



UNIT 6 - LESSON 2

THE KINGDOM OF DAVID

No greater king than David ever sat upon the throne of Israel. We are fortunate that the story of his reign has been so well documented in what is called the “Court History”, 2 Samuel 9-20; 1 Kings 1,2. In addition to this history, there are many references to the earlier life of David in 1 and 2 Samuel and these books should be read in conjunction with this lesson.

1. DAVID’S EARLY YEARS

“From shepherd boy to king”: such is the romantic story of David. He first appears in the Biblical record in 1 Samuel 16 at a critical time in the history of Israel’s first king, Saul. Yahweh has spoken to Samuel, telling the prophet of Saul’s rejection from the office of king of Israel (though in fact, Saul continued to reign). On Yahweh’s command, Samuel went to Bethlehem, ostensibly to offer sacrifices in the city so that Samuel had the sons of Jesse pass before him. None of the first seven was Yahweh’s choice for king (Note especially 1 Samuel 16:7). Then the youngest son was summoned from his shepherd duties to appear before the prophet and Samuel knew that this was the man he must anoint. The anointing was an outward sign, but even more important was the fact that the Spirit of Yahweh came upon David. (1 Sam. 16:14-23).

The anointing was a secret and David received no special treatment following it. He did serve in the court for a time, employing his musical talents on the lyre and acting as Saul’s armour-bearer (1 Sam.16:14-23).

David next appears as the Israelite champion who is prepared to stand against the Philistine giant Goliath, and defeats him in the name of Yahweh. Goliath stood over nine feet tall and we can understand the reluctance of any Israelite to engage him in single combat. However, one Israelite should have been prepared to do so – King Saul. The king was chief warrior of his people (1 Sam. 8:20); of impressive stature (1 Sam. 9:2); and he had already shown himself to be a capable warrior (1 Sam. 11:6-11). When David took the field against Goliath and defeated the Philistine, he was acting the part that Saul should have played. Saul realised this and so did Israel (1 Sam. 18:7) and being of a jealous nature, the king developed a hatred for David whom he saw as a rival for himself and his sons after him.

**UNIT 6 - LESSON 2****THE KINGDOM OF DAVID (cont'd)****2. THE RIVAL OF SAUL (1 Samuel: 18-31)**

David became a very popular member of Saul's court after his victory over Goliath. He was popular with the people but not with Saul. Even a marriage to Saul's daughter, Michal, did not end the rivalry. The close friendship between David and Saul's son and heir, Jonathan, only served to heighten Saul's jealousy. After several attempts by Saul to kill him, David realised that he must flee from the court and live as a refugee.

David moved into the wilderness and attracted a band of followers who were disenchanted with Saul. From time to time Saul pursued him and on at least two occasions David had the opportunity to kill Saul but refused to kill the anointed of Yahweh.

Eventually Saul's pressure against him forced David to leave Israel and seek refuge with the Philistines. He lived as an exile until the death of Saul. It was in battle but David was excused from fighting against his countrymen by the distrust of some of the Philistine leaders.

3. KING OF JUDAH

The death of Saul did not immediately place the kingship in David's hands. He was uncertain about future plans, but Yahweh revealed that he should go to Hebron. There he was anointed king over the southern part of the kingdom, Judah. In the north (Israel) Saul's son Ishbosheth was appointed king by Abner, Saul's commander-in-chief. He appears to have been very dependent upon Abner.

David reigned as king of Judah for 7½ years. In this period there was warfare between Israel and Judah. Abner was killed and Ishbosheth's weakness became apparent (11 Samuel 4:1). A group of conspirators planned and carried out the king's assassination then went to David, expecting gratitude. Displaying a magnificent sense of justice, David punished the conspirators with execution. However, they had cleared the way for the kingdom to be reunited under David.

4. KING OF ALL ISRAEL (2 Samuel 5:111-5)

A covenant between David and Israel was made at Hebron and David ruled the kingdom for the next 33 years. However, the divisions which had occurred were significant and the tension between Israel and Judah was finally to divide the nation.

**UNIT 6 - LESSON 2****THE KINGDOM OF DAVID (cont'd)****5. DAVID'S ACHIEVEMENTS****(1) POLITICAL**

- a) David defeated the Jebusites and took their stronghold Jerusalem for his own city.
- b) He asserted Israel's independence from the Philistines by a decisive victory (2 Samuel 5:17-25; 8:1).
- c) He subdued Israel's external foes (2 Samuel 8).
 - (i) The Moabites became his vassals.
 - (ii) Hadadezer, king of Zobah was defeated.
 - (iii) The Syrians were defeated and became his vassals
 - (iv) King Toi of Hamath agreed to become a vassal of David
 - (v) David defeated the Edomites and ruled them.
 - (vi) The Ammonites were defeated by David when their king Hanun insulted Israel's ambassadors.

These conquests are reflected in Psalm 60: 6-9

- d) He established the principle that one of his sons should succeed him by appointing Solomon as his successor.

(2) ECONOMIC

- a) David entered into an alliance with Hiram, king of Tyre.(2 Samuel 5:11-12)
- b) The development of a court at Jerusalem must have necessitated a system of taxation to support it.

(3) ADMINISTRATIVE

- a) When David captured Jerusalem, he made it his own city and the civil and religious capital of the nation. The advantage of this arrangement was that it was not previously connected with any of Israel's tribes.
- b) David's conquests of surrounding nations gave him a kingdom larger than at any other time in Israel's history. We are not given details of his administration of the kingdom.

**UNIT 6 - LESSON 2****THE KINGDOM OF DAVID (cont'd)****(3) ADMINISTRATIVE (cont'd)**

- c) The development of court life is recorded in the Court History (2 Sam.9-20; 1 Kings 1-2).
- d) David may have organised an Israelite chariot force, thus raising the nation's military status. (2 Sam.8:4).

(4) RELIGIOUS

- a) David centralised worship in Jerusalem. The ark of the covenant was taken there (2 Sam.6) and David made plans to build a permanent sanctuary in the city (2 Sam.7). However, Yahweh told David that not he but his son would build this sanctuary.
- b) Yahweh made a covenant with David (11 Sam.7). The promises contain messianic elements.
- c) David helped organise the worship of Israel. He is associated with many of the Psalms and it is certain that his piety and musical gifts combined to enrich Israel's worship and, in time, Christian worship.

6. PROBLEMS OF DAVID'S REIGN

In spite of David's greatness, he also had serious faults and these are presented quite frankly.

- a) His sin against Bathsheba (adultery) and Uriah (murder) brought Yahweh's displeasure and a prophetic rebuke from Nathan (2 Sam. 11-12). Psalm 51 is traditionally associated with David's repentance for this sin.
- b) Family feuds arose within David's large family. They are a reflection of his own sin and his subsequent failure to exercise the control that was needed in domestic affairs. The rape of Tamar by Amnon and the murder of Amnon by Absalom are examples of this problem (2 Sam.13).
- c) Stemming directly from David's domestic trouble was Absalom's revolt (2 Sam. 15-19). David was forced to flee from Jerusalem, but even when he had subdued the revolt and was hunting Absalom he was reluctant to take firm action against him (2 Sam.18:5,33).
- d) The potential division in the kingdom was marked by a revolt of the Israelite tribes (2 Sam.20).

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- e) At the end of David's reign a dispute broke out over the succession. Adonijah, supported by Joab and Abiathar, attempted to secure the succession for himself, seeing that David was failing in health. Nathan, Bathsheba and certain others approached David directly to secure the succession for Bathsheba's son, Solomon (1 Kings 1). David's failure to regulate the succession caused this problem but it was resolved by Solomon's proclamation as king. After David's death Solomon acted against Adonijah and his supporters, killing Adonijah and Joab and expelling Abiathar from his priestly office (1 Kings 2).

7. THE LEGACY OF DAVID

While we have seen David's faults we must still acknowledge his greatness, and Israel's debt to him.

- a) Under David Israel reached heights that were never surpassed. The ideal boundaries of the kingdom were achieved.
- b) Israel looked back to David in later days, viewing him as the ideal king against whom other kings were to be measured (e.g. 2 Kings 18:3).
- c) The Davidic covenant (II Sam. 7) was an important part of Israel's faith and hope, embodying the concepts of a never-ending kingdom and of an ideal ruler in the future.

QUESTION 1:

Discuss how David demonstrates a good balance between reliance on God and use of his own skills in his fight with Goliath.

QUESTION 2:

There was a long period between David's anointing by Samuel (1 Sam. 16:1-13) and his accession to the kingship (2 Sam. 2:4; 2 Sam. 5:1-5). What did David learn in this time and what did Israel learn?

These references might give you some ideas:-

1 Sam. 17:37, 45-47; 23:22-23; 25:29-31.

QUESTION 3:

What were the consequences of David's sin with Bathsheba both in the short terms and in the long term?

QUESTION 4:

Why was David such a good king especially compared with Saul?

QUESTION 5:

What have you learned about the Ark of the Covenant during David's reign? (2 Sam. 6:2-17; 7:2; 11:11; 15:24-29).



SUGGESTED FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR GROUP STUDY:

- A. Compare David's response to Nathan (II Sam. 12:1-15) with Saul's response to Samuel (1 Sam.15). What is the difference? What can you learn from that?
- B. Read 2 Samuel 24:18-25. What does verse 24 say about David and to you personally?

NOTE: If you would like to read a fascinating personal study of this king, - *David* by Dr. J.Hercus, published by Inter-Varsity Press is worth you attention.