

A NATION RULES - ISRAEL'S EARLY MONARCHY

Study 1

David - The Rejected Monarch

Read 1 Samuel chapters 18-24

The chapters you will read give a general picture of the nature of Saul's treatment of David in the later years of his rule over Israel. It is a strange story with a mixture of love and hatred. Perhaps you would think that because of the certainty of God's displeasure with his behaviour, Saul would repent and pursue a more godly course. He was in a strange situation. Samuel had anointed him king and then told him that his kingship was at an end. He would have heard that David had been anointed by Samuel and this could only have brought him fear and uncertainty. Of what worth was the kingdom if he was not really king? Think about the implications of this as you study Saul's treatment of David.

The people COMPARED Saul with David, and very soon noticed the differences between them. As David came from the triumph of slaying Goliath they sang their appreciation of his achievement. **"Saul has slain his thousands. And David his ten thousands."** (18: 6 & 7) Eventually such was the attractiveness of his behaviour that we read that ALL ISRAEL and JUDAH loved David. What was it that compelled their attention? Apart from the charm and freshness of his youth, we can be sure it was his quiet consistent uprightness which gave evidence that he followed and served the Lord. This exposed the emptiness of Saul's life. The Lord had left Saul but He was with David. Remember, that the people around us will be quick to notice the vital difference between a true Christian life and one that does not have Christ as Saviour.

Look closely at Saul's ATTITUDE to David. It is obvious that the king realised that David was a good soldier and could be trusted. (18: 5) Yet when his prowess was praised by others, it had the effect of making Saul angry. From that day forward he watched David. (18: 9) We read also that Saul was afraid of him - there was that about his character which no doubt increased the king's sense of guilt and shame. Godliness will always expose guilt and often produces hostility in those who feel guilty. This was obviously the case with Saul, king of Israel.

Jonathan's friendship with David eventually increased the hostility of Saul even further. What a mixture of attitudes we see in this king, revealing the instability of his character. The man whom he was determined to smite with his spear, (18: 11) he makes his son-in-law. (18: 17) You will notice (19: 6) that when Jonathan pleads for the life of David, Saul listens and promises that he will not put David to death. Yet not very long afterwards the whole scene changes. Saul not only threatens David's life, but because of Jonathan's association with him, he threatens his son's life also. (20: 28-34) These incidents reveal the inner torture of Saul's mind as the claims of David are always before him. It is always true that a person who is out of harmony with God

can never be STABLE and can never experience PEACE. Israel suffered during these times because the king, the leader of their nation, was out of touch with God. The RIGHTFUL king was now in REJECTION.

What was David's ATTITUDE to Saul? There is no doubt that the state of affairs brought sadness to David. (20: 1) **"What have I done? What is my iniquity?"** This hatred was undeserved, for David was a loyal servant to his monarch. Yet there was no corresponding hatred in David. The beauty and grace of David's character shines out more brightly as persecution increases. He had opportunities for revenge, and yet twice he spared Saul's life in a remarkable way. (24: 4-7 & 26: 9-11). To David, Saul was the Lord's anointed so he refused to take a short-cut to the throne. Instead he was willing, submissively, to wait God's time even though it meant suffering and hardship.

David as the rejected king is a picture of the Lord Jesus. Our Lord could use words that David used of himself in **Psalm 35: 19, "They hate me without a cause."** (John 15: 25) When the Lord Jesus came to His own nation, He found that they were in the grip of alien forces and He was rejected. They refused to recognise the rights of the Lord Jesus as King. As they drove Him to death they cried, **"We will not have this man to reign over us."** (Luke 19: 14) In this way the Lord Jesus experienced, to an even greater degree, the sorrow that David knew as he was hounded by Saul. Yet in making this comparison between David and the Lord Jesus we must always remember the one essential difference. Our Lord Jesus was the sinless, spotless Son of God, made man. David was only human and this showed itself in his deception before Ahimelech, for which the priest paid dearly. (22 : 11-18)

Yet there were those who loved David, even in his rejection, and were ATTRACTED to him. In **chapter 22** we have a contrasting picture between the meaning of love and hatred. In the cave of Adullam, David's family and friends gathered to him. They came with all their discontent, debts and distresses, and found refuge with David, who became their captain. The rest of the chapter deals with an event which blackened the character of Saul without relief; for through Doeg the tale-bearing Edomite, Saul destroys the whole of the priestly house, apart from Abiathar, who escapes.

Think over this **22nd chapter**. The true character of each man is revealed here. David, like the Lord Jesus Christ, becomes the refuge for all who are oppressed and in need. He was the true shepherd-king which Israel needed. Even in his rejection he had more to offer the people than did Saul upon the throne.

Study 2

David - Accepted and Crowned

2 Samuel chapter 5

Saul and Jonathan died in the battle at Mount Gilboa. (**See 1 Samuel 31**) Thus father and son died together. Saul killed himself because his armour-bearer would not kill him. There is no doubt that this created a crisis in the nation's life. Saul's reign had produced a sad deterioration in their spiritual standards. The obsession of hatred that he allowed towards David soured his whole outlook, and there is no doubt that he lost the support of many people because of it. Also his erratic policies weakened the defences of the nation so that the Philistines gradually gained the ascendancy over the land. Most of all the evil spirit from the Lord destroyed his godliness. What a sad picture we have of him, resorting to witch-craft because the door of his approach to God is shut. (**1 Samuel 28**)

Consequently when the way was clear for David to ascend the throne of Israel, he faced many difficulties. **2 Samuel 3: 1** tells us that there was long and severe strife between the house of Saul and the house of David. There were those who wanted Saul's line to continue. Look at **2: 8-10**. While David had been anointed king in Hebron over the house of Judah, the royal tribe; Ishbosheth, Saul's son is anointed king over the other tribes at Mahanaim. So for two years the nation is divided. An attempt to settle the issue proves inconclusive and there follows a full-scale civil war, (**2: 17**) in which the army of Israel was defeated by the servants of David.

In **3: 1** we read of the INCREASE of David and the DECREASE of the house of Saul. As you study these apparently purely historical facts remember that the PURPOSE OF GOD LIES IN THEM - David was His choice. The tribe of Judah was the chosen kingly tribe. Out of this tribe, through the descendants of David, Christ, the promised Messiah, would eventually come. So it was inevitable that Ishbosheth should be removed and that the house of Israel should eventually submit to David's rule. God's purpose was a UNITED NATION ruled by His CHOSEN KING. He will never give that purpose up; for we can see in these incidents, a foreshadowing of the day when Christ, "**great David's greater Son**" will reign over the entire nation of Israel as their rightful Messiah.

As we come to **chapter 5** we see David ENTHRONED over the whole nation. The time came when "**ALL THE TRIBES**" came to David at Hebron. They assured him of their loyalty of association. It is obvious that even during his time of rejection, when Saul was king, his leadership was recognised. More than this even, the people knew that it was the Lord who had appointed him to feed and to lead them as Shepherd and Sovereign. (**verse 2**) What a wonderful tribute this was to the spirit of David! He was worthy to reign - they anointed him king over Israel. You will never find that the nation had any regrets over this decision. For over forty years - seven and a half in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem he ruled over the nation. Under David they became a united people and a force to be reckoned with. Only under David and Solomon was Israel a true MONARCHY.

Notice **verse 10**, "**David went on and became great and the Lord God of hosts was with him.**" Think back to the time when as a young shepherd boy he faced Goliath. He

defied the champion in the Name of His God, the God of the armies of Israel. God gave him VICTORY. In the valley he proved the power of God. Now he is on the throne and the same God is making him great. There is a lesson here for us. Trust in God develops character; each step of victory makes us stronger; thus we need to press on daily to greater things. God will not let us down.

Think what it meant for David to be ENTHRONED. He himself was confident that the Lord had established him as king. (**v. 12**) He had WAITED, now he could WONDER at the WAY God had led him through all his trials. Later he would WORSHIP. This is usually the pathway of those who trust in God.

For the enemies of Israel it meant eventual defeat. Gradually, as God, through David, strengthened the nation, the fighting power to defeat and attack increased. David moved into battle at the command of his God. (**v. 19**) As he, step by step, followed the Lord, so the Philistines were driven back, and there came a day when total defeat was achieved. David sang about these triumphs in many of his Psalms. You will notice that he always ascribed the glory to God. See e.g. **Psalms 47, 48, 49, 108, 115, 118**.

Lastly, remember what it meant for Israel when David was at last accepted as the Lord's anointed, and enthroned as their king. The day they crowned him as absolute monarch was when their blessing began. Peace and prosperity gradually developed. It was a wonderful blessing for the nation to have as king, a man who not only loved his God but also cared for and loved his people. Their well-being depended upon David's enthronement. What a lesson there is in this for us. Only when we enthrone the Lord Jesus as LORD and KING in our lives will real joy and victory be realised. Perhaps this is the best thing we can learn from our study. Only Jesus is worthy to COMMAND and CONTROL our lives. When He does, sin's power is broken, Satan's rule is defeated and self-will is denied its control of our ways.

Study 3

David - Exploits and Failure

2 Samuel chapters 11 & 12

There are some chapters in the Bible which each of us wish were not there. Perhaps this is especially true in the life of David. He was so attractive in his character and achieved so much for Israel, that it seems impossible that he could commit such evil. Yet we have said in these lessons more than once that the Bible gives a true record of the lives covered in its histories. Good qualities are given their proper place, but the bad things are not overlooked. In the two chapters you have read one of the most terrible deeds committed in the whole of Scripture is recorded. Lust and murder are seen in their worst context, and David, the king, is the person involved in both cases.

David's EXPLOITS were tremendous. He achieved by his POWER great victories which were for his own advancement and for the good of his people. **Chapter 8** gives details of the spread of his rule, and the way in which he extended the scope of his possessions. Not only were the Philistines subdued, but also his power was felt by Moab, Ammon, Syria and other old enemies of Israel. Note **8: 13 & 14**. David got a name and the Lord preserved him

where ever he went. We get the impression, from this chapter, of a king who not only attained power, but knew how to organise and use it to the best advantage. The closing verses of **chapter 8** describe the way in which David built his government, using men whom he could trust.

David's KINDNESS and MERCY were evident in his rule. This made him a prosperous king. Look at **chapter 9**. The story of Mephibosheth is one of the most beautiful stories in the Bible. To a member of the enemy's household, lame, exiled and useless, David displays the kindness of his God. There is no better picture of the love and grace of the Lord Jesus to us as sinners than this act by the king of Israel. Many monarchs before and after David, saw to it that any opposition by the deposed royal families was effectively prevented by the sword. Not so David!

We ask then, 'What went wrong?' - as we read the account of **chapters 11 - 12**. Perhaps we get a hint as to how David could have AVOIDED temptation from **v. 1-2**. Kings normally went out to battle, but David stayed at home. Then, it was as he rose up off his bed he met the tempting sight. Do we get the idea here, that if David had been active in battle, instead of resting on his bed at home, the temptation need not have come? Satan finds work for idle hands to do. This is true!

It is essential to notice here the progress of events. David was TEMPTED by what he saw. Now temptation is not, in itself, wrong. Bathsheba attracted him; but possibly many other men were attracted by her beauty too. Where the sin came into David's life was when, through his lust, he committed adultery with her. Sadly the SIN DID NOT END THERE. Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, was one of David's special guard of thirty-seven men, (**2 Samuel 23: 39**) and was away on the king's war. He is recalled by the king, and in **11: 9-13** we see David employing every strategy he knew to get Uriah to go home. Had Uriah been a man of less principle, (**v. 11**) he would have gone home to his wife. The child could then have been passed off as his, and he would not have been killed. But maybe he already suspected the truth! In any event, the king did not rest until he became the indirect cause of Uriah's murder. LUST - ADULTERY - MURDER - what a terrible trio of evils! All seemed to go well for David afterwards. He brought Bathsheba to his palace. She became his wife and he looked forward to the birth of the child. Some no doubt were horrified and shocked. Yet he was king, and kings had done such things before. In fact it all seemed to have blown over very nicely!

"But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (11: 27) - you should underline this in your Bible. Regarding moral standards, David and many others have got away with such sin and more like them. Yet the final assessment of sin does not lie with men, but with God. Nathan, the prophet, arrives on the scene and the whole sordid episode is exposed. David is made to see himself as God sees him; a humbling experience for a king. Thus he is brought to his knees in repentance. Read the parable of the ewe lamb belonging to the poor man and the rich man's greed. It was a masterpiece in illustration and touched the king's heart and conscience. he confessed, **"I have sinned against the Lord."** (**12: 13**) How wonderful it was that David was dealing with a loving God who forgave him his sin. This is God's way. So often in our Christian living we give way to temptation and fall. Satan knows our weaknesses and makes it his aim to defeat us. But we can experience the Lord's forgiveness as David did. **"If we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all**

unrighteousness." (**1 John 1: 9**) But remember also that unconfessed sin in our lives will mar our relationship with God. David was very conscious of this and his confession was genuine. Read **Psalms 51** and you will learn some of the deep feelings of David's heart in this matter.

God forgave David, but he still had to pay a costly price for his sin. The baby died, bringing sadness to the king and Bathsheba. Then **chapter 13** tells of the same sins being committed by David's own family. David's sons acted with great wickedness - the example of their father did not encourage them to do right. This is a very serious consideration when we think of our actions as they affect others. Remember, that there are certain things that are inevitable as a result of sin. Even God's forgiveness could not hinder the EFFECT of David's sin upon his family. Worse even than this - the name of the Lord was dishonoured see **chapters 12, 13, 14**. Be sure that you learn carefully the lessons of David's failure.

Study 4

Solomon - Son of David

1 Kings chapters 1-3

Solomon was the second son of Bathsheba, and we read that when he was born the Lord loved him. During his reign the early monarchy of Israel reached the zenith of its power and influence. David's reign was long and its stable character laid a solid foundation for the kingdom. His policies both at home and abroad produced prosperity and peace. Read the closing chapters of **2 Samuel**. They will give you a full picture of the qualities of his rule. There is no better illustration of the deep spirit of appreciation that David had of the true worth of his men than in **23: 14 -17**. For their part, the king's slightest wish was sufficient to cause them to risk their lives to satisfy it. On his side, there was that appreciation of their loyalty and devotion to cause him to pour the water out as a sacrifice before the Lord. This was true kingliness.

David was an old man now and his ability to rule was obviously failing. **1 Kings 1: 5** tells of someone who had decided that the throne should be his, and he obviously intended to use devious means to obtain it. Joab, one of the king's trusted leaders, (**2 Samuel 20: 23**) joined with this conspiracy. Notice in **1 Kings 1: 8** the names of those who were NOT with Adonijah. It is quite significant that Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet are listed there. They were the true spiritual heads of the nation and were determined that the right monarch should reign.

Solomon was GOD'S CHOICE. (**1: 17**) As soon as David heard of the conspiracy, he made sure that Solomon should be anointed. (**1: 32-34**) This is one of the the amazing facts of the history of Israel. Bathsheba was the wife who represented David's failure. Solomon was her son - yet we are told that the Lord loved him. It is just one of those touches of human history which reveals the grace and mercy of God. The throne of Israel was not only built upon God's power, but upon His love and mercy as well. This is an interesting point to remember.

Notice the CHARGE that David gave to his son as he occupies the throne, **"Be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man."** (**2: 2**) Solomon was going to need to be

strong to govern the nation. Notice the SOURCE of his strength. **“Keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His statutes and His commandments”.** (2: 3) Here was good advice from a godly father. David knew that the secret of a strong kingdom was the foundation of the law of the Lord. Too often history proved that when Israel disregarded the law, they degenerated to low moral and spiritual levels and lost their power in the world. It was God’s intention that there should always be a man to occupy the throne of Israel. Solomon was to continue the line, a line of kings that, notwithstanding all the gaps caused by failure, should eventually reach its climax in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice the CHOICE of Solomon that marked the COMMENCEMENT of his reign. He LOVED THE LORD, (3: 3) - this was a fine beginning. The great vision of the Lord at Gibeon, (v. 5) gave evidence of the spirit of the king as he faced the future of his kingdom. God gave him a ‘blank cheque’ as it were, to desire whatever he would. Riches - honour - power - all were there for him to have for himself. What a wonderful answer Solomon gave. **“I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or to come in”.** (v. 7) With a humble spirit he sought for God’s guidance. **“Give to your servant an understanding heart, to judge your people”.** (v. 9) We obviously cannot mention here all Solomon’s great achievements. But we can learn the secret of the success of David’s son. With a humble, dependent attitude and pure, selfless motive, he sought the wisdom and help which came from God. It was because God was pleased with him that riches, honour, power and peace were added - in a greater measure than he could ever have asked.

We are given one example (3: 16-28) to illustrate Solomon’s God-given wisdom. Where it is a case of one woman’s word against another, special insight into human nature is needed to uncover the true facts. This incident shows also the king’s accessibility for ordinary folk, even for prostitutes; and we can see a parallel here with our Lord Jesus Christ - **“the friend of tax collectors and sinners.”**

Solomon outshone his greatest contemporaries in wisdom, which he expressed in proverbs, songs and sayings, based on natural and animal life. See for example, **Psalms 72 and 127, and Proverbs 10: 1-22, and the Book of Ecclesiastes.**

As we draw this lesson to a close, we can reflect on the position that Israel now held among the nations. God’s intention was that they should be the chief among the nations. This seemed to be realised during Solomon’s reign. Jerusalem was the centre of the national and religious life of the people. Solomon spent seven years building the House of the Lord - a Temple that was splendid in every degree. When the house was finished the glory of God filled the Temple. (1 Kings 8: 10-11) The worship of the nation was established. Through Solomon’s wisdom and effective rule, all nations came to him. Wealth flowed into the land. It was the golden age for Israel.

Solomon’s life was marred by evil in later days. There were two ‘loves’ in his life instead of one. He **“loved the Lord”.** (3: 3) This was great, but as time went by Solomon **“loved many foreign women”.** (11: 1-4) Sadly they stole

his heart away from the Lord. His life ended in failure, and after his death the kingdom was divided. There is no room in our lives for more than one deep spiritual love. Christ must have the pre-eminence. Let us be careful that we are not as Solomon was - a man who began well, but because of divided affection, ended in failure.

Questions

Study 1: DAVID - THE REJECTED MONARCH

1. What main difference in the characters of Saul and David are revealed by these chapters?
2. What was the basic reason for Saul’s tortured state of mind, which could be equally true of men and women today?
3. David had been anointed King of Israel. Why did he refuse to ‘take’ his rightful position?
4. What must we always remember when comparing men with the Lord Jesus?
5. We have spoken of David as the ‘shepherd - king’. In what way could this title be also applied to the Lord Jesus?

Study 2: DAVID - ACCEPTED AND CROWNED

1. Give three things you have learned about the effects of Saul’s rule.
2. a) What was God’s purpose for Israel, that came about through David?
b) What great promise did God give, relative to the tribe of Judah?
3. How did the people express their loyalty to David when they gathered to make him king?
4. How can you and I develop our Christian character?
5. In what way does David’s rule illustrate our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Study 3: DAVID - EXPLOITS AND FAILURE

1. What evidence have we in these chapters to show that the Bible record is true?
2. What Christ-like illustration have we of David in **chapter 9**?
3. a) How could David have, perhaps, avoided temptation?
b) What is the difference between temptation and sin?
4. Explain what we mean, when we say that there are certain things that are the inevitable results of sin. You can use David as an illustration.
5. What is the most important lesson you have learned from our study of the life of David?

Study 4: SOLOMON - SON OF DAVID

1. What does **2 Samuel 23: 14-17** tell us of the relationship that existed between David and his men?
2. Why was Solomon sure of possessing the throne after David?
3. What does **1 Kings 3** tell us about the character of Solomon at the commencement of his reign?
4. What happened in **1 Kings 8** which was proof of God’s blessing on the House of the Lord that Solomon built?
5. What was the cause of Solomon’s failure at the end of his life, and what can we learn from it?