

HIGH LEVEL COMPARISON OF THE KINGS (FIRST & SECOND SAMUEL)

(A1) Saul performance as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-20)

(B1) **Interim:** David's exile years (1 Sam. 21-29)

(C1) **Reward:** David wins his battle against the Amalekites and takes the spoil (1 Sam. 30)

(C2) **Reward:** Saul dies in battle with the Philistines and loses everything (1 Sam. 31)

(B2) **Interim:** Saul's death to David taking the throne over Israel (2 Sam. 1-5)

(A2) David's performance as king of Israel (2 Sam. 5-24)

INTERIM PERIOD: DAVID'S EXILE YEARS (FIRST SAMUEL 21-29)

(A1) David seeks a hiding place but is rejected by the Philistines (1 Sam. 21:1-22:5)

(B1) Saul kills the priesthood (1 Sam. 22:6-23)

(C1) David escapes Saul through God's wisdom (1 Sam. 23:1-29)

(D1) Saul in David's hands—David cuts his robe in the cave (1 Sam. 24:1-22)

(E1) David and Nabal (1 Sam. 25:1-44)

(D2) Saul in David's hands—David steals his spear and water jug (1 Sam. 26:1-25)

(C2) David escapes Saul by his own wisdom (1 Sam. 27:1-28:2)

(B2) Saul seeks a medium (1 Sam. 28:3-25)

(A2) David is rejected by the Philistines (1 Sam. 29:1-11)

Lesson 1: Valuing Mercy

Lesson 2: Obeying Commands

Lesson 3: Vengeance

Lesson 4: Serving Two Masters
(Balancing Loyalty)

Awarding Crowns: Reading Schedule

Week	Lesson	Passage	Comparison Pictures
1/6/24	Introduction		
1/13/24	Lesson 1	2 Samuel 1:1-2:11	1 Samuel 31:1-12
1/20/24	Lesson 2	2 Samuel 2:12-3:31	1 Samuel 18:6-30; 19:11-17
1/27/24	Lesson 3	2 Samuel 3:22-4:12	1 Samuel 20:12-13;
2/3/24	Lesson 4	2 Samuel 5:1-25	1 Samuel 14:1-52
2/10/24	Lesson 5	2 Samuel 6:1-7:29	1 Samuel 13:5-14; 6:10-21
2/17/24	Lesson 6	2 Samuel 8:1-9:13	
2/24/24	Lesson 7	2 Samuel 10:1-11:27, 12:26-31	1 Samuel 20:12-17; 1 Samuel 25; Judges 9:1-6, 50-57
3/2/24	Lesson 8	2 Samuel 12:1-25	1 Samuel 15; Psalm 51; Matthew 5:21-48; 18:21-35
3/9/24	Lesson 9	2 Samuel 13:1-39	
3/16/24	Lesson 10	2 Samuel 14:1-15:12	Judges 9:1-6
3/23/24	Lesson 11	2 Samuel 15:13-16:14	1 Samuel 4:1-11, 6:1-7:1
3/30/24	Easter Break		
4/6/24	Lesson 12	2 Samuel 16:15-18:18	Matthew 5:43-45
4/13/24	Lesson 13	2 Samuel 18:19-19:39	1 Samuel 10:27, 11:12-13; Matthew 16:16-17:5, 26:50-56; Matthew 25:31-46; John 18:10-11
4/20/24	Lesson 14	2 Samuel 19:40-21:14	2 Timothy 2:3-5; Matthew 5:33-37
4/27/24	Lesson 15	2 Samuel 23:1-7, 24:1-25	1 Chronicles 21

Introduction

About the Books of Samuel

- First and Second Samuel were written as one book
- Span the historical transition from the age of the judges into the age of the kings
 - The judges, Eli and Samuel
 - The kings, Saul and David (stopping just short of David's death)
- Written by Samuel, Nathan and Gad
 - Samuel is considered the author of the book of Judges and the beginning of First Samuel (up to his death, 1 Samuel 25)
 - Nathan and Gad were the chroniclers of David's life (1 Chronicles 29:29) and are considered the co-authors of the First and Second Samuel

Theme of Rewards: What is a reward?

What is a reward?

A reward is something that is earned for works, good *and* bad.

The concept of reward or recompense revolves around the idea of getting a “return” on your work, like wages. The “return” can either be:

- Good, in the sense of being to your profit, honor, and benefit
- Bad, in the sense that your words and actions can be turned back on you as a payback or punishment.

It is the idea of reaping what you sow. God rewards good works with good things, but bad works are also paid back in full, and quite often the payback is God doing back to you what you did to Him or to someone else.

“For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Matthew 7:2)

Theme of Rewards in First Samuel

In First Samuel, the authors created a series of comparisons between groups of people who were in pursuit of legacies—call them inheritances, rewards, or crowns, but legacies of sorts.

The three main people comparisons involve brides, priests, and kings.

- 1) Two brides, Hannah and Peninnah**, who pursued a legacy in the form of children. Hannah ascended in honor above her rival when she asked the LORD to reward her with a son (Samuel).
- 2) Two priests/judges, Eli and Samuel**, who were engaged in maintaining a leadership crown. Eli was both a high priest and a judge—he wore both those “crowns”—but he lost those crowns and his life because of his failure to obey the commandments. As Eli began his descent from his place of honor, God raised up Samuel as priest and judge in his place. Both Eli and Samuel receive assessments of their works, and they are distinct contrasts to one another.

Theme of Rewards in First Samuel

3) Two kings, Saul and David, who were rivals for a kingdom and crown.

Like Eli, Saul lost his crown because of his failure to keep the commandments that the LORD had commanded (not just in the Law, but also regarding Samuel's instruction). In addition to having his physical kingdom torn from him, he lost the reward of an eternal kingship.

First Samuel ends with the death of Saul, but without the corresponding comparison of David's performance as king. That becomes the focus of Second Samuel.

As King David comes into his kingdom in Second Samuel, the theme changes from a focus on the basic mechanics of pursuing a reward or crown and into the task of awarding those rewards. There were some principles for pursuing a crown that will carry forward into Second Samuel, so let's review those.

The Principles for Pursuing Rewards

First Samuel focused on the mechanics of pursuing rewards, good and bad, and there were four main principles that governed that pursuit.

- 1) There are right and wrong kings with whom to align yourself.
- 2) There are right and wrong rewards to pursue.
- 3) There are right and wrong ways to pursue the reward.
- 4) There are right and wrong reasons to pursue the reward.

The Principles for Pursuing Rewards

Right and Wrong Kings

All rewards flow from the king, first from God as the Great King and then through His anointed human king. You will not be granted a good reward unless you are aligned with those kings.

What does it mean to be aligned with the king? It means embracing his values, his vision for his kingdom, and his agenda. Lip service alone is not enough.

So, what happens when the people throw off God as King over them? They end up in bondage to the human king they put in God's place. What happens when the human king throws off God as King? The First Samuel narrative tracked the outworking of what happened to King Saul when he focused on keeping an earthly kingdom by his own strength, his own will, and his own way, but without aligning himself with the Great King. Consequently, he lost his crown and kingdom.

In Second Samuel, David will face a similar assessment of his own alignment with God the King, even while he is judging his own people over their alignment with him as their king.

The Principles for Pursuing Rewards

Right and Wrong Rewards

There are tangible forms of reward such as a legacy of children, riches, power, and glory. Even an earthly kingdom can become a reward to pursue. There are other, less tangible forms of reward such as peace, validation, security, and well-being, but also vengeance (how a person is repaid for their actions). Vengeance is the one reward that the Great King alone is allowed to award.

There are earthly rewards that are granted in life, but also eternal rewards that are held in reserve for what comes after life.

The reward that God offers the kings is two-fold:

- 1) An earthly, perishable kingdom
- 2) An eternal, imperishable crown of kingship

The Principles for Pursuing Rewards

Right and Wrong Ways

Paul warns us in First Corinthians 9:25-27 that whether we are pursuing a perishable or imperishable variety of crown, we cannot run with uncertainty or flail aimlessly in our pursuit. We must know what it is we are pursuing, and then discipline our minds and restrain our earthly appetites toward that goal.

The house of Eli lost their crown because they did not restrain their lusts for earthly pleasures. So did King Saul.

Saul grasped after the earthly kingdom with oppressive force—treachery, lies, and violence, all fueled by lust, hate and paranoia. He was a man in full pursuit of his desires, but he flailed about much of the time. Pursuing an earthly kingdom by your own strength instead of letting the Great King establish you, failing to obey commands, failing to respect authority, taking glory and vengeance for yourself—these are all wrong ways pursue the reward.

The Principles for Pursuing Rewards

Right and Wrong Ways

Just because David was granted an earthly crown doesn't guarantee he will keep it any more than Saul did, so it becomes a matter of living in a way that he maintains his crown. Otherwise, another will take his earthly crown from him just as he took Saul's earthly crown.

The Kings' Men

It is not just the king whose performance is being evaluated along these lines in Second Samuel. David's own men are rewarded for their actions, as are those who seek an alliance with the king. It is not enough to profess loyalty to the king, and good intentions are never enough. How they acquit themselves, particularly when they are fighting in his name or acting on his behalf, will determine the reward they will receive, and to what degree. There are degrees of reward. The greatest honor includes sitting at the king's table. The negative rewards include demotion, curses, and even execution.

The Principles for Pursuing Rewards

Right and Wrong Reasons

There are many motivations for pursuing a reward and a place in the king's kingdom, but is what you are pursuing for the king's glory and the building of his kingdom, or for your glory and the building of your own kingdom? When Hannah asked for a child, she dedicated him back to the LORD for the building up of the LORD's kingdom and not just for her own legacy.

You can be pursuing the right goal but for the wrong reason. The wrong reason can put you out of alignment with the king and his agenda for the kingdom and affect your end reward.

Motivations behind words and actions become a strong focus in Second Samuel. When you stand before the king seeking that reward, he is going to question not just your actions but your heart, and depending on where your heart is, it may cost you the reward.

The Principles for Pursuing Rewards

The four main principles that govern the pursuit of a reward that First Samuel established:

- 1) There are right and wrong kings with whom to align yourself.
- 2) There are right and wrong rewards to pursue.
- 3) There are right and wrong ways to pursue the reward.
- 4) There are right and wrong reasons to pursue the reward.

The theme of pursuing crowns in First Samuel now flows into **the assessment and awarding of crowns** in Second Samuel. As David comes into his kingdom, he begins the task of sorting out who will be associated with him, to what degree, and on what grounds. He will also decide who will be demoted and executed. But even though he sits on the throne, his own performance is still being assessed by God the Great King. As Second Samuel opens, he has yet to achieve the imperishable crown, and maintaining his earthly crown will be an on-going challenge.

Now let's talk about the narrative structure.

Introduction

Second Samuel is divided into 3 main parts

Part 1: David establishing his kingship, 2 Samuel 1-8

- His reign as king of Judah (2 Sam. 1-4)
- His reign as king of Israel (2 Sam. 5-8)
- Ends with the summary of his administrative staff, (2 Sam. 8:15-18)

Part 2: David's descent into sin and judgment and his return, 2 Samuel 9-20

- His war at Rabbah and sin with Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 10-11)
- Judgment & fallout (2 Sam. 12-19)
- King David's return & the Sheba Rebellion (2 Sam. 19-20)
- Ends with the summary of his administrative staff, (2 Sam. 20:23-26)

Part 3: Final rewards and glorification poems, 2 Samuel 21-24

High Level Comparison of the Kings

Remember, First and Second Samuel were one book. They were meant to flow together in theme, which means the comparison of the kings needs to be considered as a thematic unit.

The comparison of the kings on a very high level can be outlined like this:

(A1) Saul performance as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-20)

(B1) Interim: David's exile years (1 Sam. 21-29)

(C1) David wins his battle against the Amalekites and takes the spoil (1 Sam. 30)

(C2) Saul dies in his battle with the Philistines and loses all (1 Sam. 31)

(B2) Interim: David reigns as king of Judah in Hebron (2 Sam. 1-5)

(A2) David's performance as king of Israel (2 Sam. 6-24)

This is what we call a **chiasm** or **chiastic structure**, and it is a signature writing style of these authors, so it is important that we learn about it.

Completing the Comparison of the Kings

(A1) Saul performance as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-20)

(B1) Interim: David's exile years (1 Sam. 21-29)

(C1) David wins his battle against the Amalekites and takes the spoil (1 Sam. 30)

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Chiasms are a form of literary structure that helps the author bring the reader to a particular point the author wants to make. The author works his way, element by element, toward the pivotal point (C1, C2), and once he has made his point, he then works backward, revisiting the points in reverse order, thus mirroring them for the purpose of making comparisons.

Completing the Comparison of the Kings

(A1) Saul performance as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-20)



(B1) Interim: David's exile years (1 Sam. 21-29)



(C1) David wins his battle against the Amalekites and takes the spoil (1 Sam. 30)

(C2) Saul dies in his battle with the Philistines and loses all (1 Sam. 31)

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Thus, you find an argument or story outlined in this A-B-C-B-A structure.

A1 and A2 are a comment on one another, as are B1 and B2.

C1 and C2 are then the pivotal points and often the theme.

By pairing these points, the author invites us to make comparisons between them, and sometimes the pairings are surprising and thought-provoking. There are lessons in them.

Let's look at these.

Completing the Comparison of the Kings

(A1) Saul performance as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-20)

(B1) Interim: David's exile years (1 Sam. 21-29)

(C1) David wins his battle against the Amalekites and takes the spoil (1 Sam. 30)

(C2) Saul dies in his battle with the Philistines and loses all (1 Sam. 31)

(B2) Interim: David reigns as king of Judah in Hebron (2 Sam. 1-5)

(A2) David's performance as king of Israel (2 Sam. 6-24)

(A1-A2): The overarching comparison is the assessment of David's performance to Saul's performance as king of Israel, but the narrative parallels aren't seen until after David is crowned king over all of Israel in Second Samuel 5:3. Overall, the comparisons of the kings focus on the two rewards being offered to these kings and why Saul loses his, but David doesn't, even though he fails in much the same way as Saul did. We will look for the reasons why.

Completing the Comparison of the Kings

(A1) Saul performance as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-20)

(B1) Interim: David's exile years (1 Sam. 21-29)

(C1) David wins his battle against the Amalekites and takes the spoil (1 Sam. 30)

(C2) Saul dies in his battle with the Philistines and loses all (1 Sam. 31)

(B2) Interim: David reigns as king of Judah in Hebron (2 Sam. 1-5)

(A2) David's performance as king of Israel (2 Sam. 6-24)

(B1-B2) The interim years of David's exile and David's reign as king of Judah are a curious comparison. You wouldn't think they are a comparison at all but just the outworking of the historical timeline, and yet they are paired in the greater narrative structure and even have a similar sub-structure within each. They are comparable in two main ways.

Completing the Comparison of the Kings

(A1) Saul performance as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-20)

(B1) Interim: David's exile years (1 Sam. 21-29) . . . **Lessons Learned**

(C1) David wins his battle against the Amalekites and takes the spoil (1 Sam. 30)

(C2) Saul dies in his battle with the Philistines and loses all (1 Sam. 31)

(B2) Interim: David reigns as king of Judah (2 Sam. 1-5) . . . **Lessons Not Applied**

(A2) David's performance as king of Israel (2 Sam. 6-24)

(B1-B2) The first comparison, and the one that sets us up for the study of Second Samuel, is their theme of lessons learned and not applied. The whole point of David going through those exile years was to train him in how to reign as God's king over God's kingdom. God didn't give Saul this training. God put Saul on the throne and left him to pursue his reward as he saw fit, but God invested time in grooming David for the kingship with a series of lessons. Now, in the second interim period, we see how well these lessons were learned, not just by David but even more so by his men.

Completing the Comparison of the Kings

(A1) Saul performance as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-20)

(B1) Interim: David's exile years (1 Sam. 21-29) . . . **Lessons Learned**

(C1) David wins his battle against the Amalekites and takes the spoil (1 Sam. 30)

(C2) Saul dies in his battle with the Philistines and loses all (1 Sam. 31)

(B2) Interim: David reigns as king of Judah (2 Sam. 1-5) . . . **Lessons Not Applied**

(A2) David's performance as king of Israel (2 Sam. 6-24)

The theme of vengeance is particularly emphasized in both. The narrative of the exile years (First Samuel 21-29) has a chiasmic structure that pivots around the key issue of vengeance. The chiasmic structure of the kingship years (Second Samuel 1-5) focuses on the strengthening of David's house over Saul's house, but the outworking of vengeance is the key issue.

Completing the Comparison of the Kings

(A1) Saul performance as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-20)

(B1) Interim: David's exile years (1 Sam. 21-29) . . . **Lessons Learned**

(C1) David wins his battle against the Amalekites and takes the spoil (1 Sam. 30)

(C2) Saul dies in his battle with the Philistines and loses all (1 Sam. 31)

(B2) Interim: David reigns as king of Judah (2 Sam. 1-5) . . . **Lessons Not Applied**

(A2) David's performance as king of Israel (2 Sam. 6-24)

(B1-B2) The second comparison involves what characters are being highlighted. During the exile years, the narrative slipped from a focus on King Saul onto David, who was Saul's mighty man and a commander in his army. Now, in the interim kingship years, the narrative similarly slips away from a focus on the King David and onto his commanders, the sons of Zeruah (Joab, Abishai, and Asahel). King David takes a passive role, doing little more than passing judgment on the actions going on around him, but the real focus is on Joab and his brothers, and their interaction with Abner, commander of the army for the House of Saul.

Completing the Comparison of the Kings

(A1) Saul performance as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-20)

(B1) Interim: David's exile years (1 Sam. 21-29) . . . **Lessons Learned**

(C1) David wins his battle against the Amalekites and takes the spoil (1 Sam. 30)

(C2) Saul dies in his battle with the Philistines and loses all (1 Sam. 31)

(B2) Interim: David reigns as king of Judah (2 Sam. 1-5) . . . **Lessons Not Applied**

(A2) David's performance as king of Israel (2 Sam. 6-24)

(C1-C2) The outcomes of David's and Saul's battles at the end of First Samuel seem to bring the theme of rewards to a natural conclusion in First Samuel. And yet, the comparison of the kings' performance hasn't truly begun, and winning that one battle wasn't the ultimate reward God had in mind for David. It was only the first step in his ascent to the throne, in contrast to Saul's final descent. The battles only served to highlight Saul's failure, the loss of his reward, and with it, the loss of his life. (This is comparable to Eli's loss of the crowns of high priest and judge at his death.)

Completing the Comparison of the Kings

(A1) Saul performance as king of Israel (1 Sam. 9-20)

(B1) Interim: David's exile years (1 Sam. 21-29)

(C1) David wins his battle against the Amalekites and takes the spoil (1 Sam. 30)

(C2) Saul dies in his battle with the Philistines and loses all (1 Sam. 31)

(B2) Interim: David reigns as king of Judah (2 Sam. 1-5)

(A2) David's performance as king of Israel (2 Sam. 6-24)

(C1-C2) First Samuel ended with Saul's death, but the comparison doesn't end with David's death, and I think the omission is deliberate, to underscore the fact that David's reign will never end according to the reward of the Davidic Covenant. That is an authorial comment.

Now let's backtrack to **(B1)** and look at the lessons that were learned during the exile, that will become part of our opening theme for Second Samuel.

Interim: Lessons Learned During Exile

Interim Period: David's Exile Years

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| (A1) David seeks a hiding place but is rejected by the Philistines (1 Sam. 21) | } | 1) Value of mercy |
| (B1) Saul kills the priesthood (1 Sam. 22) | | |
| (C1) David escapes Saul through God's wisdom (1 Sam. 23) | } | 2) Obeying commands |
| (D1) Saul in David's hands (tears his robe) (1 Sam. 24) | | |
| (E) David and Nabal (1 Sam. 25) | } | 3) Vengeance |
| (D2) Saul in David's hands (steals the spear and jug) (1 Sam. 26) | | |
| (C2) David escapes Saul by his own wisdom (1 Sam. 27) | } | 4) Serving two masters (Balance of Loyalty) |
| (B2) Saul seeks a medium (1 Sam. 28) | | |
| (A2) David seeks a hiding place but is rejected by the Philistines (2 Sam. 29) | } | |

Interim: Lessons Learned During Exile

The Value of Mercy

The exile years opened with David on the run from Saul, and then David together with his men on the run from Saul and Abner. The pursuit was relentless and a lesson in managing fear by relying on the LORD. But it was also a lesson in mercy.

God, the Great King, values mercy, and anyone seeking to reign in His kingdom needs to align with that value. But mercy doesn't come naturally. The value of mercy must be taught. When you are oppressed and pursued, you ache for mercy and reprieve. That was part of the first series of lessons, when God delivered David and his men repeatedly out of Saul's hand.

It is one thing to be granted mercy when you are in your enemy's hand, but does it translate into a driving value in your life? What happens with the coin flips, and you are the one holding your enemy in your hand? You can accept mercy for yourself, and then not give it in return (Jesus bases His parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18 on this premise). The same mercy God granted to David and his men will be expected of them when they begin to rule over others.

Interim: Lessons Learned During Exile

Obeying Commands

The lesson on mercy was interwoven with a lesson on the importance of obeying commands and inquiring of God. Was the battle that David wanted to pursue a battle in which he should engage? Did he ask God before setting off, or did he do what seemed right to him at the time? (Saul saw an opportunity and took that as God's go-ahead when it couldn't have been farther from the truth. But then Saul never bothered to inquire of the LORD like David did.) It is not just a matter of receiving the instructions but obeying them, and there is no point in inquiring of the LORD if you aren't going to follow the directions He gives.

The issue of obeying commands will work out to an even greater extent in Second Samuel, where King David's own men will reap the cost of not obeying the earthly king's commands, even as King David himself reaps the consequences of not obeying the LORD's commands. Obedience is key, even when the king's commands don't make sense, even when his men disagree with them, or even when the commands seem to put the kingdom in jeopardy.

Interim: Lessons Learned During Exile

Vengeance

The lessons in mercy were followed by a series of lessons on its opposite: vengeance. What do you do when you have your enemy in your hand? Do you kill him? Do you spare him, but take a trophy? Who has the right to take vengeance, you or God? Ah, that is the question!

The Great King reserves the right to dispense this particular reward. He has claimed the right to avenge and recompense His enemies, and He demands glory for the takedown. This moment cannot be about taking glory and making a name for yourself. It cannot be about humiliating your enemy to settle an old grudge or repay old torments. It cannot be about executing the person, unless the Great King specifically commands it, and then it is done according to His authority and His justice, not yours.

The Great King is a merciful King, but He is also a just King, and He judges those who aspire to reign in His kingdom by how they respond to the desire for vengeance when given power. Vengeance is the pivotal lesson in David's exile years, and it becomes the main focus of Second Samuel.

Interim: Lessons Learned During Exile

Serving Two Masters (The Balance of Loyalty)

The final series of lessons found David and his men back in enemy hands, voluntarily this time, and living a somewhat discordant lifestyle as they balanced the task of serving a worldly Philistine master while remaining loyal to God's agenda. It is easy to get swept into the worldly master's battles—battles that you should not be in—and loyalties become a new form of battleground. The issue of loyalty—how it is defined and how it works itself out—becomes a major theme in Second Samuel as many people seek an alliance with David and a place in his kingdom, while others who were loyal to him for the wrong reasons lose their place.

In Second Samuel, we have multiple levels of command, and the soldier in the field can find himself making a choice between obeying David the King or Joab the commander. What happens when one authority level is out of alignment with the great authorities, even God? It gets complicated. Masters aren't always people. Masters can be the things that motivate your pursuits, such as greed for earthly wealth and vanity or lust.

Interim: Lessons Learned During Exile

David learned these lessons, and while he stumbled at times and had to deal with the consequences, he managed to self-correct. But not all the mighty men who shared his experience took an equal lesson. No sooner had David won his battle with the Amalekites in First Samuel 30, than he had to immediately settle a conflict among his own men over sharing the spoil. Wicked, worthless men seek the reward for self-serving reasons, and they are found even in the ranks of David's mighty men. Joab and his brothers failed to learn the lessons of mercy, vengeance, obeying commands, and what constitutes loyalty to the king. As a result, their pursuit of a greater reward in David's kingdom was frustrated.

This kind of internal conflict over claiming a part of the king, his kingdom, and his spoil will mark King David's reign throughout the book of Second Samuel, and these four themes will resurface again with more serious consequences.

Why Study a Pursuit of Crowns?

The goal of pursuing crowns that is pictured in the Old Testament through the models of the various players in the books of Samuel becomes a goal for us as well as believers in the Church Age. The theme of pursuing a reward is spoken about in Jesus' teachings, in His parables (many of which spring from the books of Samuel), and in Paul's and Peter's writings. We are even exhorted to pursue "crowns," although they are a little different for us.

In its New Testament usage, **a crown is defined as a reward that we will receive as part of our glorification**, and a number of them are described.

Paul describes it as being similar to a prize that competitors seek, only of an imperishable quality rather than a perishable one (1 Corinthians 9:25).

- A crown of rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:19)
- A crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8)
- A crown of life (James 1:12)
- A crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4)
- Paul counts his brethren in the faith as being his joy and crown, meaning his legacy (Philippians 4:1).

Why Study a Pursuit of Crowns?

The New Testament exhortations to pursue the crown stem from the belief that we will be co-heirs with Christ as part of our glorification in the kingdom. The LORD has promised to extend the glory of royalty to us if we endure even as Christ endured, as Paul writes:

So, we have two steps being described in this verse: the suffering, that is, the enduring or persevering through trial, which we call the **process of sanctification**, and then the **glorification**. But there is another aspect which must be accomplished, and that is salvation.

Is salvation the reward? Is it the outworking of the sanctification process that isn't determined until the end when we are glorified—or is it a separate step that is accomplished apart from the endurance test of sanctification?

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

—Romans 8:16-17

Why Study a Pursuit of Crowns?

Here at FBC, we believe that salvation is a separate act—a justifying act—that must be accomplished first. It is accomplished at the moment of belief and is based on faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone and not by works, as it says in Ephesians 2:8-9:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” —Eph. 2:8-9

The gift (not by works) is contrasted to the reward, which is according to works, as it says:

“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.” – Matt. 16:27

“The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.” – Rev. 20:13

The “not by works” part is what makes the difference between salvation and sanctification, because sanctification is based on works, but salvation is not.

Why Study a Pursuit of Crowns?

The moment we confess our faith in Christ, we are granted a permanent citizenship in the kingdom on *Christ's* merit, not our own. The only way we could lose that citizenship is if Christ Himself loses His citizenship in the kingdom—which will never happen. Once we enter into that covenant relationship with the King as His bride, it is an irrevocable covenant, at least on His side. Regardless of our faithlessness or failings, Christ cannot break His covenant with us. It is blood covenant, sealed by His blood on the cross. He cannot break His word, even if we deny Him.

This is why, I think, the rewards and crowns system is needed. There are many people who will believe in Christ and be granted salvation and a citizenship in His kingdom, but many will stumble and even fall away during the sanctification process. The crowns are the rewards for those who pursue the relationship with Christ to its fullest, and there are other rewards reserved for those who do not. Remember, rewards can be good and bad, and even in the kingdom, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when the rewards are determined.

Why Study a Pursuit of Crowns?

Salvation is not a reward for having passed the endurance test. It is not the crown awarded to us for having achieved something by our own works. To pursue it as a reward is to pursue a wrong reward, and it will lead you into bondage. Salvation has to be its own step in the process.

Attaining the crown involves more than simply believing in Christ. It requires action over time. There is an endurance test that must be passed to attain the crown, and that endurance test is what we encounter during the sanctification process. Here are some other verses I believe support this:

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the LORD has promised to those who love Him.”

—James 1:12

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

—2 Timothy 4:7-8

Why Study a Pursuit of Crowns?

Crowns can be earned but also lost in the course of the sanctification process:

*“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”
—Rev. 3:10-11*

“And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” —1 Cor. 9:25-27

What does Paul mean by disqualified?

This is where church doctrine divides . . .

Why Study a Pursuit of Crowns?

- If you do *not* believe that your salvation is guaranteed at the point of belief because it is based on your works and not Christ's merit alone, then you can interpret these verses and even models in the books of Samuel to mean that you can lose that salvation and citizenship in the kingdom.
- If you *do* believe that salvation is based on Christ's merit alone and is therefore permanent, then losing the crown or being disqualified doesn't mean that you have lost your citizenship. It only means that you have lost the added glorification of royalty.

God offered the kings two crowns:

- 1) The earthly, perishable crown
- 2) The eternal, imperishable crown

What then are the equivalents of perishable and imperishable crowns for us?

The Perishable vs. Imperishable Crowns

The Earthly (Perishable) Crown

As kings, Saul and David were both granted an earthly kingdom to begin with, but it is ultimately perishable. They won't take it with them when they go but will pass it on to the next generation.

The earthly kingdom can be gained and lost in a lifetime, and the pursuit of the earthly kingdom alone, without being aligned with God the King, can become the wrong reward to pursue. We saw this with Saul, who lost his earthly kingdom in First Samuel. David will lose his earthly kingdom briefly because of sin in his life, but he will regain it. This is one of the comparison studies we will make between the kings.

The Perishable vs. Imperishable Crowns

The Earthly (Perishable) Crown

Saul and David lived under the Old Covenant. They had a literal physical kingdom that they were pursuing, and while they related to God similarly to us in heart, they related to Him *physically* in a way that we do not under the New Covenant. Christ's death on the cross changed how that relationship worked. We do not have to worry about following procedures for handling a physical Ark or making physical offerings as a physical priesthood would in the Old Testament. Christ the King fulfills those functions for us.

There was a physical kingdom in Old Testament times, and there will be a physical kingdom—Christ's Millennial Kingdom—in the future, but we are living in an interim time. Interim periods focus on lessons learned and applied. In our interim period, we are in the process of learning lessons on how to act and judge as kings, and our reward will be based on how well we learn and apply those lessons going into the kingdom era.

The Perishable vs. Imperishable Crowns

The Earthly (Perishable) Crown

In regard to pursuing a physical kingdom, there is not a physical kingdom to be pursued in this current dispensation, just as there is no physical Temple or priesthood. We, as believers living in the Church age, are not the kings of Israel, nor are we called to pursue an earthly kingdom as Saul and David pursued it. To focus on the pursuit of a physical kingdom in this life will count as a loss to us. Even so, we can experience rewards in the earthly realm for acts of obedience and perseverance through trials. They may not be tangible benefits like worldly wealth or power, but they might. The LORD may even grant us a temporary kingdom. There can also be the intangible benefits of peace, joy, well-being, and kindness.

Rewards can be gained, lost, and regained (maybe) over the course of our lives. We can lose them because of sin, but repentance after a time of failure is rewarded. Human relationships can be broken and restored. But again, these rewards are things we work for in this life. We will leave the earthly kingdom behind when we enter into the eternal kingdom.

The Perishable vs. Imperishable Crowns

The Eternal (Imperishable) Crown

God also offered to both Saul and David the imperishable crown of an eternal kingship—the legacy of being established on the throne for all generations. God doesn't tell the kings that this reward is on the table for them. They only find out once they have gained or lost it. Saul lost this as well, but we know that David gains it. It is what we call the Davidic Covenant. Again, we will be comparing the kings to see how this crown was gained or lost.

We might be tempted to label the imperishable crown as salvation because it is a covenantal crown that, once gained, cannot be lost. **But this crown is still based on what is merited for works, not by grace.** Because it is a works-based crown, it is not salvation. Instead, it is the crown that is reserved for us in the eternal kingdom.

The Perishable vs. Imperishable Crowns

The Eternal (Imperishable) Crown

When we believe in Christ and enter into that covenant with Him, God sets aside a crown for us that is of an imperishable nature. We don't know what that crown entails any more than the kings of Israel did. They only discovered it after it had been lost (in Saul's case) or gained (in David's case). We would not know that the imperishable crown even exists if it weren't for the fact that God revealed it in the lives of these kings. But He has revealed it and encourages us to pursue our own imperishable crown. We don't know what our particular crown will entail, only that it is promised to those who endure trials, who obey authorities and commands, who fight the good fight, and handle God's holy vessels honorably. This is how David earned his crown, and how we earn ours.

The earthly rewards will never attain the enduring qualities of the eternal rewards; by contrast, the eternal rewards, when realized, will include the former rewards such as the riches and glory, as Jesus says: *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."* (Matthew 6:33)

Why Study a Pursuit of Crowns?

If we are pursuing crowns, how is that reward determined?

Do you just live a Christian life and hope for the best? No! The LORD gives us an understanding of how the reward is determined through the examples of the people in the books of Samuel—what they do and what gets rewarded as a result. As we work through the text, we will be looking at the hierarchy of values for determining levels of reward and assess how we ourselves are living in pursuit of the reward. The reward is going to be granted, for better or worse, so we should live as intentionally as possible in this life.

Our Objectives

Our objectives for this study are:

- 1) To complete the comparison of the kings
- 2) To identify what values are used to determine the reward, good or bad.

As we examine the king's decisions, we will see something of his decision-making process. There is a hierarchy by which the king, and even the Great King, judge people, and we will be looking for that as we go through the text.

- 3) To identify behaviors and heart motives that can cost the characters in the narrative their reward. If someone is in pursuit of a reward, it is helpful to know how that reward will be determined, to be more intentional in pursuit and avoid pitfalls.