

**DAVID AND THE VIOLENCE HE EXPERIENCED**

The story has moved on; we left David last week whilst he was being hunted down by King Saul. Since then, Saul has committed suicide after being injured by the Philistines. Some while later, David was anointed king in the south of the country in the Judean town of Hebron. Meanwhile, Ishbosheth, one of Saul's sons was crowned king in the north. What followed was, in effect, several years of civil war. After much bloodshed and the advance of the south, we arrive finally at today's passage where we read that "All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron" and made him king over all Israel. It was a great victory, but one which was won at the cost of much blood.

**DAVID AND THE STORY OF GOD**

In one sense, what we have in today's story may seem somewhat bizarre and to be of very little significance. To understand it requires looking further afield – especially into the New Testament and to Jesus, the son of David and then on to John's Revelation where the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem is symbolic of God's new creation.

**DAVID AND THE CITY HE CHOSE**

One of the first things recorded of David is that once crowned king of all Israel, he wanted Jerusalem for his capital.

Today, no would argue with the fact that Jerusalem is one of the world's most significant cities – not in the sense that London, Washington or Paris might be but in terms of the passions, beliefs and tensions that are associated with it. It is also significant in different ways for Jews, Muslims and Christians, and arguably a real flashpoint in terms of world security. The Bible's first mention of the city (or at least a hint of it) is in the story of the king of (Jeru) Salem who came out to meet and bless Abraham after he had seen off four neighbouring warlords who had attacked his nephew. The next is in the book of Joshua, where the Israelites were taking the so-called 'promised land'. However, we read that, *Judah could not dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the people of Judah* (Joshua 15:63). A little later on we read, *the Benjamites, however, failed to dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the Benjamites* (Judges 1:21). It is symbolic for the world's stubborn resistance to God's loving purposes and for peace. The next occurrence follows the Goliath story when David, having cut off the giant's head took it to Jerusalem (1 Samuel 17:54). This begs the question, why? Perhaps a clue lies in the geography: Jerusalem was only about six miles from Bethlehem where he had grown up. David would have been well aware of the resistance of the Jebusites to any attempt to dislodge them, and so showing off Goliath's head was the equivalent of saying, 'just you wait, you ain't seen nothing yet! He coveted a victory for God. It's what we Christians should be saying to the world! Our Lord Jesus Christ is the world's true victor, its only saviour and its ultimate hope.

**DAVID AND THE STRATEGY HE EMPLOYED**

The confidence of the Jebusites lay in the impregnable position of their hilltop fortress (for that was all that Jerusalem was originally). It was so impregnable that all it needed to defend it was the blind and lame! But David was shrewd, he knew that every city needs water and that there must be a way in and out for the people to get it. David found it, entered and attacked the Jebusites from the inside. Nearly 3000 years later, archaeology has discovered the tunnels.<sup>1</sup>

**DAVID AND THE FAITH HE EXERCISED**

It is clear from the whole story of David that his faith was rooted in God for both the present and the future. One of the Bible's hallmarks is that of the way God repeatedly allows his people to be faced with 'impossible' situations, so that they learn to throw themselves upon him, trust him and prove his power to rescue them. He is the God of the impossible. It was true with Abraham (father of a nation), Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon and now David (cf. Goliath, etc.). Western Christianity has tended to think of God's salvation as something primarily for the afterlife, whereas the Bible's emphasis is often on the present. For example, jumping forward 1000 years to the time of Jesus, Luke tells us about a woman who had suffered from a gynaecological problem for 18 years, something that rendered her ritually unclean and feeling rejected by God. She came to Jesus, and touching the 'hem of his garment' daring to believe that she might find God's acceptance. Immediately she was healed. Jesus then enquired who had touched him and when the woman came forward, he told her that her faith had saved her (not 'healed' as the translations have it). Once again, God is the God of the impossible – though we must be careful not to see this merely in terms of what we call 'miracles'. That same word, salvation, is used by Jesus of Zacchaeus when he was brought back to God and his people. We can concur with the writer of Hebrews that, *without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him* (11:6). See Hebrews 11:32<sup>2</sup>.

**DAVID AND THE CAPITAL HE BUILT**

Once taken, David made the fortress his capital, he considerably extended it, built himself a palace, took wives and concubines and had many children - that, it seems, was the king's privilege in those days! (But therein lay a great danger.) He then went on to consolidate and extend the nation's territories – and its worship.

**DAVID AND THE LEGACY HE BEQUEATHED**

David's legacy has been truly gigantic. Consider how many people today, 3000 years later, have his name. But that's not the half of it. David's life has become a foundation upon which virtually all else is built; both he and his city. As we have seen, Jesus was his son in more than just a human sense and his city the symbol of God's ultimate goal. So in the revelation of John we hear, "See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed." (5:5) and then (21:1-3<sup>3</sup>). All this stems directly from David, the king who conquered the blind and lame.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1867 the archaeologist and treasure hunter Captain Charles Warren went digging in and around the rocky outcrop upon which that original fortress had been built and he discovered there a series of underground tunnels dug out by hand. In particular, he discovered a 13 metre shaft down into the waters of the Gihon spring below. Later excavations have discovered further tunnels dug out for the purpose of supplying the fortress with water. David had undertaken the same quest as Charles Warren though almost 3000 years earlier, and it enabled him to take the fortress.

<sup>2</sup> What more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised.

<sup>3</sup> Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”