



The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

1 & 2 Samuel

2 Samuel 2-24

The Reign of King David

The main focus of 2 Samuel is on the reign of King David. The book begins with David hearing the news of and lamenting the death of his predecessor and it ends with David's last words.

The Structure of this section is as follows:

The Reign of King David	2 Samuel 2-24
David's Rise to Power in Judah	2:1-4:12
David's Rule over All Israel	5:1-9:13
David's Downfall into Sin	10:1-12:31
Like Father—Like Sons	13:1-19:40
One Nation under YHWH	19:41-24:25

The section begins with David's ascendancy to the throne over his own tribe of Judah. The narrative ends with David ruling over a united kingdom of all Israel as a priestly-king. One of the keys to understanding the main point of 2 Samuel is in David's last words comparing the just ruler to worthless men. (23:3-7) David's house stands or falls depending on the King's personal relationship with YHWH and his "fear of the Lord". (23:3)

David's Rise to Power in Judah (2-4)

2 Samuel begins with David's lament over learning of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. The question is now one of succession. Will David rise to the throne, or will one of Saul's heirs seek to establish primacy. At first, the answer is both.

David is anointed King over Judah at Hebron. (2:1-4) The city of Hebron is important because it is the burial place of the patriarchs and the initial city which the spies in Numbers 13 reported as having abundance, yet inhabited by giants. 80 year old Caleb was the



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liberator of Hebron. So Hebron becomes the place where David ascends to power as King and rules for seven and a half years from Hebron.

However, Abner, the commander of Saul's army sought to retain his power by establishing Saul's son, Ish-bosheth to reign over Israel. The result was a temporarily divided nation, Israel vs. Judah.

The war that begins at the pool of Gibeon (2:12ff) become what is described as a "long war between the house of Saul and house of David". (3:1)

The downfall of the House of Saul came because of the arrogance and lust of the commander, Abner. His relations with Saul's concubine-widow Rizpah caused a falling out between Abner and king Ish-bosheth. Abner responded:

Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, "Am I a dog's head of Judah? To this day I keep showing steadfast love to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not given you into the hand of David. And yet you charge me today with a fault concerning a woman. God do so to Abner and more also, if I do not accomplish for David what the LORD has sworn to him, to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba."
--2 Samuel 3:8-10

"As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life out of every adversity, when one told me, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him at Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news. How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous man in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and destroy you from the earth?"

--2 Samuel 4:9-11

Abner would carry through with his promise, though he would reap the consequences for the sins of his initial arrogance. While David welcomed his repentance and support, an old vendetta by one of David's men, Joab, was settled resulting in Abner's death. (3:26-27)

King Ish-Bosheth was also murdered by his own captains. Thinking they would please David with their treachery, they delivered the head of their king. Instead, David brought swift justice upon them, just as he had done to the man who struck down Saul.



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David's rule over All Israel (5-9)

David's mercy and respect shown to Abner and Ish-Bosheth won the hearts and respect of the people of Israel. Despite the treachery and blood-lust among those who would seek to please him and themselves. David demonstrated that he trusted in YHWH to take care of his adversaries rather than take matters into his own hands.

All the elders of the tribes of Israel anointed David as king over Israel. They recalled the words the Lord spoke to David: "You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel." (5:2)

Unfinished business (5)

Now that David was king over all the land, there were a few items of unfinished business. The first was to rectify the failure of Judah to drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem. Once accomplished this became the new capital city called "The City of David". (5:9) A regal house was built in tribute to David's greatness by the gentile King of Tyre. (5:11)

The second matter of unfinished business was an item left over from the reign of Saul--the Philistines. The Lord gave the Philistine armies into the hand of David. (5:17-25)

The Ark comes to Jerusalem (6)

As Jerusalem became the capital city of all Israel, David purposed to bring the footstool of the throne of YHWH to the city. As they were bringing it up, one of David's servants was struck dead for improperly touching the Ark of the LORD. David and Israel were again reminded to revere and fear the LORD as the Holy one of Israel.

Out of fear David kept the Ark outside the city in the house of Obed-Edom for three months. While it was there that home was greatly blessed (6:10-12). David, upon hearing of the blessing of YHWH on the home of Obed-Edom, gathered the Ark of God in a glorious procession into the city of Jerusalem. David danced and celebrated before the Ark even to the scorn of his wife Michael. David's heart was for the Lord and not his wife!

*I will celebrate before
the Lord! I will make
myself yet more
contemptible than this,
and I will be abased in
your eyes.*

--2 Samuel 6:21-22



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The Davidic Covenant (7)

When David purposes to build a "house" for the Ark of the Lord, the prophet Nathan is given a word for the King.

YHWH was not seeking a house built by David, on the contrary it was David's house which would be built by YHWH. The Lord made an everlasting covenant with David:

And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.'

--2 Samuel 7:11-16

*I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me,
"You are my Son; today
I have begotten you.
Ask of me, and I will
make the nations your
heritage, and the ends of
the earth your
possession.*

Psalm 2:8-9

David's line was thus established as an everlasting throne. His son Solomon would be the one to fulfill the dream of David and promise of the Lord to build a house for God--the Temple of the Lord.

The adoption of David and his heirs as "sons of God" will find its ultimate fulfillment in his heir Jesus, the Son of God and master Temple builder. On the day of Jesus baptism, the divine voice anointed Jesus: "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17) His throne is the everlasting kingdom.

David ruled in strength over his enemies (9:1ff), he administered justice and equity over all Israel (8:15) and with kindness and loyalty to the house of his predecessor, Saul (9:1ff).



Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.”

2 Samuel 11:11

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David's Fall into Sin (10-12)

A war with the Ammonites becomes an occasion to reveal a weakness in the character of David--lust. While the battle with Ammon was being waged, David stayed behind in Jerusalem.

David lusted after the beautiful Bathsheba, one of the wives of his soldiers. After impregnating her, he tried to cover up his sin by calling for Uriah to go home. Uriah's honor would not permit him to leave the presence of David. So David arranged for his death on the frontlines of a foolish battle ploy.

Uriah was killed and David took Bathsheba to be his wife. The entire matter "displeased the Lord" (11:27) David had committed adultery, he had lost the respect of his commanders, he had committed murder.

The Confrontation (12)

How does one confront a King? The Lord empowered the Prophet Nathan with wisdom to shame a fool. Nathan tells a story about a rich man who took advantage of a poor man. The King was captured in the story to pass judgment against himself. Nathan reveals:

Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. ⁸ And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. ⁹ Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰ Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’



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To David's credit, he repented of his sin. (12:13) Psalm 51 is a model prayer of repentance to the Lord which David penned on this occasion.

However, the consequences of David's sin would forever plague his heirs. Both the sins of lust and violence would characterize the house of David. Moreover, the son he conceived with Bathsheba would die seven days into his young life. (12:15-23)

The Lord would give David and Bathsheba another son, Solomon. He would become the heir of the throne. Nathan the prophet called him Jedidiah, or "beloved of the Lord" because the Lord loved him. (12:24-25)

The war with Ammon concluded in victory and a weight golden crown. But the weight of the consequences of David sin would fall forcefully on his house as his sons bore the reflection of their father.

Like Father - Like Sons (13:1-19:40)

David's many wives created many half-brothers and sisters. The loyalties between half-siblings proved to be quite tenuous. One pair of siblings was Absalom and Tamar. Tamar was beautiful and their half brother Amnon lusted after her and ultimately raped her. (13:14)

His lust quickly turned to hate. As the prophet Nathan predicted, the sword was unleashed within the house of David. Absalom murdered his half brother out of vengeance for his sister. (13:29)

Absalom fled into exile out of fear of his father's judgment. David's heart was torn between love and loyalty for his sons. Again, David is skillfully confronted through a fool making story by a "wise woman" from Tekoa. (14:1-20) He allows his son, Absalom to return, but warns him not to come into his presence. After two years, David relented and allowed Absalom back into his presence. "The king kissed Absalom." (14:33) His kiss would not be returned. Absalom would prove to be treacherous and traitorous even toward his own father.



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*"O LORD, please turn
the counsel of
Ahithophel into
foolishness."*

--2 Samuel 15:31

The Rise of the False Prophet

Absalom proved to be quite cunning in gathering the hearts of the people of Israel to himself. He developed a band of followers who send his father in to flight for his life. Absalom's conspiracy grew strong when he secured David's counselor Ahithophel the Gilonite to be his counsel.

David asked the Lord from the Mount of Olives that Ahithophel's counsel would become false. (15:23)

Indeed, the Lord heard the prayer of David and used the false prophecy of Ahithophel to bring down Absalom's conspiracy.

*Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel
gave was as if one consulted the word of God;
so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed,
both by David and by Absalom.*

--2 Samuel 16:23

Absalom's death was actually brought about by a riding accident as he went to battle his father's troops. His head was caught up in an oak tree branch as he was riding his mule. David's right hand commander, Joab dispatched him with the thrust of his spear.

In consistent character David, lamented the death of his son even though he had become his enemy. Joab saw this as a weakness in the king and confronted him strongly for loving his rebellious son above his own loyal commanders and army. (19:1-8)

David's rule ultimately proved to be one that would unite all of Israel as he pardoned his enemies and brought the nation under his just and gracious rule. However, his own sin was costly for the Davidic line. Leadership under YHWH requires faithfulness.

One Nation under YHWH (19:41-24:25)

The last chapters of 2 Samuel provide a type of epilogue which exalts David's rule through David's praise of YHWH. Indeed, this is the main message of the book for its readers. When the nation and its king



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respect and revere the LORD, the nation remains united and prosperous.

However, rebellion plants seeds that will bear rotten fruit and much trouble for the House of David and the Nation.

The book ends with a rebellion by the nation which leads to David's purchase of what would become the Temple mount.

David is the first of the kingly-priests who have a heart to worship the Lord and seek his face and voice. The stage is set for the next phase in redemptive history when his son Solomon would rise to power and build the Temple of the Lord.

Now these are the last words of David:

The oracle of David, the son of Jesse,
the oracle of the man who was raised on high,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the sweet psalmist of Israel:

²“The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me;
his word is on my tongue.

³The God of Israel has spoken;
the Rock of Israel has said to me:

When one rules justly over men,
ruling in the fear of God,

⁴he dawns on them like the morning light,
like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning,
like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.

⁵“For does not my house stand so with God?
For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure.

For will he not cause to prosper
all my help and my desire?

⁶But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away,
for they cannot be taken with the hand;

⁷but the man who touches them
arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear,
and they are utterly consumed with fire.” --2 Sam. 23:1-7