

Old Testament Survey
Lesson 12 – 2 Samuel
Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School
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Introduction

1 Samuel centers around the reign of King Saul, his choice by the people, his coronation by Samuel, his control of the kingdom, and his conclusion when he committed suicide. The introduction of the righteous Samuel and David serves to illustrate Saul's spiritual bankruptcy. 2 Samuel centers primarily around the reign of King David. Of course, to see the entire story of David we must begin in 1 Samuel, read through 2 Samuel, and end in 1 Kings (with commentary provided in 1 Chronicles). So, to begin our study of 2 Samuel we will go back into 1 Samuel and review David's life in order to have a full understanding of his character and his relationship to God and with the nation of Israel.

Event 1: Samuel Anoints David (Chapter 16)

After a series of acts of disobedience, culminating in Saul usurping the office of priest and offering sacrifices then refusing to destroy the Amalekites, God rejects him as His king. God wants obedience rather than worship. God then sends Samuel to Bethlehem and the family of Jesse to find and anoint a new king. He tells Samuel exactly what kind of man He wants: Chapter 16:7-- *"Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, ... for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."*

Event 2: David Serves Saul (Chapter 16)

"The Spirit of the Lord left Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him." (v14) His servants recommended he have soothing music played to help these fits pass and they brought him, at his own request, David to play for him. It worked so well that Saul told Jesse, *"let David now stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight."* (v22)

Event 3: David and Goliath (Chapter 17)

1. David had a right view of God.

When David arrived to bring supplies to his brothers at the battlefield, he found an army terrified by the giant Goliath. No one would go to fight him in answer to his challenge. David's response was revealing. *"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God."* (v26) David knew that no man could come against the power of God and win.

2. David had faith in God's power and provision.

When David volunteered to fight Goliath, the answer was, *"you are but a youth."* (v33) David's response was again revealing. He told of his experiences as a shepherd when a lion and a bear came to take lambs from his flock and he not only recovered the animals, but he killed both predators. Then he explains why he is confident he can defeat Goliath. *"The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of the Philistine."* (v37)

3. David wanted God to get the credit.

Goliath came out with a shield bearer carrying his shield in front of him, a sword, a spear, and a lance, and said to David, *"I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field."* (v44) David's response was consistent with his character. *"This day will the Lord deliver you up into my hands, ... that all the earth may know that there is a (the) God in Israel."* (v46)

Event 4: David's Successes Bred Saul's Jealousy (Chapters 18-31)

David became Saul's top soldier, leading his army to victory after victory and causing the women of Israel to sing:

⁷The women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands."

⁸Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" ⁹Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on. 1 Sam 18:7-9

This begins the series of attempts on David's life especially illustrated in chapters 19, 22, and 23. The attacks became more intense when Saul learned that Samuel had already anointed David as the next king. One of the reasons David is able to stay alive is his strong friendship with Saul's son, Jonathan, who has access to inside information.

Event 5: David Spares Saul's Life (Chapters 24 and 26)

Even though Saul carried on a relentless mission to search out and destroy David, David would not kill his deadly enemy, even when he has opportunity. In chapter 24 David was close enough to plunge a dagger into Saul's heart. Instead, he just cut off the corner of his robe to prove he had been there. In chapter 26 David stood at the side of a sleeping Saul with Saul's own spear stuck in the ground beside his head. Instead of killing him he took the spear and left. Why did David pass up his opportunities to be rid of a man who had vowed to kill him?

⁶So he said to his men, "Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD'S anointed." 1 Sam 24:6

In fact David felt guilty about cutting the robe and taking the spear. Why? Because, he had embarrassed his king.

Event 6: David Defeats Saul's Enemies (Chapters 27-30)

Word got out that Saul was trying to kill David, so each time David came into enemy territory they thought he would help them against Saul. But David defeated the Philistines and destroyed the Amalekites.

When Saul died the southern tribes of Judah crowned God's choice, David, king. Even then, the entire nation could not accept God's choice. The northern tribes accepted the leadership of Saul's son, Ish-bosheth bringing about a seven year civil war. So David inherited a nation in tatters bringing us a story of intrigue, murder, and treachery. Even after his enemies were eliminated, David had to heal wounds, act justly and decisively, and behave like a king for all the people, not just his loyal subjects. He was able to unite the nation and reign as an effective king. Looking at David in the Old Testament is like looking at Peter in the New. They were men of passion with great faults and emotional temperaments, but they loved God with a great love and had an ultimate faith in His grace.

2 Samuel is a book of grace. Even though Israel did not deserve it, God consolidated the kingdom, gave them a strong king, defeated their enemies, and provided a covenant of an eternal kingdom. Even though David did not deserve it, God proved His grace to be greater than David's sin. David had to suffer the consequences of his sin, but God watched over him, preserved his rule, and provided the blessing of a kingly line which would provide Jesus, the Messiah and ultimate King of Israel.

I. David's Fame (1-10)

A. The Lament for Saul (1)

God gave the throne to David; David did not steal it. David refused to take matters into his own hands and kill Saul, even though Saul had been put aside by God and deserted by Samuel, and David had been anointed God's king. This is proven as 2 Samuel begins when David, just back from his own victory over the Amalekites, heard of the death of Saul and his three sons, including his best friend, Jonathan. He was devastated.

An Amalekite came to David claiming to have killed Saul on Mt. Gilboa. We know he is lying because we know how Saul died (1 Sam 31). He probably thought he would get a reward. If David himself announced, "*I will not touch God's anointed,*" how will a pagan be allowed to (1:14)? David had him executed.

Verses 17-27 are a song of lament written by poet David in honor of his king and his friend. The refrain, "*How the mighty have fallen!*" (v19, 25, 27) expresses a tribute to these great men whom David loved and missed.

B. The House of Saul (2-4)

Normally, in the course of a monarchy, the oldest surviving son of the dead king is the successor to the throne. David was still not taking anything for granted. He asked God what he should do about Saul's kingdom. The Lord instructed him to go to Hebron. There the elders of Judah anointed him king (of course God had already picked him).

In a political power play, Abner, one of Saul's generals, installed Saul's son as king in the north to oppose David. We know what kind of man he was because his name originally was Esh-Baal (man of Baal) and was changed to one no better, Ish-bosheth (man of shame). In chapters 2 through 4 the intrigue of the civil war reads like a novel.

- Abner goes to war against Joab, David's general and kills Joab's brother.
- Then Abner defects to David's side and plots to kill Ish-bosheth in exchange for returning David's wife Michal whom Saul had given to another man (1 Sam 18).
- Joab is incensed that David would deal with Abner and plots to assassinate him without David's knowledge, and does it.
- David is upset over Abner's death and declares a day of mourning leading everyone to admire him.
- Two of Ish-bosheth's captains decapitate him and send his head to David who executes them for treason.
- Mephibosheth, the sole surviving son of Jonathan, is no threat because he is crippled so David has no other rivals.

A. David's Coronation (5)

After Ish-bosheth's death the northern tribes joined Judah in proclaiming David king and beginning a period of prosperity such as Israel had never known.

1. David crowned king. Finally Israel's will met God's will.

³So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the LORD at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel. 2 Sam 5:3

2. David commands Jerusalem. David marched on Jerusalem and removed the Jebusites from their mountain fortress. The city became known as the City of David because he moved his headquarters from Hebron. This gave him a centralized, strong, military and political capital which had no former connection with either the northern or southern tribes.

3. **David conquers the Philistines.** Unlike the occupying armies of Israel and the armies of Saul, who were unable to defeat the Philistines, David carefully followed God's instructions and routed the Philistines twice.

B. David's Convictions (6)

1. **David returns the Ark.** By bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. David could make the new capital the center of religious life as well as political. Remember the Ark had been at Abinadab's house since the Philistines returned it in terror (1 Sam 7).
2. **Uzzah and Ahio move the Ark.** The Ark had no inherent power, but was a symbol of the presence of God. As far back as Exodus 25, instructions were given that only the Levites could carry the Ark and no one could touch it. Instead of carrying it as instructed in Scripture, they put it on a cart that hit a rut causing the Ark to slide. Uzzah reached out a hand to steady it and was struck dead on the spot by God.
3. **Levites carry the Ark.** David was not dumb. He learned from this display of God's power and holiness and not only had the priests carry the Ark properly, but offered sacrifices every six paces as it was moved. When the Ark entered into Jerusalem, David celebrated by dressing in plain clothes, dancing humbly before the Lord.

C. David's Covenant (7)

David was concerned that the Lord be lifted up before the nation. He said to Nathan the Prophet, *"See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwells within tent curtains"* (v2). He had in mind a great building, made with hands to the glory of God. God would not let him do it, but his son would build the Temple. The Lord had in mind, however, a permanent "building" not made with hands, a dynasty rather than a building. Nathan told David that God had in mind a Covenant, a promise, which included three things: 1) a lineage, 2) a kingdom, and 3) a throne (v13). This covenant was the beginning of a messianic hope for Israel. One day, in the line of David, would come a man who would sit on the throne of a kingdom that would last forever.

D. David's Conquests (8)

God's promises to David for a great kingdom were realized as he conquered the Philistines in the west, the Moabites in the east, Zobath and Damascus in the north, and the Edomites in the south. *"The Lord gave David victory wherever he went.* (v14) David set up a bureaucracy including soldiers, priests, clerical workers, and politicians.

E. David's Compassion (9)

David was an effective warrior and administrator, but he was also a loyal and thoughtful ruler. He had made a pledge to Jonathan and his family (1 Sam 20) to care for them. He learned from a servant in Saul's household that Jonathan's only surviving son, Mephibosheth was crippled and living in obscurity and even poverty. He returned all of Saul's private property to him and moved Mephibosheth to Jerusalem and into his private household.

Some ideas about Mephibosheth and grace from "Grace Awakening" by Swindoll

1. The result of a fall was permanent crippling (2 Sam 4:4).
2. The King sought out someone to show loving-kindness (unconditional grace) to.
3. The one crippled did not deserve grace and did not seek grace.
4. The one crippled was shown grace and moved from a low position to one of blessing and honor.
5. The one crippled was adopted into the royal family.
6. The crippled limp was a constant reminder of grace received.
7. The adopted son was treated like family (he was "adopted").

F. David's Critics (10)

David also desired to be generous to the son of his deceased ally King Nahash and sent a delegation to convey his sympathies. Nahash's son charged them with espionage and humiliated them. David advanced to confront them, but the Ammonites hired Armean mercenaries to prepare for his advance. Joab and Abishai outmaneuver and defeat them. Even though the Armeans gathered more troops, David defeated them expanding his kingdom in the east.

II. David's Shame (11-24)

The troubles in the later years of David's reign can be traced, almost in their entirety, to his sins. His family problems and the strife in his kingdom came from flaws in his character, whether moral, parental, or judicial. David will pay dearly for his sin.

A. David's Crimes (11)

1. Israel's war with Ammon was the background for David's sin against God. The author implies that David should have been at the war instead of in Jerusalem (v1). While idle (he was not fulfilling his God appointed responsibilities) he saw Bathsheba bathing, wanted her, sent for her, and slept with her.

¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. James 1:13-15

2. Bathsheba got pregnant. David called Uriah back in order to make it look like it was his child, but he refused to sleep with his wife while his men were alone on the battlefield.
3. David ordered Uriah sent to the front of the battle and had the troops draw back so that he would be defenseless. Uriah was killed. David was guilty of adultery and murder. Not only had David done this to one of his soldiers, but he did it to a loyal and devoted friend, one of David's 37 honored mighty men (2 Sam 23:23, 39)

B. David's Confrontation (12)

1. It was ~9 months later when God sent Nathan to confront David about his sins of adultery and murder. It seems he may have quieted his conscience during that year because he fell right into Nathan's trap. As king, David was in charge of seeing that justice was done, and his righteous anger burned for the oppressed man. In fact, he condemned the man saying, "*He deserves to die*" (v5) Nathan said, "*You are the man.*" (v6)
2. Moses laid out the principle that when we sin our sins will find us out. David explains the one to whom all sin is directed – God (v13). His Psalm of repentance (Psa 51) explains his heart. Contrast this with Saul's lies when confronted with his sin (1 Sam 15:12-19).

...you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out. Num 32:23

3. Nathan pronounced God's judgment on David: 1) Because he murdered Uriah by the sword, his family would experience grief by the sword, 2) Since he took another man's wife, his wives would be taken, and 3) Even though his sin was in secret, David would be publicly humiliated (see 15:16 and 16:21-22). All of these curses were fulfilled.

4. Unlike Saul when Samuel accused him, David confessed his guilt and was grief stricken over his sin (Psa 51). God forgave him, but he still had to suffer the consequences of his sin: He and Bathsheba lost their child. God's judgment was painful as David prayed for God to deliver his son (v13-23). God, who is great in mercy, gave them another son. Solomon, whom the Lord named Jedidiah ("beloved of the Lord"), would become the king to build God's temple and for Israel's golden era (in 1 Kings). God also allowed David to personally lead a successful campaign to defeat the Ammonites.

C. Trouble with His Kinsmen (13-19)

For seven chapters we are bombarded with David's problems with his son Absalom. One interesting thing to note is that these entire episodes begin with Amnon, David's oldest son, lusting after his half sister Tamar.

1. Absalom Reacts to Amnon's Sin (13)

Amnon lured Tamar into his apartment, raped her, his lust turned to hate, and he kicked her out. She went to her brother Absalom's house. *"When David heard this, he was furious"* (v21), but he didn't do anything. This is a moral problem. What could he do since he himself had a problem in this area? He could have been a father and a just king and dealt with it, but he did not.

Absalom harbored a growing hatred for Amnon and for David that festered for over two years. Finally he got his chance for revenge. He held a festival, invited Amnon (and David, but David wouldn't go), and had his servants murder Amnon. Absalom, the murderer, ran to his maternal grandfather, Talmi, king of Gesur. David wept for Amnon, the heir to his throne, but also for Absalom who was gone, banished for three years (v21-39).

2. Absalom Returns to David (14)

Absalom was now David's successor and so Joab plotted to bring him back by using a woman to weave a fictional story to exploit David's mercy. He responded and she challenged David to reconsider his banishment of his son. David sent Joab to retrieve Absalom but refused to see him when he returned.

3. Absalom Leads a Coup Attempt (15 and 16)

Four years later, crown prince Absalom began a campaign to replace his father in the hearts of the people and steal the kingdom. David had created the environment for this by not enforcing the law and by ignoring his subjects. Absalom stepped in promising justice.

Another irony is that in Hebron, where David had been declared king Absalom was now acclaimed king by a group of rebels including David's political advisor, Ahithophel (Bathsheba's grandfather). Joined by a small (37 warriors) but loyal contingent David had to flee into the desert. He left behind his royal harem but fled with a group of 600 mercenary soldiers. He originally took the Ark, but sent it back to Jerusalem because it belonged in the house of the Lord. He also had Hushai, the Arkinite, remain in Absalom's service to give them misleading advice, spy on him, and confound the plans for a coup. On Ahithophel's advice Absalom slept with David's concubines in order to stake his claim to the throne. That was incest and fulfilled the second part of Nathan's prophecy (12:11). This was a painful time for David.

4. Absalom Frustrated by God (17)

Hushai returned to Absalom's camp in order to thwart his plans against David. His initial attempt (chap 16) was unsuccessful, but when Ahithophel advised Absalom to attack David's army while it was unorganized and weak, he was able to argue that they would fail because of David's experience in warfare. Absalom listened and postponed his attack and David escaped across the Jordan River. Why did Absalom listen this time? (v14) Ahithophel knew they had been had and went home and hung himself. David set up a provisional base and by the time Absalom amassed his army under command of Amasa, a relative of Joab. David's friends had brought food, drink, and supplies to his army.

5. Absalom is Killed (18)

Chapter 18 relates the complete victory of David's army over Absalom's, but it focuses on one event in that battle, the death of Absalom himself. Even though David had instructed his men to spare Absalom, when Joab found him hanging by his hair in a tree in the forest of Ephraim, he killed the helpless prince (2 Sam 14:25-26).

The entire second half of the chapter is an account of David's sorrow and mourning over his son. The tragedy and disgrace of Absalom's death was compounded because his sons also died leaving him no heir. The detailed description of two messages that dashed David's hopes as the news accentuated his anguish are in verses 19-33. David's sin had spelled disaster for his family and himself. The chapter ends with David's famous lament (v33), "*...O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!*"

6. Absalom is Dead, Long Live King David (19)

Absalom, David's enemy is dead, the rebellion is crushed, and the leaders of all of Israel reinstall David as their king. This should be a day of great joy, but (v2) "*. . . the victory that day was turned to mourning for all the people heard it said that day, 'The king is grieved for his son.'*" To grieve is understandable, but Joab sees the big picture. In order to consolidate the kingdom, David replaced Joab with Amasa, thus bringing the tribe of Judah back into the fold and punishing Joab for killing Absalom (He's lucky he didn't have him killed).

David also made a number of gestures of reconciliation, mercy and political savvy that brought the kingdom together, but he is not out of the woods yet. The representatives of Israel were left out of David's welcoming party leading them to feel left out of David's kingdom v41-43. This would eventually lead to the cessation of the northern tribes during the reign of David's grandson, Rehoboam recorded in 1 Kings. Not only did David have trouble with his family, those troubles extended into his kingdom and lasted until his death.

D. Trouble with His Kingdom (20-24)

1. Rebellion, déjà vu All Over Again (20)

To conclude this section on David's troubled final years we start with another rebellion. This time Sheba, a Benjamite and relative of Saul, renews that old feud and leads the tribes of Israel in another coup attempt. Amasa's slowness to react caused David to appoint his loyal soldiers Abishai and Joab to put down the rebellion. This gave Joab a chance to get even and he assassinated Amasa with a deadly kiss and a dagger.

The people of Israel saw the power of David as his army besieged the city of Abel Beth-maacah where Sheba was hiding. A woman in the city convinced the citizens to offer Sheba's head to Joab and the rebellion ended.

2. God Preserves David's Kingdom but Trouble Continues (21-24)

This last section of the book is an appendix to David's career as God's anointed king. The emphasis on David's praise to God is contrasted with accounts of God's dealing with and punishing Israel's ongoing sin.

In chapter 21 God uses a famine to remind David of the unfinished matter of justice toward the Gibeonites from the time of Saul. God also allowed the Philistines to reenter the scene even though He allowed complete victories in each battle.

Chapter 22 is primarily a song written by David to thank God for his deliverance from Saul. It is also included in the Psalm (18).

Chapter 23 contains the last official words of King David reflecting on his choice and reign over the Nation of Israel and God's faithful keeping of His covenant. David also pays tribute to the "Mighty Men" God gave him. Among these were the "Three," possibly his personal body guard. They would do anything for him, and did becoming the "stuff legends are made of." (i.e. Getting him water, in Saul's camp.) There were also Abishai and Benaiah and the "Thirty" who were the center of his fighting force, loyal to him throughout including Uriah the Hittite.

In chapter 24, the final episode of this appendix, the Lord brings a plague on Israel because David took a census, a sign of his pride and dependence on human strength rather than God's power. Joab saw the truth, that God was angry and chastising David for his self-reliance, and begged him not to, but David prevailed and the people paid the price. All we know is that the three choices of punishment God presented – famine, plague, or war, are the three curses threatened for the breaking of the covenant in Deut 28. The Book of 2 Samuel finishes with David obediently offering a sacrifice for the atonement of his sin and the sins of Israel on an altar constructed on the very location where he had witnessed the avenging angel come (v18-24). This site would become his choice for the building of the temple (1 Chron 22:1). God accepts the sacrifice as the book of 2 Samuel ends.

Homework:

- Read 1 Kings.
- What did Solomon request of God? Compare that with what you ask of God when you are faced with a daunting task?