



THRONES

THE COURT HISTORY OF KING DAVID

A DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY THROUGH

1 AND 2 SAMUEL

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INTRODUCTION:

The books of Samuel and Kings recount a story of humanity at its most dramatic. The story is filled with both triumph and tragedy. It includes intrigue and counter intrigue, assassinations and romance, loyalty and betrayal, passion and violence, shining success and wretched failure. It has been called “the finest piece of history writing in antiquity.” It is a true-to-life account where characters are presented unadorned and raw with remarkable honesty. No attempt is made to clean up the moral lapses of the heroes or hide the dark side of life. ***In these stories we can discover something about the potential in each of us for great good or great evil, and our struggle to answer the important question: who occupies the throne of our hearts?***

This study was written with the hope that you would experience it with a Bible and a journal open, pen in hand. The 10 “chapters” that appear here accompanied a 10 week teaching series broken into 10 “episodes.” You can find those messages at:
www.terraforma.church/going-deeper/message-archive

We hope this content ignites your imagination, awakens your heart, and fuels your spirit. The **summary** portions should help you zoom out and glimpse the big picture of the narrative. The **study** portions are there to prompt reflective thoughts and to draw attention to important details of the text. The **questions** were written to help catalyze your journaling and reflection. Answer all the questions, or just pick one to reflect on at length. Invite God’s Spirit to meet you in the text and illuminate your thoughts.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

- Abigail** – Beautiful and wise woman that wins the affection of David as a young man and later becomes one of David’s wives.
- Abishai** – David’s left hand, Joab’s brother, mighty warrior.
- Abner** – General for Saul, then Ish-bosheth after Saul’s death. He is a capable warrior and wise. He almost formed an alliance with King David that would have ended the War of Contention. He reluctantly kills Asahel, and is later killed by Joab in retaliation.
- Absalom** – David’s son: gifted, cunning, and handsome. He is known for his larger-than-life pageantry and accompanying ego. Kills his brother, steals the hearts of the people, usurps the throne of his father. He is Killed by Joab in in the single battle of the War of Rebellion.

- Adonijah** – David’s third son, he attempts to take the throne while his father is still living. His move for the throne fails quickly, despite gaining the support of Joab and other prominent people.
- Ahithophel** – Counsellor to Absalom during his rebellion. He kills himself after his advice is thwarted by Hushai, who is a secret agent of David.
- Amasa** – General for Absalom’s armies in the War of Rebellion, later named as Joab’s replacement as commander of the armies of David for a short time. Joab kills him treacherously.
- Amnon** – David’s son. His twisted lust leads him to rape his half-sister Tamar. He is killed by Absalom in revenge.
- Asahel** – Joab’s youngest brother, known to be brave and fast of foot. He tries to kill Abner in the War of Contention between the house of David and the house of Saul, but is defeated.
- Bathsheba** – Beautiful wife of Uriah the Hittite. She becomes the forced mistress of King David and later his wife after Uriah is murdered by the king. She is the mother of Solomon.
- David** – Shepherd, poet, warrior, slayer of Goliath, murderer of Uriah, 40-year king of Israel.
- Hushai** – David’s secret agent planted in the court of Absalom during the rebellion. He spies and reports on Absalom’s plans to David, and confounds the advice of Ahithophel.
- Ish-Bosheth** – Son of Saul, has a short reign over half of a divided kingdom after winning the support of the tribe of Benjamin and several of Saul’s key leaders. Engages in a civil war with the house of David to contest the rightful control of Israel (War of Contention). He is assassinated by his own men after Abner defects to David.
- Joab** – David’s right hand: general, assassin, advisor, and friend. He does what he wants sometimes, not always what he is told. Does much of David’s killing and is known to take matters into his own hands. He is not afraid to speak his mind to the king, even rebuke. Joab is a capable leader and a proficient warrior, but his complex relationship with David makes him unpredictable.
- Jonathan** – Saul’s son and the favorite to succeed Saul’s throne. He is an accomplished warrior that is beloved by the people. Abdicates his throne to David in a covenant of friendship defined by the Hebrew word *hesed*. Pleads David’s innocence before his father Saul, and protects David from the mad king.
- Mephibosheth** – Jonathan’s son, Saul’s grandson. Crippled as a young child and made to live in secret for fear of David’s wrath. Received mercy (*hesed*) from David in fulfillment of his promise to Jonathan.

- Michal** – Saul’s daughter, David’s wife. She is taken from David when he flees the kingdom as a fugitive and given to another of Saul’s men. She is later given back to David during the War of Contention. Mocks David’s worship as the ark is returned to Jerusalem.
- Nathan** – A prophet that acts as the corrective voice of God to David during his reign. Nathan confronts David after his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah, and later is present at the anointing of David’s heir.
- Samuel** – Prophet, sage, kingmaker. He is the voice of God to the people. Anoints Saul as king, and later presides over Saul’s rejection as king. Anoints David as a boy in anticipation of his ascension to the throne.
- Saul** – Israel’s first king, a hero turned villain. He is tall, handsome, and impressive, yet known to be paranoid, fearful, and anxious. The latter years of Saul’s reign are marked by instability as he unsuccessfully strives to retain his power.
- Shimei** – Supporter of King Saul that taunts, shames, and abuses David while David flees from Absalom. When David returned to the throne Shimei begs for mercy.
- Solomon** – Another of David’s younger sons, his mother is Bathsheba. Solomon is the only one of David’s sons that doesn’t make a play for the throne while his father is still living. David names him his heir and gives him command of his private army. Solomon is known for his legendary wisdom and his reign is the high-water mark for Israel.
- Tamar** – Beautiful daughter of David, sister to Absalom. She was shamed and abused by her half-brother Amnon and used to advance the political goals of her brother Absalom. Her story is tragic.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Scripture Reference</u>	<u>Event</u>
1079 BC	1 Samuel 15	Saul's REJECTION - The Lord rejects Saul as King <i>"The kingdom will be torn from your hands and given to someone better..."</i>
1063 BC	1 Samuel 16	David's RISE David anointed by Samuel while tending his father's flocks.
	1 Samuel 17	David defeats the giant Goliath in single combat.
	1 Samuel 18	David in Saul's service, Saul begins to be jealous of David.
	1 Samuel 20	David's covenant friendship with Jonathan begins.
1062 BC?	1 Samuel 18-26	RIVALRY of Kings: David flees the kingdom as a fugitive, Saul in pursuit desperately grasping to retain power. Saul tries to kill David twice.
	1 Samuel 22	David trains a private army of mercenaries at the Cave of Adullam.
	1 Samuel 24 & 26	David spares Saul's life twice and refuses to take the kingdom by force: he will not <i>"touch the Lord's anointed."</i>
1056 BC	1 Samuel 31	RESISTANCE before David's Reign: Saul kills himself after losing a battle against the Philistines at Mt. Gilboa. David receives Saul's physical crown as proof of his death. David mourns the loss of Saul and Jonathan.
	2 Samuel 1	David writes moving lament for the fallen king and his friend Jonathan.
	2 Samuel 3	David is anointed king over Judah (south) Ish-Bosheth king over Israel (north) The War of Contention: years of war between the House of David and the House of Saul; Joab leads David's armies and Abner leads the armies of Ish-Bosheth. David increases in favor, while Ish-Bosheth decreases. War ends when Ish-Bosheth is assassinated by some of his own battle leaders in an attempt to win David's favor.
1048 BC	2 Samuel 5	David king over all Israel David defeats the Philistines to secure his borders. David takes Jerusalem and makes it his capital city.
1042 BC	2 Samuel 6	Ark of the Covenant brought to Jerusalem.

	2 Samuel 7	David desires to build a temple for God's glory. Even though he is told "no," he receives a remarkable covenant promise from God: <i>"I will establish the throne of your kingdom forever."</i>
1040 BC	2 Samuel 9	RESTORATION of Relationship for Covenant Friend: David seeks out Mephibosheth to fulfill <i>hesed</i> promised to Jonathan.
1035 BC	2 Samuel 11	David's REPROACH: David rapes Bathsheba and murders her husband Uriah to cover up his sin after getting her pregnant.
1032 BC 1030 BC	2 Samuel 13	RUPTURE of David's Household/Trouble at Court: Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar. Absalom kills Amnon to avenge his sister's shame and to eliminate one rival to the throne; as a result, he is banished from the kingdom.
1027 BC	2 Samuel 14	Absalom returns from exile thanks to the intervention of Joab on his behalf.
1024 BC	2 Samuel 15	Absalom's REBELLION: Absalom conspires to usurp the throne of his father David. David flees Jerusalem barefoot and hooded as people taunt and humiliate him.
1023 BC	2 Samuel 18	Absalom is killed by Joab in battle between those that sided with Absalom and David's private mercenary army and faithful men.
	2 Samuel 19	David returns to Jerusalem to REBUILD his fractured kingdom.
	2 Samuel 20	David puts down another rebellion from the tribe of Benjamin named by Sheba, stabilizing the kingdom.
1015 BC	2 Samuel 23	REWARD: David dies as King of all Israel after a 40-year reign, a <i>"man after God's heart."</i> David's son Solomon succeeds him as king.

CHAPTER 1: REJECTION

THE BIG PICTURE

The books of Samuel and Kings tell one sweeping story of transition. Israel up until this point has been a loose confederation of 12 tribes, sometimes united and at others divided. As the narrative unfolds, Israel becomes a single nation led by one king. This story is told masterfully by a brilliant narrator and includes irony, suspense, surprise, and drama. Our story starts with the passing of the torch of leadership from Samuel to Saul; from an aging prophet to Israel's first monarch. God has warned the people of Israel about the liabilities of trusting a human king, and their first king will prove to be a disappointment. The entire Biblical books of **1 and 2 Samuel** make for dramatic and fruitful reading, but this guide will highlight some important passages and try to give you some important background information.

ENTER THE STORY:

- I. Read the circumstances surrounding Israel's demand for a human king in **1 Samuel 8**. Why does Israel want a human king? Essentially they want a human king because the other nations around them have a human king. They are struggling to trust God, and have chosen to trust the voice of popular opinion instead.
 - Think about other examples of people making ill-advised choices trying to follow the crowd. Why is this so tempting?
 - How often do you make this mistake? What are the consequences?

- II. One of the key themes in the books of Samuel is the idea of **covenant loyalty**. The big question for the story is not whether or not Israel will have a king, but what kind of king Israel will have. Will he be a king that honors the covenant with God? Will he lead the people to be faithful to God? In the early years, Saul was stable, level headed, and he paid attention to God. In **1 Samuel 9:21**, he almost seems humble. As his recognition grew, he began to overly concern himself with the approval of others. It is easy to imagine how Saul constantly heard the praise of men and women alike. He heard how handsome he was, how impressive and noble in his appearance. This becomes problematic when Saul lives primarily to please people. In the story recorded in **1 Samuel 13:5-15**, Saul seems to be more concerned with the approval of the people than he is with the command of God. He lost his ability to derive his worth from God alone, and he began to establish his worth based on the opinions of people.
 - Whose approval do you crave? Understand that every name that is on this list is someone you have given significant influence on your life.
 - In what way is seeking the approval of others like rejecting the approval of God?

- How can craving the approval of others lead to imbalances like fear and paranoia? Where else do you see evidence of imbalance in Saul's life?

III. Another great study that reveals something about the character of Saul is to look at his relationship with his weapon of choice: **the spear**. Saul's spear is a symbol of his insecurity. It is the perfect melee weapon to keep people at a distance. It is used as a tool of wrath on several occasions: **1 Samuel 18:10-11, 1 Samuel 19:9-10, and 1 Samuel 20:32-33.**

- How might your insecurity affect your relationships with others?
- When you "throw spears" at others, does it look more like an overt attack, cold silence, pent up anger, sarcastic jibes, intimidation, or something else?
- Have you ever thrown a spear (figuratively) at someone that was important to you? How have you tried to mend the relationship?

Read **1 Samuel 22:6**. Look at the way Saul hangs around camp with his "spear in hand." Imagine Saul giving speeches or addressing his people with this weapon in hand. Is he trying to be intimidating? The author of this story is painting a very dramatic picture, and it is easy as readers to see the pattern. Saul and this spear are a bad combination. In **1 Samuel 26:7**, Saul even sleeps with the spear, paranoid that everyone is out to get him.

- Do you know anyone that lives "spear in hand," like they are always ready to go off on the people around them?
- Saul used a spear to intimidate and keep people away. What barriers do you put in between you and others?

IV. Saul's final rejection comes after he directly disobeys the command of God to destroy the Amalekites, a story recounted in **1 Samuel 15**. Saul tries just about everything to avoid admitting to the sin of disobedience. He blames others, he justifies his actions, and he minimizes his mistake; but Samuel holds him accountable. Saul has disobeyed God's command in such a way that he personally profits from God's judgment on the Amalekites. Saul was sent to avenge an ancient injustice, and as God's agent, he should not have personally profited from it. The Amalekites story goes back to the Exodus (**Exodus 17:8-16**) when they fell on the pilgrim Israelite people in the wilderness, almost blocking God's redemptive plans. This war is God's war, not Saul's. **Saul is only carrying out God's sentence.** It wouldn't be right if Saul became wealthy or profited in fame or otherwise by serving God in this way. God is not happy about this, the same way a parent is not happy about having to punish his or her children. To make sure that one child does not profit from the discipline of another, the principle of **herem** was invoked.

This Hebrew word describes a special act of consecration after such a battle. All the spoils of war are irrevocably devoted to God, and are therefore holy (set apart). This is the same principle that was followed for the battles of Jericho and Ai. To take plunder in such a situation is a serious crime. In this case it implies that Saul does not view himself as God's servant, but uses the favor of God to serve his own selfish purposes. He thinks he knows better. It is simple arrogance and presumption. Note how Saul's struggle with pleasing others surfaces in this passage, and how it disqualifies him from leadership in Israel. Look closely at the last verse in this chapter: **1 Samuel 15:35**. His rejection is final, but his reign is far from over. The old prophet Samuel, the one that discovered and mentored this boy with so much promise grieves over the reality of Saul's failure. His heart is broken, and he never sees Saul again.

- Saul is trying desperately to keep on the right side of public opinion. How worried do you think a leader should be about the opinions of crowd? How is a monarchy different from a democracy in this regard?
- Can you imagine God feeling regret or sadness because of what Saul has become? Do you think God has ever felt regret or grief because of your choices? How can you better honor the gifts and opportunities God has given you?
- This passage includes this rebuke from Samuel: "You were once small in your own eyes." Do you struggle with pride or a puffed up sense of importance? How can you avoid Saul's mistake?