

## The Age of Kings: 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles

*The Age of Kings:* What can history, even biblical history, possibly reveal to us about God? What was God up to in the reign of King David and his son Solomon? Why did God destroy ancient Jerusalem and send them into exile for seventy years? What relevance can the age of Old Testament kings possibly have in the life of a twenty-first century believer? Why did God speak prophetically to his people during this period of time? These questions and more will be considered in this class. We will explore together God's redemptive historical work revealed in the pages of scripture and see how the mission of the people of God both then and now has always been the same.

The objective of this class is: to gain an appreciation for the period of the northern & southern monarchies in the OT, and understand the relationship between the redemptive work of God and the events that unfolded during this specific time in history. Careful attention will be given to both the Davidic Covenant as well as the decline and exile of the people of God.

Introduction: Last week we covered the details and events of the life of King Saul, the king after Israel's own heart. Today we will slow down a bit and set our sights on David, the man after God's own heart. Most of us are very familiar with David; he is probably among the top five for being the most well-loved characters of scripture. His life, however, was not free from the stains of sin and transgression, but he knew what it meant to rely exclusively upon the grace of God for pardon, mercy and protection. In him, God would continue the unfolding of his historical redemptive plan.

Part One: A Divine Perspective – In many respects, the selection of David is God's answer to the dilemma proposed by the period of the Judges. You will recall that the time of the judges could be summarized by the hallmark statement, "There was no king in Israel, every man did what was right in his own eyes." The second part of the statement is a direct consequence of the first. Not that a human king would have kept God's people on the straight and narrow, but rather that Israel did have a king (Jehovah, the covenant making and covenant keeping God), but they refused to acknowledge his sovereign rule in the lives of his people.

When Samuel continues to mourn for the circumstantial rejection of Saul as king (see last week's notes for an exposition on the various sins of which he was guilty), the Lord asks him, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel?" (1 Samuel 16:1) Such a question from the Almighty might seem a bit harsh, since part of Samuel's role as prophet/seer was to intercede for the people of God. There is a lesson to be learned here: we cannot mourn and lament over those who incur the guilt of the unpardonable sin. There is no lack of mercy on the part of God for allowing such people the fruit of their desires. Saul had demonstrated time and again that he was more concerned about his own kingdom than God's. As a vassal under the Lord, an appointed steward over the household of God, much was entrusted into his care. To whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48).

God instructs Samuel to go to the house of Jesse the Bethlehemite, "...for I have provided for myself a king among his sons" (16:1b). You will note the difference between this statement and God's instructions regarding Saul. God had stated, "Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. He it is that shall restrain my people" (9:16;17b). The fact that Saul was the one that Israel "desired" and their desire as originally expressed to Samuel was for a king like all the other nations, was touched upon last week. We now see that God had destined Saul to be a prince over the people of Israel for the express purpose of saving Israel from the hand of the Philistines. Saul was

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not quite a judge (his anointing and singling out from among the people of God was more than any judge had experienced). Neither was his kingship the same as that of the Davidic dynasty. It would seem that from the beginning Saul was to be a savior that would, “restrain” God’s people. The Hebrew word translated in the ESV as “restrain” in 9:17 *עָצַר* has the literal meaning of “restraining, detaining, and recovering”. We can say with certainty that Saul fulfilled his divinely appointed role even down to his rejection. Everything about Saul’s reign including his disobedience and rejection by God, served to restrain or rescue Israel from the desire to be like all the other nations. Unfortunately, this desire would not be eclipsed with the pages of history, even for the successors of King David. However, God was about to do a new thing through David. He will inaugurate an eternal throne of the one true Ruler of God’s people. In David, God has provided for himself a king. The first king was for the people; the second king would be for God. We see this played out in the life of David as the story continues to unfold.

Now, we will return to the statement made above regarding how David is God’s answer to the dilemma proposed in the period of the Judges. One of the most amazing features of the sixteenth chapter of 1 Samuel is the fact that even the prophet himself is reprimanded by God for his failure to see with a divine perspective. When the first of Jesse’s sons (Eliab) appears before Samuel his response is, “*Surely, the Lord’s anointed is before him*” (16:6b). This comment was made in response to the fact that Eliab matched the characteristics of King Saul. He was apparently pleasing to look at and of a tall, stately stature (16:6a). God provides a bit of information to Samuel that can easily be obscured by the story in the following chapter, but is in all reality the heart of the account of the anointing of David. The Lord says to Samuel, “*Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart*” (16:7b). In the period of the judges, every man did what was right in his own eyes. The natural appearance defined their reality. Under the dominion of God, appearance means nothing, for God does not look on the outward appearance, but on the heart. The heart is the heart of the situation, and only God sees the heart. God had previously endeavored to instruct Israel in this truth in Deuteronomy 7:7-8, but they were dull of hearing.

One by one, the sons of Jesse appeared before the prophet, and one by one they were rejected. Finally, Jesse asks, “*Are all your sons here?*” It is then that he learns there is one who was not invited to the feast. Jesse and his sons cared more for the safety of their sheep than for the spiritual well-being of the youngest boy of the house. We should not be too harsh on them, after all a man’s sheep was his livelihood back then, and they had no way of knowing in advance that Samuel was looking for the next ruler of God’s people, but it *was* a sacrifice – it *was* worship. One must wonder why young David was not invited. When David does appear the Lord says, “*Arise, anoint him, for this is he*” (16:12b). Who is he? The King that God has provided for himself in the most unassuming of places (backwater Bethlehem), the most unassuming eighth son of a man with his quiver full. As soon as he was anointed, the same verbiage that is used of Saul when he felt compelled to launch an attack against the Ammonites is used of David, “*And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward.*” At the same time, “*the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him*” (16:14).

Part Two: A Tale of Three Giants – There is some passage of time between the anointing of David and the arrival of the Philistine champion, Goliath, the amount of which we are not certain. It is obvious that some of that time David spent in the court of King Saul playing his harp to allay the negative side effects from the evil spirit that troubled him. Albeit, when the giant walks down into the valley of Elah, David is

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back home tending to his father's sheep. Although we have become accustomed to one giant in this story, David really must face three giants. The first giant Eliab, David's older brother, is in every respect the embodiment of Saul. Remember, that he looks the part, and acts the part, so much so that even the prophet of the Lord was initially deceived.

When David arrives at the battlefield with a present of grain, bread, and cheese and sees the giant march out and defy the armies of Israel he is aghast. In modern day English he asks, "Why isn't someone doing something?" It is Eliab who hears his brother and becomes angry with him. He rages, "*Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle*" (17:28). One's first response to such a statement is, "What!?" Did we miss something. For one, why the ill temper. Secondly those "few" sheep were so important during the last family get together that you would not allow David to attend the feast because he needed to stay with them. Thirdly, your presumption? Your evil heart? What in the world is Eliab talking about? David's response is somewhat similar. He states, "*What have I done now? Was it not but a word?*"

So, Eliab is the first giant because he wants David to question the legitimacy of his desire to defend the glory of the Lord. Eliab attempted to redirect David's attention to three things: 1) his responsibility to care for his family's sheep. 2) David's own sins and shortcomings; 3) David's desire to see an imaginary battle. Any one of the above could have understandably provoked young David to retreat into the crowd of passiveness and run from the field of battle.

The second giant was faced in the tent of King Saul. When news had spread that David was willing to defend the glory of the Lord and face the giant, Saul requested that he appear before him. Saul began his conversation with David, not with words of commendation but by pointing to the obvious (at least to the eyes of natural man). Saul states, "*You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth*" (17:33). To this statement, David replies by informing Saul of scenarios in which he was keeping his father's sheep and a lion and a bear came and took a lamb from the flock. David, intent on maintaining his father's wealth, did not hesitate to strike the lion and the bear and remove the lost animal from the predator's mouth. He then says, "*The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine*" (17:37).

Saul clothed David with his armor, but David refused to take the sword and armor, "*because he had not tested them.*" This encounter is the second giant because it seeks to expose David's perceived inadequacy for the task at hand and would have provided him with armor, which the rest of the military world considered indispensable. However, David refused to trust in his own strength or in the arm of man, but sought deliverance from the hand of the Lord who can save by many or by few.

The third giant is the most obvious. Equipped with a rod and a sling and five smooth stones, David steps out onto the field of battle to face the giant. Goliath is loud and boisterous, standing nearly nine feet tall with a bronze helmet on his head, a coat of mail, bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin slung between his shoulders. His armor bearer went before him to carry his heavy armor and serve as maximum defense. He roars upon David that he will feed his flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. David announces that his defenses, which cannot be seen, are superior in every way. He states, "*You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied*" (17:45). You will note that

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David is not here saying that Goliath has simply defied the armies of God, but rather that he has defied God, and the men of Israel happen to be his army. The covenantal relationship between the two is such that to defy the armies of Israel is ultimately to defy God himself. God will defeat this giant of a man not with his armies, which are fleeing in fear to a place of safety, but with the young unassuming shepherd boy who faces the enemy of God as if he is nothing more than a lion or bear seeking to still the weak and vulnerable from the flock. There is something nostalgic about this event, something that harkens back to an earlier time, when David's father and seven brothers were feasting before the Lord, and he was invited as an afterthought. Upon arriving he is anointed king, and the Spirit of the Lord rushes upon him.

With this awareness David runs quickly forward with a stone in his sling. The round river pebble is divinely led by an unseen hand to find a resting place where the Philistine's armor bearer could not reach, and his bronze helmet did no good – right between the eyes. With a thud the great giant falls to the ground. Then, to add insult to injury for the Philistines, David runs and removes the giant's sword from its sheath, and uses his own sword to remove his head from his body. The enemy is defeated; the victory is the Lord's.

Part Three: The Defense of the Glory of the Lord – To understand why David felt a need to face Goliath, we must dig deep into what David asked when he first appeared on the field of battle.

When David first arrives to the Philistine camp and sees the champion's display he witnesses the strong warriors of Israel run in panic and declare, *"Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches, and give him his daughter and make his house free in Israel. And David said to the men who stood by him, 'What shall be done for the man who kills the Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?'"* (17:25-26) In other words, the men of Israel were focused on the monetary gain that would be offered in return for the destruction of the enemy's champion. Saul, the leader of the people of God, was convinced that he could inspire bravery through the promise of wealth. David said, "What!? Is not the defense of the glory of the Lord reward enough? Why should the people of God be bribed by wealth to do what they know is right?" It is obvious from this line of reasoning how little Israel knew and how much less they cared about Jehovah, the covenant keeping God.

The real meaning of the story of David and Goliath is not that the underdog can prevail over a person or force much greater than he, but that God's glory was defied at the hands of those who blaspheme, and he will use the weak and small things of this world to put to shame the large and mighty all for the sake of his glory. Dale Ralph David is correct to state, "If God is so identified with Israel, do you think he is indifferent to such slurs on his reputation? Do you expect a living God to allow an uncircumcised Philistine to trample his name in military and theological mud? Israel thought the Philistine invulnerable; for David he was only uncircumcised. A living God gives a whole new view of things."<sup>1</sup>

God's glory needs no defending, but woe to the person, group or organization that should seek to defy Him. God is glorified even in the just retributive act of sanctifying his name, something that all God's people both OT and NT are called to do.

Part Four: A Brotherly Bond – After the harrowing adventure of the slaying of Goliath, a strong bond develops between Jonathan and David. The old adage, "Birds of a feather flock together" is true and one

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<sup>1</sup> Davis, Dale Ralph. *1 Samuel: Looking On the Heart*. Pg. 184  
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cannot help but think that the author of the book is seeking to associate the previous declaration of faith on the part of Jonathan with the recent victory over Goliath. In 1 Samuel 14:6b we hear Jonathan saying to his armor bearer, *“It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few.”* Such faith in the unseen hand of God proves that he and David were indeed kindred spirits. Their bond, or covenant, will last even after death as is later revealed in David’s kindness to Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth. What is interesting is that Jonathan, while cutting a covenant with David, removes his princely robes his belt and his sword, all emblems of Jonathan’s rank as the crown prince, and gives them to David. This seems to be his way of acknowledging that the kingdom has passed from the house of his father to David. He did so with a willing and glad heart.

Jonathan’s kindness to David will continue to be shown throughout David’s time in exile. More than once will such kindness be the means of preservation for the man whom all Israel will grow to love. Saul, on the other hand, walks away from the field of battle that day with a new jealousy: he too is aware that the kingdom (the presence of the Lord in his life enabling him to save his people and rule over the heritage of the Lord), has been taken from him, and given to David. In fits of jealous rage, he turns his attention (and paranoia) to seeking to end David’s life in one fashion or another. One such means is the bridal dowry of his second daughter Michal. He will give her to David for a gift of one hundred foreskins of the Philistines. Such a gift may sound gruesome, but Saul’s true intention was to facilitate the death of David. David, eager to have the hand of Michal in marriage, goes out and slays two hundred Philistines and presents their foreskins to Saul. King Saul honors his promise but continues to seek ways to kill David.

Conclusion: This week we have covered the beginning of the story of King David, including the most well-loved account in all of scripture: the story of David killing Goliath. As we continue on in our study of the life of David, it will be helpful to bear in mind that in David, God has provided for himself a king. We will see what this means for the life of God’s people as we continue in the Age of the Kings.

*Questions:*

*Q. Why do you think David was not originally summonsed to the offering of the Lord upon the arrival of the prophet Samuel?*

*Q. In what way(s) were Eliab and King Saul similar?*

*Q. Are you ever tempted to look on the outward appearance instead of the heart? How might this effect your spiritual growth?*

*Q. Discuss the first two of the three giants David had to encounter (using the notes above).*

*Q. How might such distractions derail spiritual growth and development today? Explain.*

*Q. How can you defend the glory of the Lord in your own life?*