

Lesson 81

David Becomes King

God fulfilled his promise to make David the next king of Israel.

Overview

Lesson Focus

David went from living in exile with the Philistines to being king over Judah. He waited for God's timing to remove King Saul, who was killed in battle. Eventually, all of Israel crowned David as king, and David chose Jerusalem as his capital city.

Key Passages

1 Samuel 29:2–7, 30:4–6, 31:1–7; 2 Samuel 1:11–12, 2:8–11, 5:1–5

Objectives

Students will be able to:

Describe how King Saul and his sons died.

Identify how David became king of Judah and then over all Israel.

Memory Verse

Psalm 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

In the previous lesson, David was being pursued by the jealous King Saul. David and his men were forced to hide in caves and strongholds in the wilderness, always on the move. Twice David had the opportunity to kill Saul, once in a cave and once in Saul's camp (1 Samuel 24 and 26), but David refused to take the life of God's anointed king. Finally, David decided to escape Saul by moving to the land of the Philistines and joining himself to Achish, king of Gath (1 Samuel 27:1–3). Saul gave up chasing David, and David and his men and their families were given the city of Ziklag to live. From there, David and his men raided the enemies of Israel but told Achish they were raiding Israelites. They left no survivors in any area they raided so no one could report where they'd been. Achish believed David would always be his servant since the Israelites must hate him for raiding them (1 Samuel 27:8–12). Achish trusted David so much that he included him in his personal bodyguard when the Philistines gathered for battle against the Israelites (1 Samuel 28:1–2).

David faced a dilemma of loyalties as a servant of Achish, who had graciously harbored him, and as an Israelite. God delivered him from this situation by having the Philistine commanders refuse to let David fight with them. Achish may have trusted David, but they did not. So David and his men returned to Ziklag. But the men discovered that an Amalekite raiding party had overcome the city, burned it, and captured all the people (1 Samuel 30:1–3). Overcome with grief, David's men even spoke of stoning David, but David strengthened himself in the Lord (1 Samuel 30:6). After asking God's direction, David and his men pursued the Amalekites and caught up to them when they were spread out, celebrating their great success. David struck them down, and only 400 young men escaped the vengeance of David and his men. They recovered everything that was taken, and all their wives and children were rescued. They returned to Ziklag, and David sent some of the spoil of the Amalekites to Israelite allies who had helped him during his years on the run.

Meanwhile, King Saul was terrified at the sight of the Philistine army. When God would not answer him by dreams, Urim, or prophets, Saul disguised himself and went to see a medium in En-dor (1 Samuel 28:8). This was directly forbidden by God (Deuteronomy 18:10–12), and Saul had previously removed those who practiced divination from the land. His disobedience and foolish decision-making continued as he vowed not to harm the medium in the Lord's name and asked her to bring up the deceased prophet, Samuel. Because the medium was startled when Samuel actually appeared, we can deduce that it was the power of God that enabled this supernatural appearance of Samuel. Samuel told Saul that because of his disobedience to the Lord, he would lose the kingdom to David. Samuel also prophesied that the Israelites would lose the battle against the Philistines and Saul and his sons would die (1 Samuel 28:16–19). This came true in the battle on Mount Gilboa when the Israelites were defeated and Saul and three of his sons were killed. Refusing to be captured by his enemies, Saul fell on his own sword, and his armor-bearer did the same (1 Samuel 31:1–7).

2 Samuel begins with David receiving the news of Saul's death from an Amalekite who looted the battlefield and stole Saul's crown. Rather than rewarding the opportunistic Amalekite, David had him struck down for claiming to have killed Saul. David and his men mourned for Saul and Jonathan, and David wrote a lament to remember them in song (2 Samuel 1:19–27).

Again following God's direction, David returned to Judah, and the leaders of his tribe anointed him king at Hebron (2 Samuel 2:1–4). But Saul's commander and cousin, Abner, placed Saul's remaining son, Ish-bosheth, on the throne, and he set up his capital in Mahanaim on the east side of the Jordan River. War continued for years between the two kings until Ish-bosheth angered Abner, who vowed to turn the kingdom over to David. David asked for his first wife Michal, daughter of Saul, to be returned to him, and Abner agreed. Sometime later, David's commander, Joab, lured Abner to a meeting and murdered him out of revenge for killing his brother in battle. Then Ish-bosheth was murdered in his bed by two of his own captains. With no one left in the house of Saul, the elders of Israel met and made David king of Israel (2 Samuel 5:1–3). David chose Jerusalem as his new capital, and he captured the city from the Jebusites. He added to its defenses and built a palace for himself. David knew

that his position was from the Lord (2 Samuel 5:12), and he was called to shepherd the people of Israel (2 Samuel 5:2).

Historical/Apologetics Background

Saul's visit with the medium of En-dor in 1 Samuel 28 shows how he continued to act in disobedience to the Lord and his commands. When Saul faced the Philistine army and wanted the Lord's help, God did not answer with the usual means of revealing his will. Saul had refused to obey God's instructions and Samuel's advice, had killed the priests, and had sent David into exile. Although he showed no repentance for his actions, Saul still wanted to save his life and his throne. With no prophet or dreams or Urim (one of the stones in the breastplate of the high priest) to guide him, Saul asked his servants to find a medium. Mediums, necromancers (those who talk to the spirits of dead people), and others who practiced divination, told fortunes, or inquired of the dead were an abomination to the Lord (Deuteronomy 18:10–12). These practices were common in the pagan nations around Israel, but God wanted his people to be holy, set apart (Leviticus 19:31). God declared that he would be against whoever turned to mediums and necromancers, and that person would be cut off from the Israelites (Leviticus 20:6). God commanded that mediums and necromancers should be put to death (Leviticus 20:27). Saul had previously removed the mediums and necromancers (1 Samuel 28:9), which is why the medium feared death if she obeyed Saul's request to bring up a dead spirit. Once Saul swore she would not be punished (in direct disobedience to God's command that she should), the medium called for Samuel. God miraculously allowed the appearance of Samuel, an old man wrapped in a robe, to talk to Saul. Samuel was agitated with Saul for disturbing him, and he reminded Saul of his disobedience against the Lord's command to completely destroy the Amalekites. After Saul heard he and his sons would die the next day, he collapsed because of fear and lack of food. The medium gave him a meal, and Saul was revived. He returned to his camp to await the battle, where he did perish with his three sons.

Skeptics of the Bible and other scholars have claimed that the Bible is full of errors because independent archaeological evidence had not confirmed specific people mentioned. However, archaeology is not something for the Christian to fear; recent discoveries have confirmed the existence of biblical people. One example is King David. Some claimed that David was not a real, historical figure in Israel's history but a hero invented by Jewish writers centuries after he supposedly lived. However, the Tel Dan stele was discovered in 1993–1994 during the excavation of Tel Dan, a town in northern Israel. The stone fragment, which came from a monument for Hazael king of Aram, is dated between 950–800 BC and has "House of David" inscribed on it. This early reference to the house of David contradicts the skeptics who tried to say he never existed. The stele is currently on display in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

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