

Summary for Session 12: Royal Kingdom—Part 2

Prep work: 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1-11

DVD: Jeff begins by recapping Saul's life as first king of God's people, the Israelites.

Saul's fear of the people proves his downfall as he disobeys God twice, once by taking on the role of priest instead of waiting for Samuel, and again by perserving the Amalekite king and prime livestock even though God put a ban on their city and condemned everything to death by fire. Even when confronted with his sins, Saul admits his guilt but insists Samuel still honor him "in front of the people." This is not the ruler that God intended to sit on the throne. Instead, God has Samuel seek out and anoint David, "a man after God's own heart." After Saul is killed in battle, David rules over Judah, the southern part of the Israelite nation. He takes Jerusalem and makes it his capital. Later, he establishes the City of David there, on a ridge off where the southern steps of the Temple will later be. Jeff notes that archaeologists have recently discovered the remains of the City, exactly where the Bible noted it was. As a culmination of making Jerusalem the capital of the now united Israelite kingdom, David brings the Ark of the Covenant into the city. His exuberant dancing in front of the procession that bears the Ark embarrasses his wife Michal, who tells him to act more solemnly. David is too jubilant about the Ark coming to rest in Jerusalem, and so he dances all the more. Jeff points out that Michal is Saul's daughter, and it may be a family trait that they are afraid of what others might think instead of acting in a manner that pleases God.

Even though the Ark is within the City, it still is housed in its tent. David wants to build a house fitting for the Ark, but God tells him that instead, God will build a house for David, a royal dynasty to stay on the throne eternally. This fulfills the promise God made to Abraham of a royal family, the one the messianic psalms refer to. Jeff reviews the ways the Bible should be interpreted by pointing out that on a literal level, God's words to David: "I will raise up your offspring" refer to Solomon, David's son and next on the throne. On an allegorical level, they refer to Jesus, who is truly the eternal king. Jeff also notes that David changes the line of priests, from Saul's choice of Abiathar to Zadok.

Finally, Jeff points out that David seeks out and shows kindness to Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, because of the strong friendship between David and Jonathan.

Even though David is a man after God's own heart, he is still capable of sinning, and he proves this in the episode with Bathsheba and Uriah. The Bible notes that David stays behind while his army goes out to war, providing the occasion for sin. After seducing Bathsheba and learning she is pregnant, David continues the downward spiral of sin by sending Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, to his death. It takes Nathan confronting him with a parable (Jeff notes parables are often used for corrupt leaders) for David to realize his grievous actions. Unlike Saul, however, David acknowledges his sin at once and is truly repentant (as seen in Psalm 51).

At this point, Jeff brings up the short passages on David's "Mighty Men." These brief stories exemplify the truths that any passage in the Bible can offer us, no matter how seemingly unimportant. In this case, these men offer us models of tenacity at a moral level (another way to consider the Bible—as guidance for our own actions). Adino, Eleazar, and Shammah exemplify tenacity in the face of overwhelming odds, fatigue, and

insignificance, respectively. They teach us that we, too, must remain strong and follow God no matter how insurmountable, tiring, or meaningless the task seems.

Jeff then highlights the role of the queen mother (Gebirah in Hebrew) in the kingdom. Using Bathsheba as an example, he describes her role as an advocate for the people; she will intercede on their behalf. The queen mother also has her own throne in the throne room, so important is her role. Jeff even notes that during the Babylonian exile, the prophet chastises the queen mother along with the king for their downfall. Notice that the queen is not the wife of the king, but the mother of the king. This was not a social construct exclusive to the Israelites; the whole of the ancient near East practiced this. We continue the practice today in Mary, the mother of the Eternal King, Jesus. She is our advocate and intercessor, and her throne is in heaven with Jesus. We recall that Elizabeth, her cousin, acknowledged her role as Gebirah when she calls Mary, "The Mother of my Lord", and even John, in the womb, leaped with joy at the sound of *Mary's* voice. Jesus confirms her role when he gives Mary to us all in the person of the Beloved apostle at the foot of the cross, "Behold, your mother."

Moving back into the story, we pick up with Solomon's ascent to the throne. His name means "peace" and he uses this time of relative peace to build. He builds the Temple in seven years and a palace for himself in 13 years. When God asks Solomon what he would ask of God, Solomon asks for wisdom. This pleases God so much he makes Solomon the wisest man in the world and heaps riches upon him, as well. Solomon's wisdom is captured in spirit in the wisdom literature of the Bible, but apparently, being wise does not equate with following God's Will. Jeff reminds us again of Moses' warning at the end of Deuteronomy against kings multiplying gold, chariots, and wives. Also there is Samuel's warning that a king will take the best of everything the people own, even their children. Solomon will end up having much gold, many chariots and wives, and will turn a tyrant to his own people. God decrees the line of David will be punished for it. The kingdom will be torn in two, and the royal kingship will have only Judah while the rest goes to the kingdom of Israel. Jeff notes that the Bible specifically states that Solomon has 666 talents of gold, the first reference to that number as symbolic of evil. Jeff ends this session by asking us to reflect on who we are most like: Saul, with his fear of the people; David, with his heart aligned with God; or Solomon, with his wisdom that ends in tyranny.