

May 7, 2023

The View

“Sirs, we wish to see Jesus.” – John 12:21

Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God’s word, including respecting its silence. We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly “headquarters.” The five elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don’t understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God’s word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

**Please fill out a visitor’s card and put it in the collection plate when is passed.
We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.**

Remember to send in your photos for the picture board to FolsomCOCphotos@gmail.com OR if you prefer, Adam, Betsy & Lisa are available to take your picture after the morning services on the next few Sundays.

Schedule

The Lord’s Day

9:30 AM Bible Classes

Auditorium: “Love Your Bible” (Part II).

Young Adult Class (room 12): “A Study of Ruth, and 1 John: Trust & Love”

10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today

David Posey

“Loving God with All Our Heart, Soul & Mind” (Matthew 22:34-40)

Livestream at 9:30 & 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>

Bible Class: 5:00 PM @ the Building

“Praying the Psalms” (Auditorium)

High School Class @ 5 PM @ David & Christie Posey’s home

Middle school class: monthly (contact David Sanderson (david.r.sanderson@intel.com)

or Seth Reagan (sethreagan@gmail.com)

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Bible classes for all ages

Auditorium: Love Your Bible, Part II

Room 12: Young Adults Class: “A Study of Ruth, and 1 John: Trust & Love”

Articles published in the View reflect only the thoughts and opinions of the author alone, not necessarily the editor, the elders or any member of the church at Folsom.

Was David Real?

[In our group meeting, when asked why we love the Bible, one of my responses was "it's narratives are true to life." This article addresses that point among others.]

Some [skeptical - dp] scholars are willing to concede that the Tel Dan and Mesha Steles* make it plausible that a real figure named David existed, yet they still insist that much of what is recorded in the Bible about David is totally fictional. But, the events ascribed to David in the Bible make more sense if David is assumed to be a real person. While a critic may claim that David's heroic conquest of a giant is mere fiction, there is nothing quite so contemporary as a politician caught in adultery and cover-up (see 2 Samuel II)! Yet, both aspects of David's life are described with an equal sense of reality.

There is, in fact, nothing about David that does not ring true to normal human experience. His devotion and his desires are portrayed in conflict, just as in the best of men. When his passion for God seems too saintly (for example, Psalm 23, 42), we are quickly reminded by his other passions that he is indeed a sinner (Psalms 32, 51). Lust, laziness, infidelity, murder, pride, fear, family feuds, marital failure — all of these are part of the history of this king.

Such un-idealistic elements are not usually painted into the portraits of myths and legends, and certainly not those intentionally designed to be national ideals and messianic progenitors. Therefore, the finding of a historical acknowledgment of the "House of David" — reported by an Israelite foe with no respect for Israelite traditions — adds material support to a literary account that already appears historically credible.

Archaeologist Bryant Wood summarizes this proper understanding of the importance of the House of David Stele when he says:

"In our day, most scholars, archaeologists and biblical scholars would take a very critical view of the historical accuracy of many of the accounts in the Bible, particularly the early books of the Bible. Most scholars today would say that anything prior to the kingdom pe-

riod is simply folk stories and myths, and here is where biblical archaeology can play a very important role because in the field of archaeology, we can come up with new evidence and new data to help us understand these biblical accounts. Many times the newer discoveries of archaeology have overturned older critical views of the Bible. Many scholars have said there never was a David or a Solomon, and now we have a stele that actually mentions David."

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At present more of the stele is still missing than has been found. Apparently the returning Israelite king who had reconquered Dan destroyed his enemy's "victory stele" and used the stone as building blocks. The majority of these stones may still remain buried some-

where at the entrance to the ancient city. Perhaps archaeologists will soon discover and bring together these lost pieces of the puzzle and complete for us the whole picture.

Until then, the small fragments we do have are sufficient to caution the historical revisionists against mythologizing biblical characters such as David. Rather, the historical reality of David encourages us to emulate the example set by this king of old — who though imperfect always returned to a perfect God; therefore, like him, we ought to live as those who are "after [God's] own heart" (I Samuel 13:14).

Excerpt from Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, Harvest House, 1997, pp. 172-174

*A "stele" (or stela) is an upright stone slab or column typically bearing a commemorative inscription or relief design, often serving as a gravestone.

Loving the Bible

...using resources

In our auditorium class we are attempting to pass along some Bible study skills that will further enhance our understanding of the Bible we are reading. Doing that at a deeper level requires the use of some extra-biblical books or study helps. Commentaries are helpful because good ones do the job of several other books: they typically define Greek or Hebrew words, provide background material for the book, discuss the context and offer explanations of the text based on all of that. Of course, not all commentaries are equal and some of them are... well, really bad. Some commentaries are just an excuse for authors to spread their pet opinions while others simply parrot what is written in other commentaries, without doing their own research. For example, the "eye of the needle gate" fiction (see below) was perpetuated because one commentator mentioned it many years ago and it was repeated by others. The point is not that we shouldn't use these references, we *should* – after reading the text several times; the point is that we must be careful when reading books – or listening to, or watching programs – *about* the Bible. Sometimes they actually impede our understanding instead of helping us comprehend what the writer was saying to the original audience, which is our goal. And it's a good idea to never rely on one commentary; read as many as you can get your hands on.

I Love the Bible Because...

Last week, in our group meeting, Zac Brown, who was leading the discussion, asked every person who was there to state the main reason they love the Bible. The ages ranged from 7 to the 70's. The responses were enlightening and heart-warming:

It tells the story of Jesus and the gospel.

It's a standard that doesn't change.

It's God's way of helping us get to heaven.

It's perfect literature, with something for everyone.

It's accurate, reliable and trustworthy.

It teaches us what is right and good.

It's the truth and tells us how to know God.

It deals with humanity as it is.

It's not just an instruction book, it reveals a way of life.

It provides a context for my life, promotes a life of purpose and meaning.

It gives us instructions and is a guide for us.

It tells us what we **need** to hear, not just what we **want** to hear.

It's true/truth.

It tells us we are loved by God and tells us what he has done for us.

It shows, in the various ways God communicates with us, how much God loves us and wants a relationship with him.

It is God's word – and that's serious.

We can learn so much from it; gives us purpose and meaning.

It defines sin and how to deal with it so we can be forgiven.

It is true to life; everyone can identify with it, if they want to.

It's the revelation of God's grace and love and a paves a path to justification and righteous living.

Be Careful What You Accept as True

The "Eye of the Needle" Gate?

Some of you will remember preachers repeating a story that there was a gate in Jerusalem called "the eye of a needle." This gate was, they said, a small one so if you took a camel through this gate, the camel would have to bend down to get through it. This was the way some preachers explained Matthew 19:24:

"Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

One article I read said the earliest known reference to this claim is by the theologian and historian Jerome, in his commentary on Matthew's gospel, in the late 4th or early 5th century AD. He wrote that there was a gate in Jerusalem called "the Needle's Eye," which was so narrow that a camel could only pass through if it first had all of its baggage removed and was then carefully led through on its knees.

Today, the story is widely believed to be apocryphal. More importantly, the "explanation" utterly twists Jesus' point. It distorts the force of Jesus' words and the disciples' reaction – "who then can be saved?" to which Jesus responded (v. 26) "with man this is impossible but with God all things are possible."

God Gave Moses 613 Commandments?

I have often read and heard Bible teachers refer to "613 commandments" in reference to some of Jesus' words. For example, in one of my commentaries on Matthew, commenting on Matthew 22:36, the writer says:

"The lawyer's question implies a rule-based understanding of the Law. 'We have 613 rules here; now which is the most important?'"

The concept of 613 commandments is first mentioned in Jewish tradition in the 3rd century AD by Rabbi Simlai, who is said to have enumerated them in the Torah. "In light of this, there is perhaps no idea that is simultaneously as widely accepted, yet with so little basis in rabbinic literature, as the supposition that it is 'unambiguous' that Jewish law consists of precisely 613 commandments. It's possible that this enumeration of 613 commandments (which is recorded in the Talmud, compiled *after* Jesus) was already well-established in Jewish thought by the time of Jesus but there is no direct evidence that Jesus or his disciples specifically referred to this exact number of commandments. The only place where talmudic and midrashic manuscripts uniformly preserve the idea that God gave Israel exactly 613 commandments is the famous passage in *Bavli Makkot* 23b-24a. This aggadic text reads (translation my own): Rabbi Simlai expounded: "613 commandments were said to Moses, 365 negative commandments, like the days of the year, and 248 positive commandments, corresponding to a person's limbs."

Source: Dr. Mark Herman at

<https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-origins-and-use-of-the-613-mitzvot>