

The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel

Lesson 18: David King Over All Israel; Jerusalem Taken -- 2 Samuel 4:1–5:25

After years of waiting, the day finally comes. All the tribes of Israel gather to David at Hebron, and they speak words David has carried in his heart since he was a shepherd boy: “Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel” (5:2). The long war is over. The fugitive who once hid in caves now stands before the elders of every tribe, and they anoint him king over all Israel. He is thirty years old, and ahead of him lie forty years on the throne. God's promise, given so long ago, has come fully to pass, not by David's grasping, but in God's good time.

But before that glad gathering, the chapters give us one more dark scene. Two captains murder Ishbosheth in his bed and bring his head to David, sure they will be rewarded for clearing the last rival from his path. They have learned nothing from the Amalekite. David, who once mourned Saul and Abner, again refuses to build his kingdom on treachery. He executes the murderers, for he will not let bloody men think they can do God's work for Him. The throne he is about to receive will not rest on a single act of murder.

Then the new king does something bold and strategic. He goes up against Jerusalem, the Jebusite stronghold that Israel had never taken, and captures the fortress of Zion. It becomes the city of David, his capital, the place where, in time, the ark and the temple and the very presence of God among His people would dwell. And the inspired writer gives us the secret of it all in a single sentence: “David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him” (5:10). Not David's sword, not David's cunning, but the LORD with him.

This lesson is about a kingdom established by God and a king who keeps inquiring of Him. Even at the height of his power, when the Philistines come up against him, David does not presume; twice he asks the LORD before he fights, and twice he obeys exactly. And over the whole scene there falls a long shadow that is really a light, the shadow of a greater Son of David, born in this very city, who would take a greater Zion and reign, not from a palace, but from the right hand of God, over a kingdom that shall never end. We will look long at David, and we will lift our eyes to Christ.

Group Discussion: The writer sums up David's rise in one sentence: “David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him.” How does that single phrase reframe everything David accomplished, and how should it reframe our own successes?

Personal Reflection: When something goes well in your life, where does your mind run first, to your own effort and ability, or to the God who was with you? What would change if you truly believed your best successes are because the Lord is with you?

Read 2 Samuel 4:1–5:25

Study Questions

1. When two captains murdered Ishbosheth and brought his head to David expecting reward, David executed them instead (4:5–12). What does this repeated refusal to build his kingdom on bloodshed reveal about God and the way He establishes His purposes?
2. Have you ever been tempted to use a wrong means to reach a good or even God-given end? How does David's refusal challenge the way you pursue what you want?
3. All the tribes came to David at Hebron and anointed him king, recalling that the LORD had said, "Thou shalt feed my people Israel" (5:1–5). What does it mean that a king is to feed, to shepherd, God's people, and how does this shape our understanding of godly leadership?
4. Whom has God given you to care for, in your family, the church, or your circle, and what would it look like to shepherd them rather than merely manage or rule them?
5. Scripture says of David's rise, "David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him" (5:10). What does this teach us about the true source of any growth, strength, or success in God's service?
6. When you succeed at something, how readily do you give God the credit, and how might you cultivate a heart that says, like David, the LORD was with me?

7. David captured the stronghold of Zion, and it became the city of David (5:6–9), the place where God would set His name and where, in time, the Christ would be revealed. How does the taking of Jerusalem point us forward to the greater Son of David and His kingdom?
8. In what ways do you find yourself longing for an earthly kingdom or earthly security, and how does fixing your hope on Christ's present, spiritual kingdom reorder those longings?
9. Even as established king, when the Philistines came up David twice inquired of the LORD before battle and obeyed exactly, even waiting for the sound in the mulberry trees (5:17–25). What does this teach us about the danger of presuming on God once we feel strong, and our continual need to seek Him, especially when the greater Son of David now reigns and calls us to live under His rule?
10. Name one specific way the Lord Jesus, the Son of David who reigns now at God's right hand, is using this passage to form your heart toward dependence, humility, or obedience right now.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Colossians 1:13, that we have been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; Acts 2:29–36, Peter declaring that David's greater Son now reigns on David's throne at God's right hand; Ezekiel 34:23–24, the promise of one Shepherd, David, to feed God's flock, fulfilled in Christ; Hebrews 12:22–24, the heavenly Zion to which believers have come; Proverbs 3:5–6, trusting and acknowledging the LORD in all our ways rather than our own understanding.

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