

The King Who Fights for His People

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God's people need a warrior-king who will defeat the enemy on their behalf.

We first see David as a shepherd boy—certainly not the king anyone would expect. His entrance onto the scene was hardly impressive. In every way, he was—to put it bluntly—ordinary. But he would become the kind of king who trusts in God's provision for his success and finds victory. And perhaps in one of the most famous Bible stories of all time, David becomes the young champion to bring down a giant.

Voices from the Church

“The text calls us not to admire David the man and no more, but to ponder what the Spirit of God may do with one person.”¹

—D. A. Carson

 People love stories and movies about the “underdog” winning a victory. What is the biggest underdog victory you've witnessed?

 What emotions and thoughts stir up inside you when you witness a surprising and unexpected victory?

In this session, we see how, after God rejected Saul as king, He directed the prophet Samuel to anoint David, the son of Jesse. In the story of David, we see that God

does not judge people based on worldly expectations. David's battle against Goliath is an example of a king's trust in the Lord's deliverance and of God's faithfulness to accomplish a decisive victory for His people. God's people needed a warrior-king to defeat the enemy on their behalf, and in the story of David, we see glimpses of the promised King we need, as well as an example of obeying God from a heart on fire for Him.

1. God's king does not line up with worldly expectations (1 Sam. 16:1-13).

¹ The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."² And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'³ And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you."⁴ Samuel did what the LORD commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?"⁵ And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him."⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."¹⁰ And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."¹¹ Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here."¹² And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

God sent Samuel on a mission to find the next king of Israel from one of the sons of Jesse. Eliab was the oldest, so he came forward first, looking as kingly as possible. Samuel took one look at him and thought he had found his man—no doubt he was good-looking, tall, and strong. *This* must be kingly material. God, however, was unimpressed. Eliab’s appearance, height, and stature did not even register as relevant qualities. God never looks down from heaven to judge us by human standards. His criteria are different than what most of us value because He looks to the heart.



How is the truth that God “looks on the heart” both bad news and good news for you?

After rejecting all the other sons, Samuel finally asked about the youngest son. David was a shepherd, which was not a coveted position in Israel. He was also the smallest, perhaps to the point that even his father, Jesse, didn’t think his youngest son could be a king. The text implies that David was outwardly unimpressive, even to those who knew him best; yet he was the one God chose!

David would go on to lead an extraordinary life, but we must not miss the truth that every extraordinary event in his life happened in spite of his own ordinariness. David had access to the power of an extraordinary God in part because he did not think he was extraordinary in himself—a strong contrast to Saul, fully convinced of his own greatness.



What are some snap judgments we tend to make about others based on their appearance or social status?



How does this account warn us against misjudging others?

2. God's king trusts in the Lord's deliverance (1 Sam. 17:20-26,33-37).

We pick up the story when Jesse sent David out to visit his brothers on the battlefield.

²⁰ And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry. ²¹ And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. ²² And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. ²³ As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.

²⁴ All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. ²⁵ And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel." ²⁶ And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

David asked some nearby Israelite soldiers two questions. The second question was the more important of the two because it revealed David's real motivation. He cared about the glory of God.

Unfortunately, we see in this story a tragic irony—some of the most discouraging opposition that Christians face comes from the people who *should* be on God's side. Goliath was frightening enough, but there were soldiers doing everything in their power to prevent anyone from stepping out in bold faith, such as Eliab, David's brother (v. 28). Cowardly people of God are often the biggest obstacle to the mission of God.

Voices from the Church

"The account of David and Goliath vividly pictures the source of the Christian's faith—not our own size, strength, or resources, but the power of Almighty God."²

—Henry Blackaby



What are ways we (unintentionally or not) dampen the belief of others in the power of God?

Word got back to King Saul that someone might be up for the challenge of taking on Goliath (v. 31). But as soon as David arrived, Saul took up the same tone his brothers had.

³³ And Saul said to David, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth.”³⁴ But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock,³⁵ I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him.³⁶ Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.”³⁷ And David said, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and the LORD be with you!”

David was unfazed by the discouragement of people around him. He was the anointed king who trusted in God’s power. Besides, he had done his real training in the pasture, and compared to a lion or a bear, Goliath was not terribly impressive.

Today, we ought not despise the pasture or resent our suffering—these are God’s laboratories for molding our hearts to trust in the Lord’s deliverance.



What “pasture” are you in right now or have you experienced in the past?



What does it look like for you to faithfully trust God through that experience?

3. God's king accomplishes a decisive victory for His people (1 Sam. 17:45-51).



⁴⁵ Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

⁴⁶ This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves

not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.”

⁴⁸ When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.⁴⁹ And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.

⁵⁰ So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David.⁵¹ Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

This is gripping stuff, but other than being a fascinating battle story, what exactly is the main lesson to learn in David's triumph over Goliath?

Contemporary audiences love to use this story as an analogy about the underdog: *No matter the odds, you can do it! Just believe in yourself!* Sadly, this misses the point. God does not want us to read this story and come away with a cocky assurance that given the right confidence, we can achieve whatever we set our mind to. Yes, we can glean insight from David's courage and how he overcame insurmountable odds, but that's not the main point of the story. If you are to put yourself in someone's shoes in this story, it would be the people of Israel hoping David would win the battle. You and I are like the children of Israel praying for our representative fighter to bring the victory for our side.

David went to the battle line with confidence, not because he found himself particularly worthy but because he saw the battle for what it was—a struggle between the God of Israel and the gods of the world. And when he won, the entire nation of Israel shared in his representative victory, even though they had done nothing to earn it themselves.



Why is it important that David waged his battle against Goliath in the name of the Lord rather than in his own power?

We stand in a situation similar to Israel's, in need of a representative to save us from evil. Humanity's greatest and most fundamental problem—the problem behind all of our problems—is our alienation from God due to our sin. And just like Israel, there is nothing that any of us can do about that. In fact, there is nothing that any of us, of our own accord, even *desire* to do about this.

We are like the hoards of Israelites hiding in our tents, ignoring the threat of Satan, sin, and death. What we need, like Israel, is a representative to take on evil on our behalf. This story prepares the way for God to raise up another King who would accomplish another decisive victory—King Jesus. No one would have expected or picked Him to win the victory, but through His death and resurrection, He is mighty to save, and one day He will come and finally slay the serpent and rescue people from sin and death.

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

52. Christ as King

God has always been King over His kingdom from eternity past, whether in heaven or on earth. Yet some of His creatures in both realms have rebelled against Him, leaving destruction in their wake. To restore His broken world, God promised a King who would deliver His people and restore all of creation. The promise of a coming King finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and looks forward to its perfection when Jesus returns for His bride, the church.

What are some similarities between the story of David and Goliath and the work of Christ?	What are some differences between the story of David and Goliath and the work of Christ?

Conclusion

Through the life of David, we see God’s chosen king who honors God and fights for his people. When we step back and look at the big picture of the Bible, we see how God later sent the ultimate King. We would have overlooked Him with our own eyes, but God sent Him for our redemption, the King who achieved a decisive victory for us. This is the King who now sends us out on mission for His kingdom with a message of hope for all who are still trapped in sin and in need of salvation.



Voices from Church History

“Having trust in Christ, consigning everything to the God of powers, regarding God alone as all that is highest...This is the faith that has prevailed over all weapons.”³

—Paulinus of Nola (354–431)

CHRIST CONNECTION: In David we see a picture of courageous faith in God’s power. We also catch a glimpse of the bigger story of the Bible and the coming King whom no one would have expected or picked to win the victory, but through His death and resurrection, He is mighty to save.

HIS MISSION, YOUR MISSION

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: As God's people who have been forgiven through the power of the cross, we don't pursue the nations in judgment but with the message of grace, that all may hear the good news and be swept up into the glorious love and grace of God.

1. What are some ways King Jesus does not line up with worldly expectations but supersedes them?

2. How does Jesus' deliverance through the cross encourage you in your mission to take the good news to the nations?

3. List some ways your group/church can be intentional about sharing the message of God's grace in the name of the Lord Jesus.

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Keith and Kristyn Getty (session 13) are writers of modern hymns that teach Christian doctrine sung in globally-accessible melodies. Some of their best known hymns include "In Christ Alone," "Speak, O Lord," and "The Power of the Cross," all three co-written by Keith with Stuart Townend. Their hymns are sung in churches around the world, in fine concert halls of Europe and North America, and on US network and public television and the UK's BBC. Keith and Kristyn live between Northern Ireland and Nashville with their three young daughters.

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