One Greater Than David Has Arrived
1 Samuel 21:1-9, Matthew 12:1-8
Bellevue Baptist
Nov. 22, 2026

Open your Bibles to 1 Samuel 21, as we finish up this series in this great Old Testament book. For the past few weeks, we've been studying the life of Saul, Israel's first king, but today we'll jump ahead to a moment when his replacement, King David, is rising as a rival and the jealous Saul is seeking to kill him.

David eventually becomes the greatest of the Old Testament kings, but falls miserably short of being the king humanity longed for. Next week begins the season of Advent, a word that means longing, and the entire Old Testament is essentially that–-the story of Israel's longing for a worthy king. That's where Jesus comes in.

The story of Jesus has changed the lives of millions, making Christianity the largest religion in the world, the Bible the #1 selling book in history.

Perhaps you join us today from a different worldview, perhaps you're a naturalist who believes that the material universe is all that exists. There is no spirit world, just the physical. If that's the case then you would object to the biblical story of Jesus. The view of naturalism, which now dominates, staunchly rejects the supernatural. Matter is all that matters and the spiritual does not exist.

Yet the core of the Bible asserts that a spiritual dimension does exist, and that Jesus came to prove it by rising from the dead. The story of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection is the main story in the Bible, and everything in the Old Testament points to that climactic moment. It was the Apostle Paul who wrote:

> **3For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 1 Cor. 15:3-5**

That is the message that Christians call the Gospel, and it all revolves around the historicity of Jesus. Paul makes it clear that these specific things actually happened– Christ died in fulfillment of prophecy, he was buried in a tomb, he walked out of that tomb on the third day, and he appeared to eyewitnesses.

I want you to notice that twice in that paragraph, it is noted that he died according to the Scriptures. Today's passage involving King David is one of those places in the Old Testament that shows the connection between the Old and New Testaments–how the Bible is one big story.

So, let's look at it, 1 Samuel 21. In this portion of the story, David is now a fugitive, running for his life from Saul. He finds himself in a small town named Nob. He goes to

that town to find a weapon; the sword of Goliath is in storage there. David is like a soldier in war without a gun. He needs a weapon and he needs some food.

David went to the priest Ahimelech at Nob. Ahimelech was afraid to meet David, so he said to him, "Why are you alone and no one is with you?"

2 David answered the priest Ahimelech, "The king gave me a mission, but he told me, 'Don't let anyone know anything about the mission I'm sending you on or what I have ordered you to do.' I have stationed my young men at a certain place. 1 Sam. 21:1-2

What's happening here? Ahimelech the priest is nervous because the famous warrior David has shown up unannounced and the priest thinks something must be wrong. Why are you here? Am I in trouble?

Since David is trying to stay under the radar, he makes up an excuse. He says, Don't you worry! I'm here because Saul has sent me on a secret mission–he told me not to tell anybody what I'm up to. Now, David goes on in v.3 to ask for some food….

3 Now what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever can be found. 21:3

This was a huge ask on his part. Why? Because the only bread that the priest had was the bread that was used in the Tabernacle, which was known as "The Bread of the Presence." In those days, Judaism was built on religious rituals and symbols and this sacred bread, the Lord commanded to be placed inside the worship center. Way back in the book of Leviticus. We get the instructions:

> **5 "Take fine flour and bake twelve loaves of bread…8 This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. 9 It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place…**
>
> **Lev. 24:5-9**

So, there you have it…three things we learn in Leviticus about this bread:

1) God commanded fresh bread to be made.
2) 12 loaves were offered every seven days.
3) Aaron and his sons–the priests–were required to eat the bread after seven days.

Nothing like 12 loaves of stale bread to cap off the week. MMMM.

I know what you're thinking right now. This sermon is so relevant to my life. Don't tune me out yet.

For the sake of time, I'll summarize what happens next. Basically, David says to the priest: Could I override the rules and could I eat that bread? Me and my little band of soldiers, we are famished. V. 6…

6 So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, for there was no bread there except the Bread of the Presence that had been removed from the presence of the LORD. V.6

Ahimelech takes a huge risk by saying yes–for a priest to break the religious rule was inconceivable. This just didn't happen. You stuck to the manual. This priest, however, decided that there were higher reasons than ritual at play. David was here, the anointed next king of Israel, and an exception could be made for God's chosen one.

Now, as I said before, this is one of those moments when you can see how the Old Testament is the prequel to the New Testament. Let me show you.

Let's go on a time warp, moving fast forward 1000 years to Matthew 12. If you have your Bible, you can turn there with me.

In this passage, Jesus and his 12 disciples are walking along the road, and like David and his soldiers, they are starving. They are desperate for a snack, and there just so happens to be a wheat field along the road. It was custom that the outskirts of a field could be eaten by those who were hungry, but the rule was–you could only eat enough for your belly; they couldn't take it in a sack.

Jesus's disciples eat the wheat, no problem. But here is the problem.

The religious police called the Pharisees had said, "you cannot pick crops on the Sabbath. Not on that day. There is no working, no matter how hungry you are." But God didn't say that; the religious rulers did. It was a tradition that had no foundation in Scripture.

These men see Jesus's men picking crops and they call a foul.

Now watch what happens...

> **At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." Matthew 12:1-2**

What was the Sabbath? This 24-hour period of forced non-productivity became the most distinctive mark of Judaism. In Genesis, God set that day aside for rest, but the legalistic Jews expanded the restrictions over time, making the day quite ridiculous. It was a lot of work not to work!

One commentator writes:

> **Baths could not be taken for fear some of the water might spill onto the floor and "wash" it. Chairs could not be moved because dragging them might make a furrow in the ground. A woman was not to look in a mirror lest she see a gray hair and be tempted to pull it out. You could carry ink enough to draw only two letters of the alphabet, and false teeth could not be worn because they exceeded the weight limit for burdens.**
>
> **--Matthew, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary**

Legalists like to make life harder, in the name of religion. Watch what Jesus says to them in V3…

> **3 Jesus said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Matthew 12:3-4**

Jesus says: do you guys not read your Bible? What have you been doing with your free time? You're saying that we can't eat on the Sabbath, when the most famous Jewish king walked into the religious center and did this very same thing?

If David can break the Sabbath, why can't I break the Sabbath?

Now you see that he's treading on thin ice. He's putting himself in league with King David. You don't want to do that. Jesus is subtly saying: "One greater than David is here." He implies this, but he doesn't say it. Now look at V5…

> **Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? V. 5**

The only people that are allowed to work extra hard on the Sabbath are the priests. They are innocent, they are guiltless because they get a special exception. After all, someone has to work on the Sabbath because worship on that day required manpower. The priests didn't rest on the Sabbath like everyone else. So, it was clear that God did allow for a few exceptions.

Then Jesus says something that sets their teeth on edge:

> **6 I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. V.6**

First, he insinuates he's bigger than David. Now he says he's bigger than the temple. As if that weren't enough, he goes for the jugular in v. 8.

> **8 For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." V. 8**

From that moment on, those men who plot to kill him. He was a threat to their entire way of life.

Jesus claimed that he had come to change everything, and hyper-religious people don't like change.

Jesus would be arrested by ritualists and tortured by the Romans. He would die on a cross and rise on the 3rd day, and the rest, as we say it, is history.

Do you see why the Bible carries such authority today? Just study its depth, and its details. Look at the prophecies and the way they were fulfilled in Christ. Where else can you find a book with these kinds of claims and the history to back it up? But the skeptic says, "That's not history! People don't believe that stuff anymore. Naturalism is on the rise; religion on its way out."

I don't think so. Jesus is not going away in the culture.

Christian scholar, Timothy Keller, writes:

> **The non-churchgoing population in the United States and Europe is steadily increasing. The number of Americans answering "no religious preference" to poll questions has skyrocketed, having doubled or even tripled in the last decade…**

It's true. Most churches are shrinking every year, and the numbers are nose-diving. Yet Keller goes on:

> **But even as more and more people identify themselves as having "no religious preference," certain churches with supposedly obsolete beliefs in an infallible Bible and miracles are growing in the United States and exploding in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.**
>
> **–Tim Keller, The Reason For God**

What churches are growing? Tim Keller says–those that continue to teach the Bible unashamedly and those who aren't caught up in traditions of men. In other words–local churches that continue to change their methodology without marring the message–the world is still starving for this.

Christianity isn't going away. Cultural Christianity is going away. Lukewarm, ritualistic Christianity is dying—and praise the Lord for that. What is remaining? Authentic Christians.

"But, what makes you so sure that Jesus is real?" Says my skeptical friend. "How do you know this book is true and not lies?"

To that I say: Is the burden of proof on me? Or is the burden of proof on you?

History's records supporting the life of Jesus Christ are equal to that of Julius Caesar, whom we present in our classrooms as fact. One New Testament scholar writes:

> **If the sources for Caesar are good enough for classicists to study and accept, then we should also seriously assess the core descriptions of Jesus's life from the sources closest to him. –Darrell Bock**

Why is the world so slow to accept the historical claims of Scripture, when we accept other forms of history without hesitation? How can we ignore the fact that within 20 years of Jesus' death, a massive religious movement like none other in history, swept the known world and has continued till today?

If you're listening today as a good-hearted skeptic, I ask you: What do you have to lose in exploring the claims of Christ? After deep study, you may can cross him off your list and continue as you please, or, you may decide, as millions have, that he's greater than David, greater than the temple, greater than the Sabbath, greater than all your sin.

With my time remaining, I'd like to go back and grab those three claims of Christ in Matthew 12 and try to make sense of why they matter to us today.

Jesus says three things to his Skeptics:

1. I am greater than David.
2. I am greater than the temple.
3. I am greater than the Sabbath.

Who cares? What does that have to do with the price of tea in China?

Let me see if I can probe a little deeper and help you see the relevance.

When Jesus said:

I am greater than David = I am the King that people have yearned for.

You may not realize it, but you are awful at running your life.

Jake was a self-made man. Born into a poor family, who lived paycheck to paycheck, he vowed that he would make something of himself—he would escape the lower class. Football was his ticket. Jake threw a perfect spiral, like laser beams into the hands of his receivers. He made the big plays and was big-college-bound.

And then, on the first play of his final game, his knee popped and he was never the same. For the next two years, Jake tried everything in his power to resume his career but to no avail. He could not recover. He slipped into a deep depression. And then one day, a compassionate friend pulled him out of bed and demanded he come to church.

“I don’t care about your lame religion,” he said, but for some odd reason, he put on his clothes and sauntered into that church. And when he showed up, it was as if, that man behind the pulpit had been following his social media. The pastor spoke of second chances, of starting over, of all things becoming new through this man named Jesus Christ, of a living hope that is beyond this world. Jake’s heart was pumping, his hands were sweating, he was feeling the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

The pastor read aloud the passage in Matthew:

> **25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Matthew 16:24-26**

Jake saw something that day that he had never seen before. He saw his need for a Sovereign King to rule him, a Shepherd to guide him, a Messiah to save him. He repented of his sins, and he accepted Christ into his heart. From that moment on, he was a man on a mission, and the mission was so much more fulfilling than football.

All who run from God eventually hit rock bottom, and that is why Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of God.”

Perhaps you’re listening today, and you recognize your need for a ruler, for a Shepherd, for a King. One greater than David is here, and he’s looking for loyal subjects. You need the king of kings.

#2, when Jesus said…

I am greater than the temple = I am the Lamb the world has longed for.

Do you know what the temple is? You might think it’s the side of your head. Not so in Scripture. The temple was a big building in the center of the community. It was the place where people came to feel the release from their guilt.

Every human being feels the nagging sense of their sins, because sin separates us from God and from other people. Human beings long for a closer connection with others, but the greatest obstacle for intimacy is the sin that harbors inside. We are not free to love until we are free of guilt.

When Jesus Christ went public with his identity, John the Baptist saw him and said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

Why would he say that? Because he was a Jew that went to the temple, and watched people try to put their guilt on an animal to find relief from their sins. And it wasn’t fully working.

Jesus Christ came to the world for one main reason, says he: to take away the need for a temple. To remove guilt once and for all so that you could truly love.

What have you done that you're ashamed of? If the answer is nothing, you are one unique individual. But if you're like all of us, there's a trail of wreckage behind you, and there's not a single thing you can do to change your past. Only Jesus can clean that up.

He came to the world to save sinners, of which I am the foremost, said the apostle Paul. And Jesus changed Paul's life. He can change yours too.

No other worldview on this planet can offer you what Christ can offer. He was the Lamb the world longed for. He was greater than the temple.

#3, When Jesus says:

I am greater than the Sabbath = I am the peace and quiet that the world searches for.

Don't you love peace and quiet? Do you ever want to escape the noise of the world and the restless longings of your own heart?

Jesus said:

> **28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."**
>
> **Matt. 11:28**

The sabbath was designed by God as a day of rest, but it didn't work. It was one of the 10 Commandments, but it is not a part of New Testament Christianity. We don't find our rest in a day; we find our rest in a person. The sabbath was just a shadow of the greater reality.

Jesus comes into the world promising to do far more than a day of napping could ever do. He offers a lasting peace, and long-held rest. That only comes when you surrender control to God, and you give him authority over your life.

Jesus is greater than the Sabbath, why? Because there is no rule or ritual that truly changes our hearts. Only grace can change us. In the Sabbath we find law, in the Savior we find grace.

Have you found that rest? Do you desire to know Christ?