DAVID: HOW A KING SHOULD BE

2 SAMUEL CHAPTERS 5-6

Have you ever looked forward to something really great – maybe a dream vacation, or getting a big promotion, getting married or graduating – only to have your joy delayed? It seemed like what you anticipated would happen is never going to happen! But then one day, it finally happens! The big day, the event you looked forward to for so long, finally takes place. Well, that’s exactly what David is experiencing here in 2 Sam as we move into Ch 5. For about 18 years David has anticipated the day when he would finally become the king of Israel. While waiting on God he’s had to endure quite a lot. For nearly a decade he was on the run from King Saul who was trying to kill him. Then even after Saul died David has had to wait an additional 7 years until God worked out all the details which would pave the way for David to assume the throne of Israel.

READ 2 Sam 5:1-4

The people of Israel, the other 11 tribes, the same people who had resisted David being their king for the past 7+ years now have changed their tune. Now they’re eager to submit to David as their king. They recognize David as being their Israelite brother. They recall what a great warrior and commander David had been under King Saul. They acknowledge that David was chosen by the Lord to be the king of Israel. All of these are true enough, but they had been true for the past 7 years. So how do you explain this sudden embracing of David as their king? [death of Ish-bosheth, death of Abner, David’s behavior] I believe their change of heart was from the Lord. For years Satan had blinded their hearts and minds. Now in God’s perfect time He lifts the blinders from their eyes and they view David in a whole new light. They now see David as God’s man to lead their nation. And they quickly unify behind him.

Chaps 5-8 are a unit. These chapters recount many of David’s accomplishments as king over a period of several years. Today we’ll look at some of the key moments that will mark David’s reign as the greatest king in Israel’s history. So what was David’s first recorded act as the new king of Israel? He’s finally made it! What’s the first thing he does?

READ 2 Sam 5:6-10

David conquers the Jebusite-controlled city of Jerusalem. Who were the Jebusites? They were Gentiles, pagans, enemies of God’s people. They were descendants of the Canaanites whom the people of Israel had failed to destroy (not simply drive them out of the land) during the time of Joshua and the Conquest. Deut 20:17 says, “You shall devote them to complete destruction…as the Lord your God has commanded.” The Jebusites had held this city ever since the times of the Judges, so probably about 200 years. And David had been eyeing this city ever since he was a teenager. Back in 1 Sam 17 shortly after David had killed Goliath the scripture says that David took the head of Goliath and brought it to Jerusalem. David was sending a message to the Jebusites inside the fortified city of Jerusalem, “Mark it down, someday this is going to happen to you!” Believe me, David eyed Jerusalem for years as he passed by its walls frequently journeying the 10 miles between Bethlehem and Gibeah.

V 7 says, “David took the stronghold of Zion.” That is the first time in the Bible that the name Zion is used for Jerusalem. Zion is synonymous with the City of God. It sits up on top of hill which is why it is often referred to as Mount Zion; whenever the Jewish pilgrims went to Jerusalem they talked about ascending UP to Jerusalem. It was a high point, a strategic location, and well-fortified. David conquers it. Not a whole lot of detail is given as to how he did it but it mentions him going in thru the water shaft – a tunnel which channeled water from the springs of Gihon outside the city walls into the city. Jerusalem becomes known as the City of David because David lived there, made it his home base, & later his capital.

How is it that King David is able to accomplish what King Saul or a number of the judges prior to him never even attempted, defeat the Jebusites and conquer the stronghold of Jerusalem? V 10 tells us. Because “the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him.” Please don’t miss this. One of the recurring themes in this section, Chaps 5-8 is the contrast between King David and King Saul. Remember that God rejected Saul from being king and in 1 Sam 16:14 we’re told that the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul. But here we’re told, v 10, that the Lord was with David.

So David conquers Jerusalem, God’s holy city. Then we’re told that Hiram king of Tyre, a Gentile king, establishes diplomatic relations with King David. This proves to be a very important alliance. He supplies what David needs to build his palace and later will supply David and his son Solomon with many of the materials used to build the temple.

READ 2 Sam 5:12

David knows that he is the king of Israel only because of God. This is something that Saul never realized. Saul thought that it was all about him. David knows it’s all about God. And God exalts David’s kingdom, not for David’s sake but for the sake of God’s covenant people. In this section from Chaps 5-8 the covenant name for God, Yahweh, “LORD” in our English translations, is used 45 times. God, the covenant God of Israel, is actively at work in David’s life as king. What a contrast from Saul!

V 13 mentions that David took multiple wives and concubines. Last week we discussed how this was a violation of God’s command in Deut 17:17 – that Israel’s king should not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away [from God]. I’m not going to beat David up too much about this. We know he wasn’t perfect, obviously had some weaknesses. Nevertheless God blesses David and gives him many children.

Well David takes the City of God, Jerusalem. The next thing he does is to defeat the Philistines. Those poor Philistines! They know what a mighty warrior David is and they should know better than to mess with him. But here they come making their way thru the valley toward Jerusalem. What does David do? Does he mobilize his army and head out to fight them? No, not just yet. He does something that King Saul did not do.

READ 2 Sam 5:19

What David does first is inquire of the Lord. He prays. He seeks the Lord’s guidance. He doesn’t presume anything. Then, only after David has God’s approval, does he act. He goes out and defeats the Philistines. Again in v 23, right in the middle of a battle, David inquires of the LORD. And God gives David a specific battle plan and in v 25 David does exactly what God tells him to do. He strikes down the Philistines and sends them scurrying back toward the sea – back to the coastal plains of Israel where they lived. After this little skirmish David doesn’t fight many more battles with the Philistines. It isn’t until Ch 21, toward the end of David’s reign, that another war with the Philistines is mentioned. What I want you to see is that David seeks the Lord’s direction against the enemies of Israel. He waits upon the Lord and then the Lord gives the army of Israel victory.

In Chapter 6 David shows that he’s not only a warrior with the power of God upon him, but that he is also a spiritual leader – something which Saul most certainly was NOT. The ark of God is mentioned for the first time since it was taken to Kiriath-jearim way back in 1 Sam 7. We’re talking the early days of Samuel’s rule as judge. So it’s been quite a while. And this long period of time has not been the best spiritually for the nation of Israel. David recognizes something which Saul never did – David understands the spiritual significance of the ark of God to the people of Israel.

So what do we know about the ark of God?

SHOW slide – often referred to as the Ark of the Covenant

The ark represented the presence of God with the nation. Ever since the wilderness wanderings under Moses the people knew to follow the ark. The manifest presence of God resided there in the form of a pillar of fire by night and pillar of cloud by day. God’s presence rested over the ark. The ark for years was quite literally the center of the Israelite community housed in the tabernacle. By the time you come to the days of Eli and Samuel, the people had turned the ark into a bit of a good luck charm. The spiritual significance had waned. The people just assumed that the mere presence of the ark in battle meant defeat of their enemy. Well they soon found out that you don’t presume on God. In 1 Sam 4 the ark is captured by the Philistines [taken to Ashdod (Dagon, tumors), Gath (tumors) and Ekron (death, tumors), decided to return ark back to Israel]. And that’s when the people of Kiriath-jearim came and took the ark to the house of Abinadab on the hill. Not once during his 40-year reign did Saul attempt to bring the ark up to Gibeah where he was based or to one of the tent sanctuaries such as Nob or Gibeon where it could be housed. No, he was content to leave the ark right where it was. Out of sight, out of mind.

So why does David feel compelled to bring the ark up to Jerusalem after all this time? I mean, the ark was just a religious relic of the past, right? It didn’t have any relevance now, did it? For decades nobody has even talked about it.

READ 1 Chron 13:1-4

You have this period of spiritual revival in Israel, led by David. Bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem will be a rallying point for the nation. David sees this as an opportunity to re-establish the worship of God, led by the Levites, as a national priority just as it was in the days of Samuel.

READ 2 Sam 6:5

A huge praise service breaks out. There was joy in Israel! Psalm 150 proclaims, “Praise Him with trumpet sound; praise Him with tambourine and dance; praise Him with strings and pipe! Praise Him with sounding cymbals; praise Him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!” So I believe David’s intention as the king and spiritual leader of his nation is to bring the people closer to God and the ark of the Lord, which represents God’s presence with His people will once again be at the center of the nation’s worship.

Well, in the midst of the celebration something goes terribly wrong!

READ 2 Sam 6:6-11 (OO-zuh)

What was Uzzah’s error mentioned in v 7? In Num 4:15 God prohibited touching anything that is holy and the ark was considered to be holy. How was the ark supposed to be carried? With poles by the Kohathites (a family of Levites). What was the only other time the ark was ever carried on a cart? By the Philistines. Not exactly the best model for Israel to follow!

I want you to see how David handles this situation. He’s angry (I believe with himself), not sure how to proceed. For now he houses the ark where it is at in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite (a Philistine family). It is placed in a Gentile household temporarily while David tries to assess the situation and figure out what to do. Three months go by.

READ 2 Sam 6:12-15

Notice this time the ark is transported according to God’s law. In the parallel account in 1 Chron 15 there is a little more detail given. David assembles all the heads of the Levites, tells them to consecrate themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord. It says the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord (Exo 25 and Num 4).

David leads the way as the ark is being brought into Jerusalem. He is dressed in priestly garments, a linen ephod. David the king leads the national celebration acting in the role of a priest. And his dancing is before the Lord with all of his might. David is caught up in the joyous occasion as all of the people praise the Lord. To contrast David’s actions that day with Saul, well that’s where Saul’s daughter enters the picture.

READ 2 Sam 6:20

Michal observed David leaping and dancing (she is not part of the celebration) and v 16 says she “despised him in her heart.” Here’s a man caught up in the national worship of Yahweh and all she sees is the undignified actions of a king. Her father, Saul, would never have behaved like that! He was a dignified king. And when David gets home she lets him know it. Well, notice David’s response to her…

READ 2 Sam 6:21-23

Basically David says, “You’re right. Your father would never have acted this way because his heart wasn’t right with God. Worshipping God with unrestrained joy was never his priority. Which is why God replaced him as king and chose me – I’m not worried about what people think, about maintaining a dignified image – I will celebrate before the Lord!

Michal has the same heart that her father had – a heart which was not bent toward following God, but one that was self-absorbed. Three times in this passage that Michal is mentioned she is called “Michal the daughter of Saul.” She is not Michal, David’s wife. Her heart is just like her father’s. And just like dear old dad, she despises David. V 23 tells us that this adversely affects their relationship as husband and wife. Any intimacy they might have had is ruined. Spiritual problems can adversely impact even our closest physical relationships if we are not careful.

King David is exactly the kind of king that Israel needs at this time. He takes God’s city away from God’s enemies and establishes it as his own. He seeks God’s direction and follows it. He exercises full confidence in the power of God in battle and drives God’s enemies out of the land. He re-establishes God at the center of Israel’s worship. No, David is not at all like their previous king!

And some day, perhaps very soon, our King, Jesus, will return. And when He does Revelation tells us that He will defeat His enemies and He will set up His rule and reign in His holy city, Jerusalem. Once again He will be the center of the worship of His people. In many ways David pre-figures the Lord Jesus in what He will do when He is King.

Isaac Watts wrote a hymn, which turned into a Christmas carol. But it is not about Christmas. It is not about Jesus coming the first time. It is actually a hymn about Jesus’ second coming. It’s called “Joy to the World.”

Listen to the words as we sing them. If you’re a Christian your King has already come. He is the King of your life and that is something worth singing about!