

OUTLINE STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

Prof. William G. Moorehead

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CHAPTER TWELVE

SECOND SAMUEL

The key word is “*Kingdom*”; the key verse, I Samuel 16:1.

The unity of plan and the design of these books of Samuel is quite apparent. The main theme is the establishment of the Kingdom in Israel, and the transfer of the crown from the tribe of Benjamin to that of Judah.

The king given in answer to the clamors of the restless people—given in anger and taken away in wrath, is by divine interposition succeeded by one who “**is after God’s own heart**,” David. The books of Samuel afford an illustration of Samson’s riddle, Judges 14:14. The eater is made to yield meat, the strong, sweetness. Samson’s riddle is God’s riddle.

David is the prominent figure in these books; for his name becomes in due time associated with the name of his Son and Lord; his throne merges into the throne of the Messiah. Even his splendid son Solomon sinks to a lower place.

Broadly, it may be said that First Samuel records David’s wondrous training for his mission; Second Samuel, his reign.

In the first, he is at school; in the second, on the throne. Discipline! How large a place it fills in God’s purposes touching His best servants! Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Daniel, John the Baptist, and Paul, are the proof of it. No man in this world ever has achieved much who has not been in God’s school.

Second Samuel contains the history of the reign of David. The book may be conveniently divided into three parts.

Part I, chapters 1-10: David enthroned as king, first over Judah, and then over all Israel.

Part II, chapters 11-20: David’s sin and its dreadful consequences—some of its consequences are, incest and rebellion in his own family, and Joab’s insolence and lawlessness—a frightful crop followed his sowing!

Part III, chapters 21-24: David’s last acts and last words, and his mighty men.

1. David's prominence in the Bible.

No Old Testament character surpasses him in this regard. He ranks with Moses and Abraham. Indeed, in frequency of mention and the reverence paid him, hardly another equals him. Jerusalem is called after him, II Samuel 5:9; Bethlehem, likewise, Luke 2:4, 2. Again and again we read of the “**house of David**,” Zechariah 12:7; Luke 1:27, 69; of the “**tabernacle of David**,” Acts 15:16.

The relation which Christ sustains to David is manifold.

- He is of the seed of David, Romans 1:3; cf. Psalm 89:36;
- He is the Son of David Matthew 1:1; 22:42;
- He is the Heir to throne of David, Luke 1:32; Acts 2:30;
- He hath the key of David, Revelation 3:7; cf. Isaiah 22:22.

Scripture associates David with Christ in the closest way; the one ever foreshadows the other; his “house” is the kingdom of David, and this is the foregleam of Christ’s kingdom; his “key” is the symbol of the authority he had over his house, and this in the hand of Christ is expressive of supreme sovereignty. All this gives David a preeminence that belongs to few, if any other, in the Bible.

2. *His birth and youth*, I Samuel 16; 17:15, 34, etc. Bethlehem, famous for its well, I Chronicles 11:17, was the place of his birth, as also the birthplace of his august son and heir, Matthew 2:4-6. He was the youngest of eight sons. His lineage is carefully preserved in Ruth 4 and I Chronicles 2:11-15 (Note: in I Chronicles 2 David is called the seventh son. Probably one of the brothers had died early, and so in this list he would naturally be omitted).

In the genealogy of Matthew he is distinguished by the royal title, “**David the king**.” His early manhood was spent in the duties of a shepherd, an occupation attended with personal hazard. So the shepherd-king tells us that in defence of his flock he slew a lion and a bear, I Samuel 17:34-36.

Out of his shepherd-life grew one of his sweetest psalms, the matchless Twenty-third; and no doubt his sojourn in the wide country, and his nights in the field, gazing on the starry heavens so dazzlingly brilliant in the east, suggested some of the images in that finest anthem of creation, the Eighth Psalm.

3. *His anointing*, I Samuel 16:1-13.

The sons of Jesse passed before Samuel in a sort of review. The eldest, Eliab, seemed to recommend himself to the prophet as the successor of Saul by his physical qualifications. But all glorying in the flesh and its birthright is now to be set aside.

In the sad example of Saul it has been demonstrated to all spiritual minds that the flesh profiteth nothing.

The external appearance, the fine proportions and lofty stature must give place to the energy of faith in the inner man. The youngest in Jesse's family, the despised and forgotten one, is the chosen of the Lord, **“for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”**

This anointing of David was private, secret. Publicly he was anointed over Judah, II Samuel 2:4, and over all Israel, II Samuel 5:3. Note, Saul and Jehu were anointed with a vial of oil, I Samuel 10:1; II Kings 9:1; David and Solomon with a horn of oil. But Christ was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, Hebrews 1:9. It was because Christ fulfilled all righteousness, did perfectly the will of His Father, that He was raised to the throne of God amid the acclamations of the heavenly host.

We have a little glimpse of David's personal appearance here. He is said to have been “ruddy”—with auburn hair, and the bloom of youth on his cheek. Tradition says that his lowly descendant, Mary, had also auburn or golden hair. He was of a “beautiful countenance,” had “fair eyes,” the margin has it; “beautiful eyes,” the ancient Septuagint reads. Richly endowed as he was, a poet of the highest order, a man of faith, zeal, devotedness, energy, no wonder his powers were seen in his brilliant and piercing eyes.

3. David's training for the great destiny that God had marked for him.

It was a singular one, but perfectly adapted to the end in view.

First of all, there was his association with the prophet Samuel, which must have been of incalculable benefit to him. There can be no reasonable doubt but that Samuel taught his apt and gifted pupil much; probably reading, writing, music, I Samuel 19:18-24. But Samuel gave him something far better than mere accomplishments, viz., the knowledge of the law of God, and the beauty of a devoted and godly life. No one could spend any time with Samuel, no one of the temperament and piety of David, without vast good to his own soul. Saul himself could not come into his presence without benefit. The influence of the prophet on the future king of Israel was never lost.

But the main factor in his remarkable education was his afflictions and persecutions at the hands of Saul and other enemies. God sent His servant to that school and set him down to those books which were exactly suited to His purpose respecting him. He could not have been the man and the king he was had he not suffered as he did. He could not have written the psalms that he did, humanly speaking, had he not waded deep in trouble and sorrow. He could not have been the type of the Lord Jesus he is, had he not been hated, persecuted, hunted like a partridge on the mountains.

Because he stood in peculiar relations to God; because his life was filled with the strangest vicissitudes, swinging through an arc that embraced much if not all of human experience, an arc that touched the highest point of fame and grandeur, and yet dipped down to the lowest humiliation and sorrow;

Because of his fullness of experience; he could write psalms that suit all men in all ages and conditions, psalms that go to the heart of all.

Edward Irving finely says of him,

“Every angel of joy and of sorrow swept, as he passed, over the chords of David’s harp, and the hearts of a hundred men strove and struggled together within the narrow continent of his single heart.”

Three personal blessings came to David from his trials.

The first was, his *prudence* was unfolded. Again and again it is mentioned to his credit, I Samuel 18:14, 15, 30; II Samuel 14:20; Psalm 35:14.

Second, his *magnanimity*. We see it all through his life, with a few painful exceptions, and especially in his forbearance toward Saul.

Third, his *dependence* on God. It grew out of his exposure to so many and varied perils, and out of his hair-breadth escapes.

How often he says, in memory of the dangers he has passed, “**The Lord that hath redeemed me out of adversity.**” Thus he constantly refers to the Lord as his “**rock**,” “**strength**,” etc. Indeed much of the imagery of his Psalms is taken from the hiding places and fastnesses that saved him from the pursuers.

5. *Foundation of Jerusalem, the capital of Israel*, II Samuel v, 6. It was still in the possession of the heathen Jebusites, Joshua 15:63. But David, and his chief captain, the able but unscrupulous Joab, I Chronicles 11:6, captured it. Thus the ancient city of Melchizedek became the seat of the theocratic kingdom; and from hence onward it was called “**the city of David**,” and “**the city of God**.” Thither, also, amid universal rejoicing, the ark was borne, and God in this symbol of His presence, dwelt among His people. Psalms 132 was written in commemoration of the glorious event.

6. *The royal covenant*, II Samuel 7:12-16; I Chronicles 17:11-14.

It is on the ground of this great covenant that Christ is David’s Heir, Matthew 1:1; Acts 2: 29-36. Whether Solomon is in it at all is questioned by some. If he is, it is in altogether a subordinate way, as in vs. 14: “**If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.**”

With what gratitude does David reply to the gracious covenant made with him and his house? In vs. 19, is a very peculiar expression, “And is this the manner of men, O Lord God?” cf. I Chronicles 17:17. Commentators puzzle over it not a little. It certainly refers to the Messiah. The Sept. version renders, “But this is the law of the man, O, Lord God.” The meaning seems to be, “this is the law about the man,” the man promised, the Son and Lord of David.

7. *David's failures and crimes.*

They were neither few nor small.

(1) When persecuted by Saul *he sought refuge once and again among Israel's enemies*. The first time he was extricated only after deep humiliation and disgrace, I Samuel 21. The second time he does so, he suffers loss, I Samuel 30:1-8. But he is mercifully preserved from fighting against his own people.

(2) *His plurality of wives*. He established a harem after the manner of oriental monarchs. To the two wives he had in the wilderness he added others, II Samuel 5:13. The results of his sin were seen in the disorderly and turbulent family that grew up around him, and in the kindling of fierce passions in himself which led him into dreadful sin at length.

(3) *His close alliance with the bloody sons of Zeruiah, with Joab more particularly*, who murdered as he listed, and David seemed powerless to punish, was another grievous mistake of his.

(4) *The crime as to Bathsheba and Uriah*. The record of this dark deed sets out with the statement that when the army marched against Rabbah the king tarried at Jerusalem, II Samuel 11:1.

“David's giving himself to ease and pleasure was the root of all his wretchedness. Standing waters gather filth. As the crab-fish seizeth upon the oyster gaping, so doth Satan upon the idle” (Trapp).

Our peril is greatest when we are neglecting duty. What a sad history! What unworthiness, that he, a king from God, honored of God with such a covenant as was made with him, to be guilty of such crimes! How much happier when hunted as a partridge! But even here grace, amazing grace, does not fail. He is restored, and writes the most pitiful wail of confession ever inspired by the Spirit of God, Psalm 51, and the joy of forgiveness, Psalm 32. Unpunished he did not go. Amnon's sin, Absalom's rebellion, Joab's insolence, Sheba's rebellion, and Adonijah's attempt to seize the throne, were the legitimate fruits of his guilt. Psalm 99:8.

(5) *His numbering the people*, II Samuel 24. With all his faults and sins, David, nevertheless, was one of the truest and most faithful men Israel ever had. At heart, in the inmost core of him, David was right with God. Posture of soul toward God—that is the final test. Here David fails not.

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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