

The Story (10) – King David

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I. Introduction and Review

A. After the Philistines defeated Israel, the people demanded a king. The first Israelite king, King Saul, was anointed king by the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 10) around 1051 B.C.

B. David was born in Bethlehem around 1041 B.C., after Saul had been ruling for about ten years. Saul, you will recall, was disobedient to God and as a result God removed both his dynasty and his kingship. When David was probably 12-14 years old, around 1028 B.C., he was anointed as the next king by the prophet Samuel. Saul continued as the *de facto* king until God removed him around 1011 B.C., his total reign being 40 years (Acts 13:21).

C. After defeating Goliath when he was still a youth, David was again brought into Saul's court. (He had been there years earlier as a musical therapist for Saul.) Saul became jealous of David's popularity and sought to kill him, which caused David to spend years on the run.

D. Saul and his sons died on Mount Gilboa around 1011 B.C. in a losing battle with the Philistines. Shortly thereafter David was anointed at Hebron king over the house of Judah. Hebron was the chief city in Judah at the time. This is reported in 2 Samuel 2, and that's where I want to pick back up with the story.

II. David's Reign at Hebron

A. The fact Judah independently acclaimed David king is not surprising. David was a Judean, born in Bethlehem, and he had treated Judah well during his time of fleeing and exile. This action gradually gained support from other places and persons outside of Judah.

B. Initially the other tribes opposed David as king over them. About five years after David was anointed king over Judah, Saul's cousin Abner, who was Saul's chief military officer, had Saul's youngest son, Ish-bosheth, declared king over the other tribes. These tribes came to be referred to as "Israel" in distinction from "Judah." (The tribe of Benjamin eventually became part of the southern kingdom of Judah, leaving Israel with ten tribes and Judah with two.)

C. Abner and his men who were loyal to Ish-bosheth and Joab, David's chief military officer, and his men who were loyal to David met at Gibeon perhaps to discuss the uniting of the kingdom. It ended in a battle in which Abner killed Joab's brother Asahel. The war between the house of Saul and the house of David continued, and David grew stronger while the house of Saul became weaker (2 Sam. 3:1).

D. Abner slept with one of Saul's concubines, and Ish-bosheth questioned his motives in doing so, implying that he was being disloyal to Ish-bosheth and making a move on the kingdom,

which he almost certainly was. Abner thereafter sent word to David that he would deliver Israel over to him, meaning he would influence the other tribes to embrace David's kingship. David agreed to strike a deal with Abner on the condition that he return to him his first wife, Michal, who was Saul's daughter. This would symbolize the unification of the two royal families.

E. After Michal was returned to David, Abner persuaded the elders of the wisdom of casting their lot with David. He then met with David at Hebron to let him know that the stage had been set for unification. They planned to make a formal compact and have a formal coronation, but before any of that could be arranged, Joab privately summoned Abner back to Hebron and murdered him in cold blood because he had killed Joab's brother Asahel.

F. This obviously had a great potential to generate anger and resentment against David within Israel and thus to derail the planned unification. David cursed Joab's house for what he had done, mourned Abner's death, and had him buried with full state honor. The people were convinced that this was not David's doing but a personal act of vengeance on the part of Joab.

G. Soon thereafter Ish-bosheth was murdered by two captains of his raiding bands while he was taking a nap. They cut off his head and brought it to David at Hebron thinking he would be pleased. He told them, in essence, that he had killed the man who claimed to have put King Saul out of his misery at Mount Gilboa, so how much more would he kill them for the evil they had perpetrated? They were killed, their hands and feet cut off, and their bodies were publicly displayed. David then had Ish-bosheth's head buried in Abner's tomb.

H. In 2 Samuel 5 David is anointed at Hebron as king over all of Israel and Judah. He soon thereafter captured Jerusalem which would serve as the capital of the united kingdom. Hebron was unsuitable for that purpose because it was too far south and was too strongly associated with the tribe of Judah, whereas Jerusalem bordered Judah but was technically in the territorial inheritance of Benjamin (Josh. 18:28; Bergen, 328). David's time of reigning in Hebron was 7 ½ years, so his anointing as king of the united Israel occurred around 1004 B.C.

III. David's Reign in Jerusalem

A. The Philistines had been willing to tolerate David as king over Judah, perhaps even seeing him as a continuing ally, but when he became king over a united Israel they attacked him twice. And both times God gave him the victory.

B. The ark of the covenant had remained at Kiriath Jearim since being returned by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 6. At some point, perhaps decades after conquering Jerusalem, David constructed buildings for himself in the city and had the ark brought in, where he placed it in a special tent he had pitched for it (1 Chron. 15:1; 2 Sam. 6:17; 2 Chron. 1:4).

1. On the first attempt to bring the ark, they had it transported on a cart pulled by oxen (similar to the way the Philistines had returned it) instead of carried on poles as God had commanded through Moses (Num. 4:15, 7:9; 1 Chron. 15:2, 12-15). That disobedience led to God killing Uzzah for physically grabbing the ark in trying to ensure its stability. Uzza should never have been in that position, but he still should never have touched the ark, the

representation of the absolutely holy God. God had made clear in Num. 4:15 that any of the Levites who touched the holy things while transporting them would die. Doing so was an act of irreverence. Recall in 1 Sam. 6:19-20 that God struck down seventy men from Beth-shemesh who had the audacity to look inside the ark!

2. David was upset because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:8), most likely meaning he was upset that Uzzah had acted so as to cause God to execute his judgment. After all, God was merely enforcing the Law.

3. David's heightened fear of the Lord as a result of this event was a positive thing, because a lack of fear of God in a ruler puts the entire community at risk. After a three-month detour in the house of Obed-edom, David had the ark brought properly into the city with much celebration and sacrificing of animals.

C. After David had lived in the house he had built for himself in Jerusalem and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies (2 Sam. 7:1), which suggests a significant passage of time, he desired to build a temple to house the ark of the covenant.

1. God told him that his son Solomon would build the temple because during Solomon's reign the land would have peace from its enemies, unlike David's reign which involved wars against many enemies (1 Chron. 22:6-10, 28:3). It is not because there was anything wrong with David's wars, with his having shed blood in that way – there was not; they were God's wars against Israel's enemies. As Tremper Longman explains (*Making Sense of the Old Testament*, 97), "David had the role of completing the conquest, and since the temple symbolized peace from enemies, the task was better left to his successor, whose very name – Solomon – meant 'peace.'"

2. Instead of David building God a house, God tells David he will build him a house (7:11), meaning he will establish an eternal ruling dynasty of David's descendants. The right to rule will never be removed from David's family as it had been from Saul's. In 2 Samuel 7 David responds with a great prayer of gratitude

3. Note that God makes clear in 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89 that he will punish David's faithless descendants, and we see that happen at times throughout Israelite history. Jesus is, of course, the immortal descendant of David who has been placed by God permanently on David's throne (see, e.g., Lk. 1:29-33; Acts 2:29-36).

D. 2 Samuel 8 and 10 report David's military victories over Moab, Zobah (Hadadezer, king of), Edom, Ammon (Hanun, king of), and Syria. Chapter 12 reports the capture of Rabbah, the royal city of the Ammonites.

E. In 2 Samuel 9 there is the story of David's kindness to Jonathan's crippled son Mephibosheth. The report of his being crippled as a child is in 2 Sam. 4:4.

F. Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and David committed adultery with her as reported in 2 Samuel 11.

1. David thereafter tried to cover up his sin by calling Uriah back from the battlefield and trying to get him to sleep with his wife in the hope of preventing her pregnancy from being traced back to him. When that plan failed, David had Uriah killed in battle and then took Bathsheba as one of his wives.

2. As you can imagine, David's conduct involving Bathsheba greatly displeased the Lord, as the prophet Nathan made clear to him in 2 Samuel 12. The Lord said to David through Nathan in 2 Sam. 12:10-11 (ESV): ¹⁰ *Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.* ¹¹ *Thus says the LORD, '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.* He told David in v. 14 that the child born to him by Bathsheba would die, the happening of which is reported in v. 18.

G. In keeping with Nathan's prophecy, things from that point on turn tragic for David and his family.

1. In 2 Samuel 13 David's eldest son, Amnon, rapes his half-sister Tamar. Two years later, David's third son, Absalom, killed Amnon in revenge for the rape. Absalom fled to Geshur, and after he had been there three years, David was missing him because the pain of Amnon's death had eased.

2. In 2 Samuel 14 Joab used a woman from Tekoa to persuade David to allow Absalom to return to Jerusalem. David granted the request, but he did not allow Absalom to come into his presence for two years. When he finally permitted it, after Joab presented Absalom's request, Absalom bowed before David, and David kissed him.

3. Absalom used his acceptance in Jerusalem to steal the people's hearts, and after four years was ready to make his move on the throne. He went to Hebron and sent out messengers announcing his intentions, and the conspiracy grew stronger. When David was told that the people had gone over to Absalom, he and those loyal to him fled Jerusalem to avoid being killed.

4. Absalom entered Jerusalem, and as prophesied, he went in to David's concubines/wives in the sight of all Israel. This sent the message that there was no turning back, the effect of which would be to strengthen the commitment of his allies.

H. David's men engaged Absalom and his forces in a battle in the forest of Ephraim (after Hushai the Arkite turned them against Ahithophel's advice) and defeated them.

1. Despite having been told by David to "deal gently" with Absalom, Joab killed Absalom. Instead of celebrating the victory that spared David's kingship, David was weeping and mourning the death of his son.

2. Joab rebuked him and told him he loved those who hated him and hated those who loved him. He told David he apparently would have preferred Absalom to be alive even if all of them were dead! He also told him that if he did not snap out it of those who had fought for him would abandon him, which would be the worst thing yet. David then took his seat at the city gate of Mahanaim to welcome the victorious soldiers.

I. After some statesmanship, which included a promise to replace Joab with Amasa, Absalom's military commander, the people were swayed to resume their loyalty to David, so they turned out to meet him on his way back to Jerusalem.

1. But bickering broke out between the people of Israel and Judah. A man named Sheba prompted a good number of the men of Israel (hyperbolically referred to in 20:2 as "all the men of Israel") to withdraw from David, but David continued on to Jerusalem.

2. David told Amasa to gather the men of Judah before him in three days, but Amasa delayed beyond that deadline. So David called on Abishai, which meant his brother Joab as well, to hunt down Sheba. Amasa met up with them, and Joab murdered him. Sheba and his men holed up in Abel of Beth-maacah, and Joab convinced the people to throw his head over the wall rather than have his men destroy their city.

J. 2 Samuel 21 refers to a three-year famine that took place at some unspecified time during David's reign. The Lord told David there was bloodguilt on Saul and his house for having put the Gibeonites to death, which was a violation of the oath sworn by the Israelites in Joshua 9. (Saul's doing so is not reported elsewhere.) David avenged that killing of Gibeonites by handing over to them for execution seven male descendants of Saul, males born to two of Saul's daughters. The last part of chapter 21 refers to further wars with the Philistines.

K. Chapter 24 begins with the statement that God's anger was again kindled against Israel. The reason is not specified, but it presumably was some kind of disobedience to the law of God.

1. Rather than punish the nation directly for that disobedience, God allows an adversary, whether Satan or a more general adversary (1 Chron. 21:1), to tempt David, the representative of the nation, into sinning by conducting a census of the fighting men in Israel. David is clearly culpable in the matter, as he repents when he is convicted of his offense stating in 24:10 "I have sinned greatly in what I have done."

2. It is not clear what was wrong with taking a census. Perhaps he did it for purposes of boasting or out of reliance on military strength for safety rather than on God, or perhaps he failed to have the enrolled males pay the half-shekel ransom price required by the Torah (Ex. 30:13-16).

3. In any event, the Lord gave David the choice of punishment, and David chose three days of pestilence. Seventy thousand Israelites died in that judgment. The plague stopped at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. David bought the spot from Araunah and erected an

altar on which he made sacrifices to God. The temple would later be built on that spot (1 Chron. 21:28-22:1).

IV. Transfer of the Kingship to Solomon

A. In reconstructing events at the end of David's life, it seems that David's son Solomon was made coregent with David around 973 BC (1 Chron. 23:1). This was the time he was charging Solomon regarding the building of the temple, a project for which David had made preparations. See Walter Kaiser's *A History of Israel* and Eugene Merrill's *Kingdom of Priests*.

B. This appointment did not sit well with Solomon's older brother Adonijah, who around 971 BC conspired with others to usurp the throne from Solomon. This is the story told in 1 Kings 1-2. Nathan informed Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, that Adonijah was attempting to steal the throne. Together Nathan and Bathsheba moved David to action, who arranged for Solomon to be brought before the people so that his prior appointment might be ratified by a formal public coronation. That is why 1 Chron. 29:22b refers to Solomon being acknowledged as king "a second time." David died shortly thereafter, in 971 B.C., having reigned for forty years.