CHAPTER FIVE: KING DAVID AND KING SOLOMON
KING DAVID

David and Samuel

Samuel told Saul, "The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." David was no war hero, at least not yet. In fact, he was out tending sheep when the prophet came calling. As Samuel anointed Saul, he now anoints David as the future king of Israel. But life doesn’t change much for the shepherd boy. He goes back to his flocks while his older brothers go off to the army . . .

David and Goliath

With three big brothers in the army, David would take care-packages from home out to the front lines. On one such trip he happened to hear the taunts of a Giant who had the soldiers of Israel quaking in their boots. Offended that this Philistine should mock the living God, David was determined to answer the challenge. Though Saul at first tried to talk him out of it, and then made David try the king’s own armor on for size, the shepherd boy headed off to battle with nothing more than a sling and five smooth stones.

Though we like to pull for the long-shot and still refer to opponents in a gross mismatch as a “David and Goliath,” the Biblical account is less about underdogs and more about faith. David certainly thought he was the odds-on favorite, not Goliath. Though the huge career warrior mocked David’s size and age and cursed him by the gods of the Philistines, David knew what was really going on.

"You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin," David said. "But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.”

Here David sounds like he knows the lessons it took Moses, Joshua, and the Judges generations to teach: God fights for his people. As David told Goliath, “For the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hand.” Who’s the underdog, now, sucker?

David and Jonathan

From the day David defeated Goliath until Jonathan was killed in battle against the Philistines, David and Jonathan were consistent and devoted friends. As the Lord blessed David, David rose in the ranks of the army and in favor with all the people. When Jonathan’s father, King Saul, became jealous of David and repeatedly tried to kill him, even then Jonathan remained faithful to his friend.

This friendship that allowed men with rival claims to the throne to love each other as brothers was rooted in faithfulness to Yahweh. They made a covenant together: “The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my offsprings and your offsprings, forever.”

Though Prince Jonathan had every right to demand recognition as Saul’s heir apparent, Jonathan submitted himself to the will of the LORD. Jonathan knew Yahweh had chosen David to be the next king, and Jonathan loved both David and the LORD.
David-hood

Saul was a serious threat to David’s health and well-being. It was only with the help of Saul’s daughter Mical, David’s wife, and Saul’s son Jonathan, David’s best friend, that David escaped Saul’s many plots to take his life.

Once David finally fled Saul’s city, he lost himself in the caves and hills and forests of the wilderness surrounding Israel and her neighbors. David’s brothers who had been soldiers in Saul’s army met him there, as did a band of merry men: “And 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. And there were with him about four hundred men.”

They actually could have put on a rather convincing production of Robinhood: the Sheriff of Nottingham would have been played by King Saul, whose relationship to David and his merry men was marked by animosity, raids, pursuit, and death threats. Saul was continually chasing this rag-tag band through forests and around mountainsides, always almost catching them, but not quite.

David is obviously Robinhood, leading a motley crew of bandits and discontents, even robbing the rich (Philistine towns) to feed the poor. And Davidhood has a right-hand man, a Little John, the primary commander of David’s armies, general Joab. Davidhood even has a Friar Tuck, the priest Abiathar who escaped one of Saul’s deadly tirades and brought the Word of Yahweh into David’s camp. Maid Marion could be played quite plausibly by a woman named Abigail, but that’s another story . . .

The Death of Saul and Jonathan

Though David had multiple chances to take out King Saul, he always spared Saul’s life, often against the advice of his generals. But David knew that Yahweh fights for His people; David knew that though Saul was after his life, Saul was still the anointed one of the LORD, and out of faithfulness to the LORD, David refused to take matters into his own hands.

The Philistines were a thorn in the side of the Israelites from the time of the judges and through the entire reign of King Saul. It is in battle with this sea-faring people on the coast of the Mediterranean that Saul finally loses his life. Badly wounded by archers, Jonathan and two other sons already dead on the battlefield, Saul refused to be killed by the enemy. When his armor-bearer disobeys a direct order to kill the King, Saul falls on his own sword. It was a day of bitter defeat and loss for the armies of Israel.

Like the conquest of the Promised Land, the war with the Philistines is also about theology. When the Philistines find Saul’s body, they take his armor and put it in the temple of the goddess Ashtaroth as a trophy. The claim is obvious: my god is bigger than your god.

OT Bookmark: Know Where You Are

1 and 2 Samuel were at one point written together on one scroll, bearing the name of that transition figure, last judge and first prophet, Samuel. Samuel dies in 1 Samuel 25, but the second book still bears the name of the original extended-version scroll.

In 1 Samuel, David has been anointed as the next king, but spends the whole book running from Saul. Saul dies at the very end of 1 Samuel, and 2 Samuel begins with David becoming king of Judah in Hebron and then king over all Israel in Jerusalem. The transition from 1 Samuel to 2 Samuel is the transition from King Saul to King David.
After the Death of Saul

Though David has been anointed by Samuel to succeed Saul, and though David was well-known and well-loved for his many military successes, Saul’s death was not immediately followed by a united kingdom under David. Instead, David’s tribe of Judah made him king in their capital city of Hebron while the other tribes followed Saul’s general Abner in backing Saul’s son Ish-bosheth for the throne. The struggle between Joab and Abner, between the supporters of David and of Ish-bosheth, gets ugly fast. Without David’s consent, Abner and Ish-bosheth are both assassinated. Joab, to avenge his own brother’s death (and consolidate his position as David’s Five Star General) kills Abner. Then, Ish-bosheth is murdered by some of his own men who could sense the tide of support shifting toward David. When they brought his head to David looking for a reward, they didn’t get the thanks they were expecting. Like the messenger who claimed to have killed Saul, David takes these mercenaries and has them executed for murder. Though he is a man of war, David will not tolerate an attack on the man God has made king. As David told Goliath, the battle belongs to the LORD.

Consolidating the Kingdom

After seven years as king in Hebron, David is finally made king over all Israel. His first move is to consolidate a kingdom with the tendency to divide along a North/South axis. David goes up from Hebron in the Deep South of Judah, to a mountain fortress named Jerusalem. There the Jebusites are still living, though they should have been driven out during the Conquest. David rights this wrong and drives out the Jebusites, making the centrally located Jerusalem his new capital.

In fact, because David knows that the battle belongs to the Lord, his military campaigns look a lot like a redoing of the entire Conquest. David rights this wrong and drives out the Jebusites, making the centrally located Jerusalem his new capital. In all his military campaigns, David is victorious. Why? The answer is conquest theology: Yahweh fights for His people.

Besides defeating the Philistines, Israel’s most persistent foe, and establishing a more centrally-located capital at Jerusalem, David also had the Ark of the Covenant and the Tent of Meeting brought to the capital city. Military success combined with a central place of worship and government strengthened David’s rule and ushered in the Golden Age of the monarchy in Israel.

OT Interview

For more David dancing with all his might before the LORD as the Ark entered his capital city, see the interview with ?? on page ??

Who’s Building a House for Whom???

After David has been established in Jerusalem, he looks out of his palace window and sees the tent that houses the Ark of the LORD. Somehow, this just doesn’t seem right. So David desires to build a temple, a house for the presence of God in the midst of his people. It is an honorable wish, but the answer comes back from Yahweh, hold on a second! You’re going to build a house for me??!!! I’m the one running the show! In fact, I’m going to build a house for you!

God’s response is a play on words. In the first instance, David desires to build a temple, literally a house for God. But God turns David’s building proposal on its head; God is going to build a dynasty, or “house” for David. According to Yahweh, the House of David would include a son from David’s line whose throne would be established forever and ever: “I will be to him a father, and be shall be to me a son . . . And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me.”

2 Sam 7:14; 16
“Idle hands are the devil’s workshop,” the old adage goes; and it was “in the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle” that David sends Joab and the army off to war while he has some idle time around the palace. One evening stroll, one bathing beauty, and one thing leads to another.

When all of David’s exploits are recounted, and his most famous warriors are recorded by name, on the list of David’s most important, most valiant, most faithful heroes we find the name, “Uriah the Hittite.” This was the man whom David cuckolded, whom David called back from the front lines in a vain attempt to cover his sin, whom David gave orders to have abandoned in the fighting so that he would be killed. Sin begets sin. David went from adultery to deceit to murder. One quick wedding to a widow after her time of mourning and David thought he had gotten away with it.

Nathan the prophet, the same man who brought the promise from God to build David an eternal house, now comes into the king’s chambers to bring God’s word of judgment and wrath. In one of the most effective sermons ever recorded, Nathan tells the story of a rich man who was not content with his abundance but instead to the pet lamb from a poor neighbor’s family to feed a visiting dignitary. David’s anger is immediate: “Surely, that man deserves to die!” Nathan’s response? “You are that man!”

David’s sin was more than murder to cover up adultery. At its root it was a reversal of the complete dependence on God that David had so often shown in other situations. The shepherd facing the giant Goliath knew that Yahweh was in control. The outlaw running for his life refused to assassinate King Saul, because he knew Yahweh was in control. The young King in Hebron will not condone Ish-bosheth’s murder, because he will not take what is Yahweh’s to give. But here, the King who has fought his battles and made his fortune and established his reign looks around and takes what he likes. The adultery with Uriah’s wife is more: it is a denial of David’s complete dependence on God.

And so God says, “I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more.” I gave you everything you have; if you needed more, wouldn’t I have given it to you? In committing adultery with Bathsheba, you have despised Me.

David’s response is a return to the attitude that marked him as a man after Yahweh’s heart. Facing the wreck his sin has made of his relationship with God, he gets down on his knees and throws himself on the mercy of God: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”
Sin Begets Sin

We saw it way back in Genesis 5. Adam, created in the image of God, sinned. His son was born in the image of Adam. Sin begets sin. And though Yahweh took David’s guilt away and the death penalty David rightly spoke on himself was not carried out, David’s sin still had consequences.

Though Bathsheba would later be the mother of Solomon, David’s heir, this first child of their union died a week after he was born. And God’s judgment was also seen in the story of Absalom, a long-haired, Fabio-looking son of David who first murdered his half brother (for raping Absalom’s full sister) and later lead a revolt that was successful enough to drive David out of Jerusalem for a time. The messed-up family life of the father seems somehow hereditary.

As a part of his claim to the throne and in order break all ties with his father, Absalom took the royal concubines David had to leave behind and made them his. Absalom set up a public tent to show off his royal power grab so the people would get the message.

In this despicable act, Yahweh’s words concerning David’s sin with Bathsheba came to fruition: “Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.” What David tried to cover up, Absalom did in front of all the people. Sin begets sin.

OT Bookmark: Know Where You Are

The transition from 1 Samuel to 2 Samuel is the transition from King Saul to King David. The transition from 2 Samuel to 1 Kings is the transition from King David to King Solomon. Sure, David is still alive in the opening chapters of 1 Kings, but only as a character in the palace intrigue that will end with Solomon on the throne.

KING SOLOMON

The Rise of Solomon

Shortly after Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother, helps secure Solomon as heir, David dies and Solomon ascends the throne. In a vision, the LORD tells Solomon to ask for something, something big. Instead of asking for fame or fortune, Solomon asks for wisdom to rule God’s people. Door number three turns out to be a good choice: because he asked for the ability to be faithful in the tasks Yahweh had given to him, the LORD gave Solomon fame and fortune along with the discernment to govern the vast nation of Israel.

Solomon’s reign was one marked by prosperity in every respect. The wars his father fought established the nation of Israel and expanded her boarders. Solomon’s reign saw a time of peace that allowed for trade and expanded commerce. Solomon’s unsurpassed wisdom and wealth became world-renowned. He even authored three books that belong to the Old Testament Wisdom literature: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. But Solomon’s highest honor was the one his father David had himself longed for: finally, the transitory Tabernacle was replaced with a more permanent structure. Solomon was allowed to build the temple of Yahweh.

The temple matched the Tabernacle in layout and function, but the scale and ornate splendor far outshone the humble tent. Still, what made the temple the temple was not the precious stones or the cedar or the gold. Even Solomon in his prayer of dedication admits, “Heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you [Yahweh]; how much less this house that I have built!”
The assurance of God’s presence was not based on the size or beauty of the building; it was founded solely on the promise of God, the God who said, “I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.”

Still today, God’s people don’t rely on the size or architecture of the worship space; they rely on the promise of God to meet with them in, with, and under human words and physical means, a splash of water, a taste of bread, a sip of wine. Still today, the worship of the living God begins with His Name, the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Still today He promises, to those baptized into the Name, to those gathered in the Name, “I have consecrated this body, this Church by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.”

Smoke Gets In Your Eyes

At key points in the story of God’s people, the very presence of the LORD is somehow available to His people in, with, and under a cloud. Remember how Yahweh led the people of Israel by a pillar of cloud by day (Exodus 13:21) and how the cloud cover the top of Mount Sinai where Moses entered into God’s presence (Exodus 19:16). Then, at the very end of Exodus, the cloud of God’s glory descended on the Tent of Meeting, showing that God was with his people. In the wilderness, the cloud would go up from the Tabernacle when the people were to break camp and head back out on the road (Numbers 9:15). When Solomon dedicates the temple in Jerusalem, God takes up residence there: the Holy Smoke of God’s presence is so thick and overpowering, the priests have to abandon their posts. The prophet Ezekiel sees a vision of the cloud of God’s glory departing the temple and going to be with his people in exile shortly before the temple is destroyed by the Babylonian armies (Ezekiel 10:4 ff.). Not until the New Testament do we see the glory cloud of God’s presence return to His people, and this time, when the voice from the cloud speaks, it says, “This is my beloved Son! Listen to Him!” (Matthew 17:5).

The Decline of Solomon

Before the people entered into the Promised Land, Moses warned them: “Don’t marry foreign wives!” Why not? Foreign wives worship foreign gods, and they will lead you astray. Religious pluralism can easily lead away from the worship of the one true God.

For Solomon, marriage was a means to political stability. With 700 wives, he was literally related to just about anyone in the Ancient Near East who would ever think of attacking him. But the women of Egypt and Moab and Ammon and Edom and Sidonia brought their luggage, their favorite small appliances, and their cultures’ gods.

Solomon himself had written, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” Somehow, between the Chantilly lace and the pretty face, and the pony-tail hangin’ down, even the wisest of the wise lost sight of the beginning of wisdom. “For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.”

God’s judgment was tempered with mercy; for the sake of David, He did not tear the kingdom away from Solomon while he was alive. And even when the kingdom would be rent from Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, God would leave a small territory faithful to David’s line.
Fire Starters
Get the picture

Web Extensions
For updates and links to the following resources, visit www.csl.edu/???

Test Takers
Know anything underlined in the chapter and the following:

For Further Reading
Day 1: 1 Samuel 17-19; at 16:11 read Psalm 23 and at 19:17 read Psalm 59
Day 3: 2 Samuel 1-4
Day 4: 2 Samuel 5-7; at 6:15 read Psalm 150
Day 5: 2 Samuel 11-12; at 12:17 read Psalm 51
Day 6: 2 Samuel 15, 17, and 18; at 15:31 read Psalm 3

OT Interview
For more on the theology of Deuteronomy, see the interview with Dr. Tim Saleska on page ???