

SESSION SIX

DAVID'S KINGDOM AND THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

2 Samuel 1:1—7:29

I. INTRODUCTION

In the book of 1 Samuel, the covenant program with Israel shifted from a theocracy to a monarchy. God permitted the people to have a king. This choice to have a king was in the decretive will of God, but Israel chose the king out of a wrong motive (not one of faith). The nation was accomplishing God's decretive will, but at the same time they were responsible for their wrong choice. God confirmed this "wrong choice" by the rejection of Saul's rule. Nevertheless, God would henceforth deal with the nation through the agency of a king.

The covenant program which had been initiated with Abraham would be continued with Israel, although it would now be worked out through kingship. God raises up David as a man after His own heart, to demonstrate that the divine program (which will be accomplished through a king) will only transpire through the king of God's own choosing. David, however, will not be the king who effects the ultimate realization of the divine program (the Abrahamic covenant). Yet there will be a king who does, and this king will be in the seed of David. The high point of 2 Samuel is the covenant which God makes with David (2 Sam 7), for it is in this covenant that further disclosure is made concerning God's overall program to bring blessing. This program to bring blessing will culminate in a kingdom which is ruled by a king from the line of David. From our vantage point, it is obviously clear that this will be realized in Jesus Christ.

The book revolves around the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam 7. The initial part of the book deals with the consolidation of the kingdom under David. With this accomplished, God gives him the promise that someone in His line will always rule over Israel. At the same time, provision is made for dealing with the kings in discipline. David himself is subject to this, for his terrible sin with Bathsheba leads to trouble within his house and kingdom. By virtue of this divine discipline upon the Davidic kings, accountability to YHWH is maintained.

II. STRUCTURE OF 2 SAMUEL

The book falls into three basic parts (see chart):

- 1) ch 1–10 — God establishes David as king and blesses his kingdom
- 2) ch 11–20 — David's sin and the effect upon his house and kingdom
- 3) ch 21–24 — An Appendix to David's career

In 1 Sam 16–31, David was left to be a wanderer. However, he learns great lessons in walking by faith. 2 Sam 1–10 reveals the high-point of David's life, i.e., David under blessing. Finally, 2 Sam 11–1 Kgs 2 represents the third phase of David's life in which he experiences decline and reaps the consequences of his sin.

III. THE PURPOSE OF 2 SAMUEL

to reveal God's plan for an eternal kingdom that will be realized with the line of David and to reveal the consequences of sin upon the realization of kingdom blessing.

IV. THE EFFECT OF KINGSHIP UPON THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

With the implementation of the monarchy, three significant changes take place affecting the history of Israel:

- 1) **Dynastic Succession** - There will now be an assured successor who will rule over Israel. In the period of the judges, the nation depended upon God raising up a deliverer when the necessity came. Under a monarchy, however, there is always the certainty of a ruler.
- 2) **Centralization of Power** - With a king, you have one man who can impose his will on the people, and who has the might to do so by means of an army. In the judges, there was no one to always control the people and make them do right. On the other hand, such centralization of power also has a greater potential for the abuse of that power.
- 3) **Privileged Class Within the Society** - The kingship also implies the presence of "royalty" and those who can bestow favors on others.

V. SAUL CONTRASTED WITH DAVID

Some comments have already been made about this in 1 Samuel, but a few more are in order. Saul was a man almost devoid of faith. He used the kingship for his own selfish purposes, and expressed little concern about the advancement and glory of YHWH's kingdom. One evidence of this is his attitude toward the ark. The ark was YHWH's throne . . . the representation of His rule and presence with the nation. But during the rule of Saul, he gave no attention to the ark, being content to leave it at Kiriath-jearim.

David does just the opposite. He is deeply burdened about the ark. As soon as David captures Jerusalem and defeats the Philistine invasion, the first thing he does is to fetch the ark from Kiriath-jearim. This is a reflection of the characterization of David as a man after God's own heart. He is "after God's heart" in that he is theocentrically inclined. His ambitions are for the kingdom and for God, not for himself. David is not a perfect man (he does sin), but Yahweh is his Lord, and he is totally motivated to expand the kingdom (in accordance with the Abrahamic land promises). David's attitude about the ark is vastly different than Saul's. This is beautifully described in Ps 132, where David basically says, "I could not even sleep while the ark was at Kiriath-jearim." David has no peace until the ark is brought up into Jerusalem and placed in the very center of the kingdom, so that the ark can have all the dignity and honor that is befitting the throne of God.

"Surely I will not enter my house, or lie on my bed;

I will not give sleep to my eyes, Or slumber to my eyelids;

Until I find a place for the LORD, A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob" (Ps 132:3-5).

VI. 2 SAMUEL 1-7

The first seven chapters of 2 Samuel deal with the consolidation of the kingdom under David. 1 Samuel closed with the death of Saul, and now God is ready to entrust the kingdom to David.

However, there are a few lingering conflicts that must be dealt with. Saul had a son named Ishbosheth who is supported by Abner, the commander of Saul's armies. On the other hand, David is made king over Judah (the southern part of the kingdom) at Hebron. So the kingdom is divided between Ishbosheth and David. These chapters reflect how God consolidates the kingdom under David and establishes this throne forever.

A. David's Victory Over the House of Saul (2 Sam 1:1–4:12)

These chapters illustrate that David was indeed a wise and godly leader.

1. David's Lament Over Saul's Death (ch 1)

David's lament for Saul and Jonathan reflects his respect for these two men. Although Saul had been his persecutor for many years, David knew that God had established him as king. Hence, he had respect for the person in office and authority over him. David knew he did not have to take matters in his own hand to rid the throne of Saul.

2. The Rivalry for the Kingdom — David and Ishbosheth (2:1-11)

David was crowned king of Judah at Hebron, and Ishbosheth was crowned as king over Israel at Mahanaim. Although Ishbosheth was the legal heir of Saul, he was not God's choice for the throne; David was the rightful king. Ishbosheth had no appointment by God nor had he received gifts to rule. Rather Abner was attempting to establish his rule. David had to be content to rule over the southern tribe of Judah for seven years before he would realize the full possession of the kingdom. Nevertheless, his ascendancy to the throne was the outworking of God's plan. God purposed as far back as Gen 49 to have the ruler come from Judah:

*"The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet" (Gen 49:10).*

3. The Demise of Saul's House (2:12–4:12)

a. Fighting Between Joab and Abner (2:12-32)

Sadly, Israel is reduced to civil war—brother killing brother. One of Judah's military leaders, Asahel is killed by Saul's commander, Abner. This sets in motion blood revenge, as Joab and Abishai (brothers of Asahel) eventually get even with Abner by killing him (3:30).

b. Abner's Death and David's Lament (3:1-39)

David was outnumbered, since most of the tribes had followed after Ishbosheth. But David does not secure the throne by military victory. Rather, God uses a number of events to work it out. First a conflict develops between Ishbosheth and Abner over the abuse of a concubine. With Abner insulted, he turns against Ishbosheth and begins to form a covenant with David to help him secure the kingdom. However, the plan never fully materializes, since Abner is murdered by Joab (David's commander) in revenge for the killing of Joab's brother by Abner in battle. Joab was deceitful in this act, and there is even evidence of an unhealthy relationship developing between David and Joab. Notice how Joab speaks to David as an inferior (3:24-25). David does not have Joab slain (as he did other assassins). David's lack of control over Joab will come back to haunt him one day, for Joab will kill David's own son despite David's explicit orders that he not be harmed

(18:9-18). Nevertheless, Abner's death marks the certain doom of Ishbosheth's claim to the throne.

c. Ishbosheth Assassinated (4:1-12)

Abner's death did alarm Ishbosheth and shook up his followers. In the upheaval, Ishbosheth is assassinated by two men (though without David's approval). Now the opposition is removed for David to become king.

B. The Foundation for David's Kingdom at Jerusalem (5:1–7:29)

1. The Establishment of David as King at Jerusalem (5:1-25)

All the action in the first five chapters had been moving toward the establishment of David as king. Now this is finally realized as all the tribes come together to make David the king. In doing so, they are acting out of obedience to the Lord, not just political necessity. Note the concession of the leaders (5:2):

"And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.'"

He wisely bided his time in Hebron for seven years, thus waiting on God's timing.

One of the first acts that David does as king is to attack Jerusalem and conquer the Jebusites who dwelt there (5:6). Apparently they had never been successfully driven out since the time of the conquest under Joshua (recall Josh 15:63). Zion seems to have been the fortress that occupied one part of the city. David is said to have dwelt there in the stronghold (5:9), and this became known as "the city of David." Of course, Jerusalem had certain advantages as a capital. It was much more central than Hebron or Shiloh, and would make a much more fitting place for the ark (so that worship could be central to the kingdom). Possibly, David had received divine revelation that Zion was to be the location for the ark (cf. Ps 132:13-14).

2. The Ark Brought Up To Jerusalem (6:1-23)

The bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem has great theological significance: (1) this act reveals David's esteem for Yahweh's worship as central in the life of the nation; (2) by bringing the Ark to the new capital, the various tribes and central government were more fully bound; and (3) the stage was set for the message from Yahweh about David's eternal house.

3. God's Eternal Covenant to Bless David's House (7:1-29)

a. Introduction

The high point of 2 Samuel is the covenant that God makes with David. This is often referred to as the "Davidic covenant." There are two other primary passages that also deal with this covenant: Ps 89 and 1 Chron 17.

The context is very familiar. David wants to build God a house, i.e., a permanent building in which to house the ark (a building that is appropriate for the God of glory). Despite his good intentions, David is not allowed to do so, for he has been a man of war . . . a man of blood (1 Chron 22:8; 28:3). God insisted that a *man of peace* should build his house.

Rather than having David build Him a house, God says that He will build David a house. This is a play on words, for the "house" that God will build for David will not be a literal house but rather a dynasty, a line of rulers from the loins of David. In the giving of this covenant, seven promises are made to David and his seed.

b. The Structure of the Covenant

The covenant falls into two basic parts, as reflected by the fact that there is a deliberate break in the middle of vs 11. God speaks in the first person singular in vv 8-11a, a break occurs in vs 11, and then God resumes speaking in vv 12-16. The separation into two divisions is not without significance:

1st Division (vv. 8-11a) — Promises to be realized in David's lifetime – three!

- 1) A great name (8:13), i.e., he will become famous
- 2) A place for Israel in the land – i.e., there is still more land to be occupied (when the covenant was made, Israel only controlled the territory west of the Jordan), but the kingdom is secured within David's own lifetime.
- 3) Rest from all his enemies (1 Kgs 5:4).

2nd Division (vv 11b-16) — Promises to be realized after his death – four!

- 1) An eternal seed – David was promised that his line would continue to be the ruling dynasty (this is an amazing promise for any dynasty!). The throne of Israel would always be occupied by someone from the line of David (though this will be worked out in time through the southern kingdom).
- 2) An eternal kingdom (vv 12-13, 16) – To the seed of David is also promised a kingdom. Like the throne, the kingdom can be temporarily removed, yet it will not be set aside forever.
- 3) An eternal throne – God uses David to establish the throne of the kingdom at Jerusalem. Hence, Jerusalem will be the capital of God's kingdom forever. The "eternal throne", however, does not mean that the throne will continue uninterrupted. There can be an interruption of the throne, but when the throne is resumed a descendant of David will be the occupant. The throne was interrupted by the Babylonian captivity, but upon return a Jew by the name of Zerubbabel took over as governor (he was in the Davidic line).
- 4) God as Father to the King (vv 14-15)

The kingdom will not always expand, for God made provision to chasten the king (and the nation) with the "rod of men" (i.e., foreign armies that would suppress and subjugate his kingdom). When God says, "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me," He is not speaking with respect to Christ alone. Rather, He is speaking of all of David's progeny who will ascend to the throne. When they were crowned as king, they came into a father-son relationship with God (with all the privileges and responsibilities). If they committed iniquity, then God brought discipline (of course this aspect would never be necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ who was in a much deeper sense the Son of God).

So, there is a promise of an eternal throne and an eternal kingdom, though in the course of history the throne was taken away and the kingdom disappeared

(586 BC). Did the promise fail? No! The kingdom was theirs, but they could not enjoy the possession of it.

There are a lot of implications in regard to this covenant. One observation to be made is that Israel will continue to exist as God's people throughout God's divine program with man (7:24):

"For Thou hast established for Thyself Thy people Israel as Thine own people forever, and Thou, O LORD, hast become their God."

There is no basis to say that the "church" today has *out-and-out* replaced God's distinctive purpose with Israel. Though we can say that the church is presently carrying out much of the role originally entrusted to Israel, that is not to say that Israel has no future as a nation.

The second division of the promises will find its highest realization in the person of Jesus Christ. This is substantiated by at least two observations:

- 1) Hebrews 1:5 applies 2 Samuel 7:14 to Jesus.

The verse is not limited to Jesus, but will find its ultimate realization in Him. That 7:14 includes the other kings between David and Jesus is clear from the second half of the verse which provides for discipline in the case of iniquity on the king's part.

- 2) Luke 1:32-33 specifies that Jesus will occupy the throne of David in keeping with the Davidic covenant, and the promise of the kingdom will find its fulfilment in Him.

". . . the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."

Thus, the Davidic covenant provides a principle for dealing with the kings that succeed David, and establishes the fact that the covenant will eventuate in a kingdom that is under the rule of Jesus Christ. The establishment of this kingdom will be the basis for the realization of the Abrahamic covenant. God will bring blessing to all the families of the earth, and this will climax in a kingdom in which Jesus rules over all the realm of mankind. As we go through the rest of Scripture, we will be given more and more revelation about this kingdom that will serve to climax the Abrahamic covenant, especially in Daniel (note especially Dan 7:13-14).

Premillennialists insist that this kingdom ruled by Christ will have an earthly phase to it, i.e., Jesus will establish a physical literal kingdom on earth for a 1000 years following His Second Coming (following which will be the eternal phase of the kingdom). This is the teaching of the Old Testament (e.g., Isa 2:1-4) and is confirmed by the New Testament (e.g., Rev 20:1-6). Some premillennialists hold that the realization of the promise for David's seed to occupy the throne of David will not come about until the millennial kingdom at the Second Coming. In my opinion, however, the progressive revelation of Scripture will show that the Davidic covenant promise to David's seed to rule on the throne of David will be partially realized with the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of the Father (Acts 13:32-33), though the full realization will not come about until the millennial kingdom. This will be more carefully explained in the sessions on "A Progressive Dispensational Look At The Fulfilment of Israel's Old Testament Covenants and Promises."