

From Samuel and David to John and Jesus

Introduction

The Text

⁸ Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹ And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ¹⁷ and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." (Luke 1:8–17)

No Wine or Strong Drink

- A. As we keep tracking with Luke in this story, we come to vv. 14-17 where Gabriel gives to Zechariah a description of John, outlining the man and his mission. But there is a little detail given in v. 15 that caught my attention: "He must not drink wine or strong drink."
 1. What is this? Is God just trying to keep John from the party, from having a good time? "He will be doomed to sit at home on Friday nights!" I don't think that's the point.
 - a. On the surface we can at least say that this detail reveals John will be set apart from this world for the work of the Lord in some special way. But there is more God wants us to see.
- B. There is a clear reference in these words back to Num 6 where Moses is discussing with Israel a special vow of separation that any Israelite could take: the Nazarite Vow (Nazarite coming from the Hebrew word nazar meaning: "to separate").
 1. It was a way of specially consecrating one's self to the service of the Lord usually for a specific period of time, though on rare occasion one might even do so for life. And as Moses goes on to describe what a Nazarite must do, the first thing we come to is: "he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink" (Num 6:3).
- C. Now, we cannot be sure whether John himself was specifically a Nazarite in this OT sense (many scholars think so), as there are other commitments a Nazarite would make that are

not mentioned by Gabriel or Luke, but certainly the detail here is meant to connect us back to this historical referent.

1. And when we grant this connection to be made, something very interesting comes into view. In Israel's history, while we are told of a few Nazarites, one of the most significant of them is Samuel. Of him, it is the second of the Nazarite obligations that is mentioned: "no razor shall touch his head" (1Sa 1:11; cf. Num 6:5). We're invited again then to make a connection between the story of John the Baptist and that of the prophet Samuel in the Old Testament.

The Outline

A. I could not bear another allusion to the story of Samuel here in the first chapters of Luke. As I've been reading and studying these 2 chs., the allusions abound! I've been waiting for the right moment to deal with this in a more dedicated way, and it seemed to me that this morning is that time.

B. So I lay the plan before you for this morning:

1. First I'll attempt to show you some of these specific allusions that Luke is making back to the Samuel narrative. I want you to see that I'm not making this up.
2. Then, we'll allow these allusions to serve as an inlet into the broader storyline of 1-2 Samuel. What we'll find is that the broader storylines of 1-2 Samuel and Luke's gospel parallel each other remarkably.
3. Then, we'll attempt to answer the question you all will be wondering at that point: So what?! Who cares that Luke makes these allusions, that these stories parallel one another? What does that have to do with my life? God makes these connections for a reason. If He has inspired them, we can be sure it's not just for scholars, academics, theologians, but for the children of God. There's nourishment for our souls here!

C. Lest you be concerned with our pace in Luke or question my decision to stop and trace out some of these allusions, allow me to share my heart with you:

1. I'm thinking about your devotional life here. I want your Old Testaments to catch fire. I want you to see the crossroads on every page, every line like signpost pointing the way to Calvary—our Christ and His cross. We don't just skim through the OT books because they're on our Bible reading plan and it's what Christians do. We read them carefully because they lead us into deeper affection for and worship of our Savior!

- a. My prayer is that by the time we get to [Luk 24](#) and Jesus references "everything written about [Him] in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms", you wouldn't be saying: "Now what is He talking about?" You would erupt with: "Of course! He is everywhere! He's not just in Psa 22 or Isa 53 but in every chapter of every book. It's all about Him!" As Peter proclaims in the book of Acts: "All the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days (3:24).

(1) The Specific Allusions

- A. Where do we see in these first couple chapters of Luke specific allusions to the narrative in Samuel? There are many but I'll just give us a few here:
1. Luke begins His gospel by introducing us to a man and his barren wife: ⁵ "In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah...And he had...Elizabeth..." ⁷ "But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren..." (Luke 1:5, 7). The Samuel narrative begins in precisely the same manner: ¹ "There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah..." ² "He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah...Hannah had no children" (1 Sam 1:1-2).
 2. Then, Luke records that, in answer to prayer, a child will be given miraculously by God to the barren woman. And the child, as we have already seen was separated in a special way for God along the lines of the Nazarite. The Samuel narrative continues in precisely the same way.
 3. Later in Luke's narrative, Mary responds to the amazing work God is doing with both her and Elizabeth by singing in worship to God (Luk 1:46-55). Interestingly, Hannah responds to the work of God on her behalf in precisely the same way (1Sa 2:1-10). And the content of these two songs is remarkably similar. Both women are responding to God's great reversal of circumstance, both for them and for His covenant people!
 4. And, finally, consider the summary statements made concerning the children in both narratives. Luke records of John that "the child grew and became strong in spirit" (1:80a); and of Jesus that He "increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" (2:52). This is remarkably similar to what is said of the young Samuel: He "continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with man" (1Sa 2:26).
- B. Clearly, then, the miraculous children of Luke's gospel are in some way being related to the miraculous child of the Samuel narrative.

(2) The Broader Storyline

- A. I gave us just a few more specific allusions to get us started. But already they invite us to step back and ask: "Why is God making all these connections for us? What do we do with this?"
1. What we find is that these allusions are not random, they are meant to invoke the broader storyline of 1-2 Samuel as background for what we will see in Luke's gospel. And as we consider Samuel and Luke along these lines, incredible parallels emerge! I will give you some of the high points here. Let me engage in some storytelling here.

Kingdom Void

SAMUEL:

- A. The narrative of 1-2 Samuel is best understood in light of the book Judges that comes just before it. The message of Judges is actually quite plain. The author goes out of his way to make sure we don't miss it by ending the book with it: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25). Implication: without a king, anarchy; with a king, maybe things will be better. There's this longing at the beginning of Samuel, then, for a king!
- B. The story of this coming king begins in the temple in Shiloh (1Sa 1:9). And here a barren woman, Hannah, is praying for a child (1Sa 1:10-11). God has mercy on her and provides a son, Samuel, whereby her heart erupts in song. It is the last line of this song that a most compelling statement is made: "The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed." (1 Sam 2:10b).
 1. It is in Hannah's song that the word "anointed" (Heb. "messiah"; Gk. "Christ") is first used in connection with the king. Here we see the anticipation of a coming Messianic, or Anointed, King. This song serves as a prophetic hint at the ministry her son Samuel would have in Israel. For it is Samuel who goes as forerunner before this king and would fill his horn with oil and anoint him into office. Samuel is made famous only in light of King David's fame.

LUKE:

- A. As we stop to consider Luke's gospel, the parallels become clear. Recall that at this point in Israel's history they are again longing for a king. "In the days of Herod, king of Judea..." (1:5). Herod is of Esau not of Jacob or David, and he is a puppet king at that. He reigns only because Rome lets him. Things aren't right in Israel as we begin this gospel. They are in exile in their own land. And everyone's waiting, hoping for a king.
- B. The story of this coming king begins in the temple in Jerusalem now. At is here, in response to prayers long since uttered, that God mercifully announces that He is granting a son, John.
 1. This son will be forerunner to Jesus "who is Christ [Messiah, Anointed One] the Lord" (2:11). John would also anoint this king, but with water, in the river Jordan. John is made famous only in light of king Jesus' fame: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Joh 3:30).

Kingdom Conflict

SAMUEL:

- A. Samuel's life reaches its climax at his anointing of King David in 1Sa 16.
 1. But we remember that one king has come before David now in Israel: Saul. Here was a king that looked worthy to rule in the people's eyes. We read that he came from money, that he looked attractive and strong (1Sa 9:1-2). And that "he was

taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward” (10:23). He had all the stuff that the world values, but he didn’t have a heart for God. So the kingdom would be taken from him (15:23).

2. God tells Samuel that the new king is going to come from the sons of Jesse in Bethlehem. Go! So Samuel goes and he sees the strong, oldest son of Jesse and thinks, this is the one. No! God would choose David, the youngest and smallest, a keeper of the sheep (16:11). Remember what God tells Samuel: “the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (16:7). And there Samuel anoints David with oil as God’s new king.
3. A few things should be noted about this anointing of David:
 - a. It is done in secret. His family doesn’t seem to be aware of what Samuel is doing. Saul is still king at this point, at least in the eyes of Israel. And yet, David has been anointed as such by God. It’s only after the death of Saul that the people really start to recognize this!
 - b. Upon this anointing we are told that “the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward” (16:13).
 - c. It marks the beginning of his service to the Lord. His first act would be the famous story of David and Goliath—the young, small, weak shepherd boy singlehandedly takes down the colossal, overpowering opponent of God’s people (1Sa 17).
- B. This secret anointing, then, sets up the initial dispensation of David’s kingship as one of kingdom conflict. For Saul is, in position, still king. And as God exalts David, Saul grows increasingly jealous, even murderously jealous. David flees to the wilderness, but Saul pursues. The king of the flesh after the king of the Spirit. But God delivers David from it all. There are even points in the story where Saul plays right into David’s hand and with one thrust of his sword Saul would be dead, but he doesn’t do it. He shows mercy to his enemy even as he’s trying to kill him!
- C. And while David is in the wilderness, the most amazing thing happens. A community of the broken, the weak, the outcasts in Israel begins to form around him: “Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became captain over them” (1Sa 22:2). They start to get it. “David’s my king!” He takes these nobodies and makes from them a fierce army, some later described as his “mighty men” (2Sa 23:8).

LUKE:

- A. John the Baptist’s life reaches its climax at his anointing of Jesus, the baptism recorded in Luk 3. Christ, like David, wasn’t much to look at. Isaiah writes that “he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa 53:2b). When Jesus comes to John at 30 years of age, His anointing, too, is in secret. It seems no one besides John on the banks of the Jordan knew that this was God’s King, His Anointed, His Messiah. And we know that at His baptism, as with David, “the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove” (3:22) and empowered Him to begin His public ministry.

- B. Jesus too was anointed into the context of kingdom conflict. Immediately following His baptism He would be led to the wilderness where he would take on in head to head combat “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2)—the one Paul would even call “the god of this world” (2Co 4:4): Satan, the “ancient serpent” (Rev 12:9).
1. But this Serpent has offspring. And sadly, many are leaders in Israel. They value the things of this world: praise of men, power, money. And they want to be king. And as God begins to exalt His Anointed, they grow increasingly jealous, even murderously jealous. Matthew tells us that “it was out of envy that they had delivered him up” (Mat 27:18). But Christ, though He could’ve called down legions at any point to wipe out his enemies at any point, is merciful towards them to the end. Even as they’re killing Him: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).
- C. And while Christ is ministering on the earth, it’s not the rich and powerful that receive His message, but the outcasts, the sinners, the tax collectors, the sick, the weak. They all come to Him out in the wilderness, as it were: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). “I’d rather be a sojourner in the wilderness with You, then a king in a palace without You!” And from this community He forms a fierce army for the advance of God’s kingdom, some later described as “men who have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6)!

Kingdom Victory

SAMUEL

- A. After Saul’s death, David finally becomes recognized as king of Judah and Israel. He is anointed at this point not in secret but in public (2Sa 2, 5) and ascends the throne. After defeating the Philistines, he restores the ark presence of God, bringing it to the tent-temple in Jerusalem. And we’re told in 2Sa 7:1: “The Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies.”

LUKE

- A. Jesus, after dealing a death-blow to Satan on the cross, finally starts to be recognized as the true Messianic King of Israel and the nations! This is what Luk 24 is all about. After His resurrection, people finally start to get it. And in His ascension, what Gabriel said of Him at the beginning comes to pass: “The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David” (Luk 1:32b). For He ascends to the throne of David in heaven, and sits down at the right hand of the Father (Act 2:34).

His is a true and lasting rest. And what Zechariah said at that beginning has come to pass: “The Lord...has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David...that we should be saved from our enemies...” (1:68a, 69, 71a). Every enemy has been defeated and is now in process of being put under His feet: Satan, sin, death. The ark presence that had been mysteriously missing from the second temple in Jerusalem is restored only now in a more full expression: the Spirit of Christ.

(3) The Main Point

- A. What is the point of this? That was interesting, but why is seeing these allusions and parallels so important? Is this just seminary, theological talk? What does all this mean?
1. The main point, it seems to me, is not found in the parallels but in the glaring perpendiculars—the places where the two narratives don't align.
 - a. And here are the most glaring of all perpendiculars: the first David was a sinner, and yet he lives; the second David, the son of David, Jesus, was sinless, and yet He dies. The main point of all this lay within these glaring differences!
- B. I shared with you the glorious rise of king David, but what I didn't share with you is that, just as his plane is about to take off for the heavenlies, the wheels fall off and the whole story starts to skid.
1. Bathsheba. Lust. Adultery. Pregnancy. Murder. Cover-up. When we first meet David he is keeping and protecting the sheep, now he starts to feed on them, exploit them. He's not ultimately the Christ hoped for in the last line of Hannah's song. David, like you and I, is a sinner. He wasn't the Christ. He desperately needed the Christ.
- C. There is this critical scene in [2Sa 12](#) following his sin with Bathsheba that helps us anticipate the next chapter in God's story.
1. Nathan the prophet is sent to confront David, and he sees his wrong: “¹³ David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.¹⁴ Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die” ([2Sa 12:13–14](#)). David will not die for his sin, but his child, his offspring will. And then we read: “^{15b} ...The Lord afflicted [struck] the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick...^{18a} On the seventh day the child died” ([2 Sam 12:15b, 18a](#)).
- D. Here is anticipated the work of the true Christ and Messiah. “[Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord](#)” ([Luk 2:11](#)). God Himself would come, take on flesh, be born by the virgin Mary, in the line of David. His life would follow the contours of David's, only with one massive distinction: He would never bow to temptation. Satan offers Him all the kingdoms of this world, and He would not have it! He was a man after God's own heart through and through.
1. But He would die. He would be struck under the hand of God on the cross, not for His own sin, but for ours, even David's. Here is the King of kings coming at the ultimate enemies of the people of God! A lowly shepherd with a few stones. And all the world's laughing at him. “Are you serious? You? You're the Messiah?” And on that cross, Jesus hurls a stone that sinks deep into the temples of Satan, sin, and death. The real goliaths of the people of God.

- a. He would do what David could never do. David pictured the Christ, but David wasn't the Christ. He desperately needed the Christ.
- E. So in the parallels God is not merely repeating Himself. He's not like some senile old grandpa telling the same story again and again. No! In all the lowercase stories of the OT, the uppercase Story of God is advancing. The shadows in 1-2 Samuel find their substance in Luke. Samuel and David were preparing us for John and Jesus.
 - 1. And indeed we will find that the same is true for the whole of the Old Testament. It's as if echoing through the halls of the Old Testament is that same haunting question from the book of Revelation that we referenced last week: "Who is worthy?" (Rev 5:2). Do you remember that, with the scroll and its seals? And they're looking everywhere and find no one. And John's just weeping. No one is worthy to advance God's purposes in history. And then: "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered!" (v. 5).
 - a. That little vignette sums up the entire Old Testament! Who is worthy? Who can truly save God's people? Noah? He's getting drunk in His vineyard. Abraham? His life ends in a tent with just a few kids to his name. Moses? He dies outside the land of promise he spent his whole life trying to get to. David? He gives into lust for pleasure and power. Solomon? On we could go.
 - i. The greatest figures in all the Old Testament come up short of the goal. Who is worthy? No one. And by the end of the Old Testament we're just weeping. Then God, through Luke, announces: Weep no more; behold, Christ! Stop your searching, it's all been preparing you for and pointing you to...Him!

Conclusion

- A. Let's get personal. How does this help at midnight on a Monday when your wife's going into labor at 12 weeks? How does this help when the womb becomes a grave? When you're giving birth to death? When your 3 year old daughter's still asking at the dinner table: "When's the baby going to come out? I can't wait to meet it."
 - 1. What do you do? Look for another king, another Christ? This Christ let me down! Countless times during this whole process we stopped to pray and beg God to turn this around for our little baby. I just got done preaching on how God hears our prayers and advances His plan in accord with them. And here I am Sunday night, Monday, praying and I'm seeing nothing happen. And then Tuesday, 3:30 AM, my wife's holding our dead baby in the palm of her hand. "Where are You?!"
 - 2. Do you look for another king? Another way of combating the enemies that surround? Another way of achieving peace and joy?

- B. The Old Testament says: every other king, every other Christ, every other savior has been trusted in and they've all come up short, even David. God says trust in the King I have chosen. The King of the cross.
1. My king is in the business of taking sin and bringing righteousness, taking sorrow and bringing joy, taking ashes and bringing beauty, taking death and bringing life. Where else would I go? There are no other answers! He alone has the words of eternal life! He alone can take the unraveling strands of my pain and weave them into something beautiful. He alone can take the scattered shards of my suffering and order them into a mosaic masterpiece. He alone is Messiah, Christ, God's Anointed, King of kings!
- C. As Samuel existed to prepare the way for David, so in a more climactic sense, John the Baptist now exists to prepare the way for Jesus. It's all about Jesus. Look to Him!