

Getting Into The Promised Land Without Falling Asleep In Leviticus

6. The United Monarchy – Part 2 David and Solomon

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**A Teaching Commentary
of the Old Testament**

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1 The Reign of David

1.1 *News of Saul's Death*

2 Samuel 1

To the end, David loved Saul and afforded him respect as king. While Saul was engaged in his final battle with the Philistines, David was battling the Amalekites. After David returned to Ziklag, a messenger, who happened to be an Amalekite, brought David the news of Saul's death. David wanted to know exactly what had happened.

The messenger seems to have been a bit of an opportunist. He wanted to take advantage of this situation, perhaps to obtain some sort of reward from David or at least to gain favor with this future king. He told David that he had personally come across Saul and found him mortally wounded. He said that Saul asked him to go ahead and finish him off. He said that he killed Saul and then brought his crown to David. (Apparently he was in possession of Saul's crown.) At the end of 1 Samuel, we learned that Saul was indeed mortally wounded but that he killed himself. This man must have come across Saul's body shortly after his death but before the Philistines found him because they would surely have taken the crown. He figured that Saul had been evil towards David and thus David would surely reward him for being the one to rid him finally of his enemy.

David went into grief for Saul and for his beloved Jonathan (Jonathan had been killed in the same battle as Saul). Eventually David came back to address this messenger, who probably thought he was about to be rewarded. Instead David told him that he had no business raising his hand against God's anointed and then he had him killed. So much for his reward.

1.2 *David Anointed as King of Judah*

2 Samuel 2:1-7

After David had mourned for Saul and Jonathan, he asked God what he should do next. God told him to go to Hebron. David took his two wives and his band of followers there. The men of Judah came to David at Hebron and anointed him as their king. Hebron became David's first capital and he reigned there for over seven years before moving to Jerusalem. (Hebron is where the Cave of Machpelah is – the place where Abraham, Sarah, and others are buried.)

David sent a message to the people of Jabesh Gilead expressing gratitude for the fact that they took care of Saul's body. He told them that he had been anointed king of Judah and that he intended to show them favor for their kindness to Saul. Although David was probably completely sincere in expressing this to these people, it was also a political maneuver on his part. Note that David had been anointed king of Judah – period. None of the other tribes had signed up to be his subjects. His message to Jabesh Gilead was partly an invitation for them to accept David as their king as well. They did not, however, indicate a desire to join his kingdom at this time.

1.3 Ishbosheth

2 Samuel 2:8-4:12

Abner was Saul's cousin and the commander of his army. Abner was loyal to the house of Saul even after his death. Saul had a surviving son by the name of Ishbosheth whom Abner appointed king over the northern tribes. Ishbosheth was forty years old when he became king and he ruled for two years. During this time there was war between the northern tribes and Judah. Fighting was often fierce. The fighting took a toll on both sides, but as time progressed Judah got stronger and the army of Abner and Ishbosheth got weaker.

A man by the name of Joab became the head of David's army. Joab had a brother named Asahel. After a battle between David's army and Ishbosheth's army, Asahel began to pursue Abner. He pursued him relentlessly. Abner warned him to turn away and leave him alone but he would not. Abner eventually killed him.

About two years into his reign, Ishbosheth accused Abner of sleeping with one of Saul's concubines. This was more than accusing him of immorality. Sleeping with a dead or dying king's concubine was considered an attempt to take over the throne (remember the episode with Reuben and Jacob in Genesis 35). This accusation infuriated Abner. He began to question his own loyalty to Ishbosheth and ultimately decided to "do for David what the Lord promised him on oath and transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish David's throne over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beersheba" (2 Samuel 3:9-10). Without Abner's army, Ishbosheth had no kingdom. Abner was going to turn his army over to David.

Abner sent a message requesting a meeting with David. David said he could come, but only if he brought David's wife Michal, the daughter of Saul. Recall that long ago Saul had given her to another man. Abner took Michal to David, telling her husband that he had to give her up. Abner also met with the elders of Israel and convinced them that they would be better off with David as their king since he was the one who could lead them in victory against the Philistines.

Abner came to David and was well received. David and Abner planned how David would take over the northern tribes. Then Abner prepared to go back and carry out the plan.

While Abner was meeting with David, Joab had been away. He came back while Abner was preparing to leave. He discovered that Abner and David had met and that Abner had been well received. Joab was mad because he still carried hatred for Abner and wanted to avenge the death of his brother. Joab arranged to meet Abner and used the occasion to murder him in cold blood.

David was genuinely upset over Abner's murder. He pronounced a curse on Joab for what he had done ("May Joab's house never be without someone who has a running sore or leprosy or who leans on a crutch or who falls by the sword or who lacks food" 2 Samuel 3:29). He held a big funeral for Abner and made everyone – including Joab – participate in it.

The people of the north were convinced that David had nothing to do with Abner's death and that he was genuinely sad about it. Thus Abner's death was not interpreted as an act of aggression against the north and did not stop them from accepting David as a leader.

When Ishbosheth learned that Abner was dead he was afraid. Not long after that, two men sneaked into his house and murdered him. They cut off his head and brought it to David, thinking that they would be rewarded for getting rid of David's enemy (remember the messenger who told him of Saul's death?). David's response was to have the two men put to death.

Chapter 4 has a note that Jonathan had a surviving son named Mephibosheth. When news came about the death of Saul and Jonathan, his nurse had picked him up in a hurry to flee and had dropped him. As a result of the fall, he was lame.

1.4 David Becomes King of a United Kingdom

2 Samuel 5:1-5, 1 Chronicles 11:1-3

Representatives from the tribes of Israel came to David and asked him to be their king. He was anointed as king over all twelve tribes. He was thirty years old when he became king and reigned for forty years. He reigned from Hebron for seven and one-half years and from Jerusalem the remainder of the time.

Chronicles does not document the period of Ishbosheth's reign. As stated in the introduction, Chronicles paints a picture of David free from flaw and conflict. What it does tell agrees with the 2 Samuel account, although it leaves out some pieces.

1.5 David's Family

2 Samuel 3:2-5, 1 Chronicles 3:1-9

Both 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles give a somewhat out-of-place accounting of David's family. It is out of place because David has not yet married all of these women and many of these sons have not yet been born.

David had previously married Michal (1), the daughter of Saul, but they had no children. While he was on the run from Saul he had also married Ahinoam (2) of Jezreel and Abigail (3) of Carmel.

David's firstborn was named Amnon and was the son of Ahinoam. His second was Daniel, the son of Abigail.

David married another woman named Maacah (4), the daughter of the king of Geshur. She gave him his third son, Absalom.

His fourth son was named Adonijah and was the son of a woman named Haggith (5). His fifth son was Shephatiah, the son of a woman named Abital (6). His sixth son was Ithream, son of his wife, Eglah (7).

These first six sons were born during the reign at Hebron.

Born to him in Jerusalem were Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon, sons of wife Bathsheba (8); other sons born to him were Ibhar, Elishua, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet (yes, a second one!). These were sons born to his wives – the list does not even bother to name the sons born to his concubines! There was also at least one sister. Tamar is named in Chronicles (she seems to have been a full sister of Absalom).

Thus David had at least eight wives and an untold number of children. This is not a great accomplishment. Even if a household is the royal household of Judah, it still needs a father. David's inability or unwillingness to nurture his household was the major failure of his life, as we will see later.

1.6 David's Army and the Conquest of the Philistines

2 Samuel 3:17-25, 1 Chronicles 11:10-12:40, 1 Chronicles 14:8-17

Chapters 11 and 12 of 1 Chronicles tell how the army of David was built. The "inner circle" of the army consisted of a group of men known as "David's Mighty Men." These are men who had been with him for a long time and had fought with him since he began being pursued by Saul. There was a second group of men who had joined David when he was at Ziklag. These included men from various parts of the nation – not just Judah. In fact, it included some Benjamites (Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin). There was a third group who joined David at Hebron, which included men from all of the tribes. David's army was voluntary. These men were not forced to serve.

The Philistines learned that David was now king over the whole nation and they were disturbed. They recognized David as a mighty warrior and they viewed him as a threat. They mounted an army and came looking for him. David went to "the stronghold," which seems to have been some sort of desert hideout where he formerly hid from Saul. David asked God what he should do, and God responded by leading him in the attack against the Philistines. The Philistines were soundly defeated.

1.7 The Conquest of Jerusalem

2 Samuel 5:6-15, 1 Chronicles 11:4-9, 1 Chronicles 14:1-7

When David became king, there were many pockets of enemies still in the land. The city of Jerusalem (also called Jebus) was a fortified city (i.e. a walled city) occupied by the Jebusites. David wanted the city for his capital, and led his army against the city. He said that the man who could lead a successful conquest of the city would be made the commander of his army. Joab rose to the occasion and led the conquest, becoming the commander of David's army.

The Jerusalem that was conquered by David is much smaller than the Jerusalem of today. Today Jerusalem is a large city that includes an area called the "old city." The old city is a walled area that encompasses the Jerusalem of Jesus' time. It includes another area called "The City of David." The portion known as "The City of David" is the area that was taken by David at this time. It is only around 12 acres in size. It sits perched on top of Mount Zion, and was walled and easily defensible. David took the city around 1000 BC.

The king of Tyre sent lumber (Tyre is in Lebanon, a country famous for its cedar), along with carpenters and masons to help build a palace for David.

1.8 The Ark of the Covenant is Brought to Jerusalem

2 Samuel 6, 1 Chronicles 13, 1 Chronicles 15-16

Now that David was establishing the capital at Jerusalem, he felt it was time to move the Ark of the Covenant there. It had been largely ignored since the time the Philistines returned it to Kiriath Jearim. David made preparations to bring it back. He constructed a new cart and hitched oxen to it to pull it. The ark was placed on it and they began the journey back to Jerusalem. People were walking alongside it, singing and dancing and playing music. At one point the oxen stumbled and a man named Uzzah reached out to steady the ark. When he touched it, God struck him dead.

What happened? In Exodus 25:12-15, God had given very explicit instructions about how the ark was to be moved. It was to be carried by Levites, not by oxen. God was angered by the fact

that his instructions were being ignored and Uzzah's act, although well intentioned, was interpreted as an act of irreverence.

David was initially angry that God had struck Uzzah dead. He interpreted it as God disapproving of them moving the Ark to Jerusalem. Later, however, his anger turned to fear of God – the healthy kind. For a time, they abandoned their plans to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, leaving it instead in the home of Obed-Edom. While it was there, God brought blessings on his house.

About three months later, David came back for the Ark. This time he brought Levites to carry it. He acknowledged that he had been wrong in the way he tried to move the ark before. He brought the proper people to carry the Ark plus a large band of musicians and singers. He erected a tent in Jerusalem to house the Ark, essentially reconstructing the tabernacle there, and appointed priests and Levites to administer it.

As the Ark entered Jerusalem, there was much rejoicing in the streets. David was wearing a linen ephod, which is the dress of the priests. He was dancing in the streets with the people. His wife Michal, the daughter of Saul, saw him from a window and despised him. Why? Perhaps she harbored bitterness towards David for the fact that God cut off her family and put David in its place. Perhaps she was bitter about being torn away from her second husband and forced to go back to David. Perhaps she thought that David should act more like a king and not be dancing in the streets with the common people. Whatever the reason, she later expressed to David the fact that she found him despicable and as a result she remained barren the remainder of her life.

The Ark had come to rest in Jerusalem.

1.9 God's Promise to David

2 Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 17

Peace settled on the land for a time. David was no longer preoccupied with fighting. It occurred to him that he was living in a palace built of cedar but God was living in a tent (the Ark was housed in a tent). David had a prophet named Nathan as one of his most trusted advisors and he told Nathan that he wanted to build a house for God. Nathan said that it sounded like a good idea and told him to go ahead with it.

That night, Nathan received a word from God for David that David would not build him a house. Instead, God would establish David's house forever. He assured David that one of his sons would be the next king and that God's favor would never leave that son. If he did foolish things he would be punished, but God would never withdraw his favor from that son as he did from Saul. Furthermore, a descendant of David would reign over God's kingdom forever. He also said that this son of David's would be the one to build God's house.

David was awed by the message and expressed his thanks to God in prayer. Part of this prayer is found in 1 Chronicles 17:20-24:

There is no one like you, O Lord, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. And who is like your people Israel – the one nation on earth whose God went out to redeem a people for himself, and to make a name for yourself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt? You made your people Israel your very own forever, and you, O Lord, have become their God.

And now, Lord, let the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house be established forever. Do as you promised, so that it will be established and that your name

will be great forever. Then men will say, "The Lord Almighty, the God over Israel, is Israel's God!" And the house of your servant David will be established before you.

1.10 Continued Military Success

2 Samuel 8, 2 Samuel 10, 1 Chronicles 18-19

David continued to wage war against the enemies of Israel. He expanded the borders of the nation to what God had originally promised when they entered the Promised Land. God gave David great favor and great victory over his enemies. He subdued the Philistines, the Edomites, the Moabites, the Amalekites, and other enemies of Israel.

At some point in time the king of the Ammonites died. Apparently David had been on good relations with him. He sent a delegation to express sympathy to the new king, who was the son of the deceased king. David's messengers however were accused of being spies. The Ammonites shaved their heads and their beards, and cut off the backside of their garments so that their buttocks showed. The purpose of all of this was to humiliate them. David was infuriated by this response to his act of kindness and he responded with warfare. The Ammonites asked the Arameans to help them in defense against the army of Israel, and the Arameans came out to help. The troops of David and Joab inflicted great injury on both parties. The Arameans withdrew and were afraid to help the Ammonites any more.

The point of all this is that David continued to be a great warrior, leading Israel in military victory and extending its borders.

1.11 David and Bathsheba

2 Samuel 11-12, 1 Chronicles 20:1-3

It is interesting to note that the Chronicles account completely omits this episode, with the exception of mentioning that David sent Joab off to war and did not go with him. Chronicles omits the character flaws of David and Solomon.

This story is framed with the timing, "In the spring at the time when kings go off to war..." As best we can tell, warring was a seasonal thing. When spring comes, we can expect baseball season to start (unless the players are on strike). When spring arrived in David's time, it was time to go to war. If the ancient people had tried to fight in the winter, they would have lost a great number of people to the elements, so they would wait for the spring.

It is interesting, however, that the passage does not say "In the spring when kings send other people to war..." The passage implies that the kings normally went with their troops. For some reason, David sent Joab and his men to war but decided not to go with them himself. (Strange what idle time can do to a person.)

One evening David went walking on his roof. This was not unusual. Houses were built with flat roofs so that one could walk on them or rest on them. In the evenings, it would be cool up there and it was common for people to walk on their roofs. It also was not totally unusual to bathe up there. There was a woman named Bathsheba who happened to be bathing on her roof while David was on his. Bathsheba was married to a Hittite named Uriah, who seems to have been a man who shared the faith of the Israelites. In fact, he was currently serving in David's army and under the command of Joab. More than likely, there was nothing immodest about the way Bathsheba was bathing. Still, she aroused David's interest. He sent some men to go and find her and bring her to him.

David ended up sleeping with Bathsheba. Although the story does not say this, it seems reasonable to assume that this whole episode built up over time and was not just a one-night thing. David may have known Bathsheba before he saw her bathing. His interest in her could have grown over time. Finally he sent for her. She ended up becoming pregnant and sent word to David to let him know. David had a real problem on his hands now because she was a married woman.

David sent a message to Joab to send Uriah home. He was hoping that Uriah would sleep with his wife, and later when he found out that Bathsheba was pregnant, David hoped that he would assume that the child was his. In fact, the deception was probably thinly veiled. Without the benefit of home pregnancy tests back then, one might wonder how far along Bathsheba must already have been if she knew she was pregnant. Furthermore, Jerusalem was a small town. How many people must have known what had happened? Uriah may well have already heard.

Uriah came back from the battlefield and reported to David. David made small talk and encouraged him to go home for the night. Instead, Uriah slept at the gate of the palace. He said that he could not go back to the pleasures of his home in good conscience when his commander and his comrades were still at war. The next day David had Uriah to dinner and got him drunk, trying to get him to go home and sleep with Bathsheba. Uriah still would not go.

David sent Uriah back to the fighting. He also sent a message to Joab to put Uriah in a vulnerable position at the front and then to draw back from him so that he would be killed. Joab was angry about this but he obeyed David's orders. Uriah was killed. Bathsheba mourned Uriah and then David married Bathsheba. She bore a son.

Nathan, David's prophet-advisor, came to David and told him a story. He told about a rich man who had many sheep and cattle. In the same town there was a poor man who had only one sheep. This sheep was a beloved family pet as well as a source of wool. The rich man had a visitor come to his house and he wanted to prepare a meal. Instead of using one of his own animals, he went to the home of the poor man and took his lamb, killed it, and served it to his guest.

David was incensed at this story. He said that the rich man who had done this deserved to die for his actions. Nathan informed David that he (David) was the rich man. The way he had taken the wife of Uriah was every bit as detestable to God as the way the rich man took the lamb from the poor man. Nathan tells him in 2 Samuel 12:7-12:

"You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

This is what the Lord says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

Nathan continues in verses 13-14:

The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.

After Nathan left, King David's child became sick. David pleaded with God for the life of his child. For seven days he fasted and prayed. On the seventh day the child died. Because David had been mourning so deeply over the child being sick, the servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. David heard them whispering and realized by their behavior that the child was dead. They told him. David got up, cleaned himself up, and went to worship God. Those around him expressed surprise that he got over the death so quickly when he had taken the sickness so hard. In 2 Samuel 12:22-23 he answers:

While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, "Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live." But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.

This is a verse that is often cited to answer the question, "What is the eternal fate of babies that die?" Some people practice infant baptism, believing that if a baptized infant dies, it will go to heaven but that an unbaptized infant will not. The Bible does not contain any specific answers to the question of the fate of people that die before they reach an "age of accountability." David seemed to believe, however, that his son would be waiting for him when he died. Assuming that David believed that he himself would be going to heaven, then we can infer that David believed that his infant son went there as well. The conclusion is that God took this unbaptized infant to heaven.

David and Bathsheba conceived again, and she gave birth to another son and named him Solomon.

In the meantime, Joab continued to wage war on behalf on Israel and to secure its boundaries. The kingdom became large and wealthy under David's reign.

1.12 Amnon and Tamar

2 Samuel 13:1-22

David's oldest son was Amnon. He had a half-sister named Tamar. Amnon was strongly attracted to Tamar. He did not know how to deal with his feelings. He confided to a friend and cousin named Jonadab about his feelings. Jonadab suggested a scheme whereby Amnon would pretend to be sick as an excuse to have Tamar come and prepare him something to eat.

Amnon feigned illness, and was convincing enough that David agreed to have Tamar fulfill his request. After Tamar had arrived, Amnon sent out all of the servants. When Tamar came to Amnon, he grabbed her and began to force her into bed. She pleaded with him not to do this. She said that if he really wanted her, they should ask the king. He would surely give her to Amnon to be his wife. He was not in a mood to listen to reason and he raped her. Once he was finished, everything he felt for her turned to hatred and rage. In reality, the hatred and rage were directed at his own guilt, but to him, she was the symbol of what had happened. He threw her out of the room. She tore her robe and put ashes on her head because of the grief she felt for what had happened.

Tamar's full brother, Absalom, found out what had happened to her. He tried to console her and brought her into his house to live.

King David also heard about what had happened and was furious. However, he did nothing about it. This "man after God's own heart" never really figured out how to seek God in matters concerning his own family.

Because of Amnon's actions and perhaps even more because of David's failure to address Amnon's actions, Absalom burned with a great hatred for Amnon, though he said nothing about it.

1.13 Absalom's Revenge

2 Samuel 13:23-14:33

There came a time when Absalom was holding a feast to celebrate the shearing of the sheep. It was common back then to have a large celebration for this event. Absalom had invited the king and all of his sons to the event. David had indicated that he would not be able to attend. Absalom then asked him to send Amnon in his place.

The text indicates that all of the king's sons had already been invited so we can assume that Amnon had declined his invitation. Even though Absalom had never said anything about the treatment of Tamar, it must have been apparent that he held bitter feelings about what had been done. David seemed to be aware of it as well because he wanted to know why Absalom wanted Amnon there. Without giving the real reason, Absalom urged David to send Amnon in his place, perhaps suggesting that if the king could not be there, the oldest son and heir to the throne should be there as his representative. For whatever reason, David sent Amnon to the feast.

At the feast, Absalom got Amnon drunk and then murdered him. This obviously upset the party. A messenger ran back to David and told him that Absalom had killed all of his other sons. Later a second messenger came and told him that only Amnon had been killed. After that his surviving sons (minus Absalom) returned home.

Absalom felt justified in what he had done but knew that he was in trouble with his father. He went into exile for three years.

David mourned for Amnon. Once this grief passed, however, he realized that he had lost Absalom as well. This loss may have been more painful because Absalom was still alive, just estranged. David longed to see him but made no effort to restore the relationship. This loss and this stubbornness must have begun to take its toll on David.

Joab, David's general, finally got to the point where he was tired of seeing David moping about the palace. He devised a scheme to help David snap back to his senses. He found a woman who would come to seek advice from David. He dressed her as if she had been in mourning for some time. She came to David and said that she was a widow with two sons. Her sons had gotten into a fight and one ended up killing the other. Now people were after her other son – who was her only surviving relative – to seek revenge and take his life as well. She was grieving over the situation and did not know what to do. David took pity on her and said that he would issue an order that nobody should harm her other son and that they should be reconciled. At that point, she turned the situation around and told him that the story she just told was really about David and not about her. He "put two and two together" and realized that Joab was behind this. The woman confirmed that Joab had sent her to do this. David told Joab to go and find Absalom and bring him home. Joab did, but David said that Absalom would have to live in his own house and would not see the king's face.

Thus Absalom came home, but he was still cut off from his father. As has been stated already, David's downfall was his unwillingness or inability to nurture his own household. Absalom

needed restoration. He longed for a relationship with his father. He had needed for David to discipline Amnon in the first place so that none of this would have ever happened. The name "Absalom" means "father of peace," and that is what Absalom probably really wanted to be – a man of peace. But David's poor fathering turned him into a man who shed the blood of his own brother. He needed his father.

After two years of being home but being exiled, Absalom could stand it no more. He sent for Joab, hoping that Joab would help to get him an audience with David. Joab did not respond to his message. He sent for him again but Joab still did not respond. Absalom wanted to get his attention, so he set one of Joab's fields on fire. Then Joab came! Absalom asked him why they had brought him back home if he was simply going to be ignored – he had to see his father. Joab brought Absalom to David. Absalom bowed before David and David kissed him. It was a start, but as the next episode shows, their restoration was far from complete.

1.14 Absalom's Revolt

2 Samuel 15-19

Now that Amnon was dead, Absalom was heir apparent to the throne. He decided to start acting the part. He got a chariot to begin transporting himself through town, along with 50 men who would run in front of him when he traveled about. He also began spending his days at the gates of the city. Whenever people would come from other cities to seek counsel from David, he would stop them and greet them with a kiss, asking them to describe the matter they wanted to bring before the king. They would tell Absalom what their problems were. He would tell them that it sounded like they had a legitimate issue and that it was too bad that the king would be just too busy to help them. Then he would say, "Oh, if only the king would appoint me as judge so I could help you." He was really schmoozing it up.

Because of this act he was carrying on, Absalom became very popular with the people and created a rift between the people and the king. The text does not say that David knew about it, but Jerusalem was not that big of a place and it is likely that David was aware of what was happening. Again, David's major failure was his unwillingness to deal with issues in his own family.

The day came when Absalom asked David to let him go to Hebron to make a sacrifice. David agreed. Absalom left for Hebron and took a large company of people with him. When they got there, he had these people declare him to be the new king.

Word got back to David about what had happened. David expected a battle to follow and he did not want to drag the whole city of Jerusalem through his family fighting. He abandoned the city, leaving behind ten of his concubines to oversee the household.

A man by the name of Ahithophel had been a prophet and an advisor to David. He had joined the ranks of Absalom. David prayed that God would confuse the counsel he gave to Absalom. David also sent back to Jerusalem another servant named Hushai. Hushai agreed that whenever Ahithophel gave advice to Absalom, he would suggest that the advice was not sound and offer contradicting advice to try to confuse Absalom. He would also try to send a messenger to David to let him know what Absalom was planning.

Absalom returned to Jerusalem to find David gone. He found the concubines in the palace. He set up a tent in public view and slept with the concubines there, which was an act of defiance and a declaration that he was taking over.

The words of the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:11-12 had come true. He had told David:

David

Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'

Absalom asked Ahithophel what they should do next. He replied that David and his troops were bound to be tired and weak. They should gather the army and pursue them that very night. The army of David would be worn out and not able to defend him. Thus they could kill David and bring the rest of the army back home. Hushai chimed in and pointed out that David and his men were very fierce and experienced warriors. He said that David would not even be staying with the army but would be hiding in some cave. He advised that they should wait until day to attack because if they went that night they would be overpowered by David's more experienced army.

Absalom took the advice of Hushai. Ahithophel saw that he was not trusted by Absalom and he hanged himself. In the meantime, Hushai managed to get a messenger to David to let him know what was going on.

David and his men crossed the Jordan and were waiting for Absalom when he and his army came. David gave instructions to his army, led by Joab, to wage whatever battle was necessary but to treat Absalom well. At the urging of his men, David remained behind and did not join in the battle.

The battle broke out and was fierce. Many men died, especially in the army of Absalom. Absalom himself was fleeing on his mule when his hair got caught in a tree. He was left hanging there by his hair. Joab found him there and thrust spears and swords into him and killed him, violating David's instructions.

Earlier, David had failed to deal with Joab's insolence when he killed Abner. David was now paying for that mistake with the life of his own son.

A messenger brought the news to David about what had happened. David was glad that the conflict was over, but he mourned deeply for his son. He was visibly upset and wished that he could have died in Absalom's place. In spite of everything that had happened, David loved Absalom.

Eventually Joab came and chastised David for how he was acting. He said that David was sending the wrong message to the army who had defended David from this enemy who sought to take his life. David cleaned up and then went out to greet the people and to express his appreciation for what they had done.

David returned to Jerusalem. He took the ten concubines that had been violated by Absalom and cared for them the rest of their lives, but he did not sleep with them again. He also determined to make a man by the name of Amasa head of the army in place of Joab since Joab had killed his son.

1.15 Sheba's Rebellion

2 Samuel 20

There were those who did not welcome David's return. A man by the name of Sheba incited a rebellion against David, and many of the non-Judean tribes joined him.

David sent his army (which now was to be under the leadership of Amasa) out to stop this revolt. Before they got to the business of dealing with Sheba and his followers, Joab murdered Amasa in cold blood and took back control of the army.

They routed Sheba and his followers. Sheba took refuge in a walled city. Joab and his men began to besiege the city. A woman called down to them from the city wall and asked why they were trying to do the city harm. They explained that they were really only after Sheba. She asked if they would leave the rest of the city alone if she could deliver Sheba to them. They said yes, and she went away for a while. Later Sheba's head came flying over the city wall. The rebellion was stopped.

David did not deal with Joab for murdering Amasa. David was a mighty warrior but did not know how to handle interpersonal conflict.

1.16 The Avenge of the Gibeonites

2 Samuel 21:1-14

The nation experienced famine for three years. David sought God to find out why. God revealed to him that it was the result of what Saul had done to the Gibeonites. When Joshua was originally taking the land, the Gibeonites tricked the Israelites into making a peace treaty with them (see Joshua, chapter 9). Even though they achieved this treaty through deceptive means, the treaty still stood. In his zeal to extend the borders of Israel, however, Saul had attacked the Gibeonites and put many of them to death.

David went to the Gibeonites and asked them how he might make amends. They said that the punishment for what happened should be limited to the house of the one responsible for the sin. They asked David to hand over seven male descendants of Saul so that they might do to them as Saul had done to the Gibeonites.

The only descendant of Saul to whom David had "ready access" was Mephibosheth, but David had promised to care for him as if he were one of his own and he would not violate that promise. He rounded up seven other sons and grandsons of Saul and handed them over to the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites executed them and left their bodies exposed.

After this happened, David gathered the seven bodies. He also went to Jabesh Gilead and secured the remains of Saul and Jonathan. He buried them all in the tomb of Kish, Saul's father, in the city of Zela in the territory of Benjamin.

After the Gibeonites had their avenge on the house of Saul, God restored the fruitfulness of the land and the famine ended.

Wow. This is a not-so-nice story. Was famine really inflicted on the whole nation because of the sins of a single individual? Did the sons and grandsons of Saul really deserve to be executed for a crime that he committed? Was God really appeased into removing the famine by the death of these bystanders? These are hard questions.

Saul was not just an ordinary individual. He was the leader of the nation and he was God's anointed leader. Verses such as James 3:1 teach us that some people are held to higher standards than others. Sin is sin, but some people's sins have greater consequences than others. Serious sins by God's anointed leaders have great consequences.

When Joshua made the covenant with the Gibeonites, he was making that covenant in God's name. Israel was God's nation. A failure on the part of Israel to keep that covenant reflected

badly in the integrity of Israel's God. Thus when Saul took it upon himself to violate that treaty and attack the Gibeonites, he was taking God's name in vain. He was dragging God's reputation through the mud.

God had warned in the Ten Commandments that the sin of an individual can bring consequences to the third and fourth generations.

As God's national leader, Saul brought distress on the whole nation – the famine. As father and grandfather, Saul brought distress on his family. That brings us to the other question. Was God really pleased by the execution of these innocent bystanders? Notice that he withdrew the famine once they were dead.

God is a God of mercy, but he is also a God of judgment and a God of accountability. God demanded accountability from the house of Saul for the pain that he had brought to the nation and to the reputation of God. Did it have to come out like it did? Probably not.

We know the famine lasted for three years. We know that the attack on the Gibeonites had predated the famine some time. The house of Saul had known about this transgression for years and had not done anything about it. It seems that God had waited patiently for them to take the initiative and make restitution but they had hardened themselves to this situation. The distress may have been brought upon them by the actions of Saul, but they ultimately gave their lives because of their unwillingness to do anything themselves about the situation.

It is a hard lesson, but one from which we can hide no less today than they could then. Sin exacts a price. The wages of sin is death. Whether we like it or not, the unresolved sins of our fathers can still come to rest on us. They still impact us. We still have to deal with them. And it still does not matter whether or not we think it is fair.

1.17 More Battles with the Philistines

2 Samuel 21:15-22:51, 1 Chronicles 20:4-8

The nation engaged in several more battles with the Philistines and experienced continued victory over the Philistines. The nation enjoyed military success under David's leadership. In one of these battles, David became weary and came very close to being killed by a Philistine warrior. One of his men protected him and killed David's assailant, but the fact that it happened was an indication that David was getting along in years and probably had no business being on the battlefield anymore. His men urged him to remain away from the fighting in the future. David's days as an active soldier were over.

2 Samuel 22 is a song written by David to celebrate the victories that God gave him over his enemies. It is the first sample that we get of David's poetry, but there is a great deal more of it to come in the book of Psalms.

1.18 David's Last Words and His Mighty Men

2 Samuel 23

2 Samuel 23 opens with a poem (psalm) introduced as "the last words of David." It is unlikely that the last words uttered by David were in fact a psalm. More than likely, this is the last psalm that David wrote. The message of the psalm is that God supports and defends and even exalts those who are faithful to him and he casts aside evil men.

2 Samuel 23 concludes with a description of the exploits of David's "mighty men." We encountered most of this information when we looked at 2 Samuel chapter 3 and a parallel passage in 1 Chronicles chapter 11.

1.19 The Census of the Army

2 Samuel 24, 1 Chronicles 21:1-22:1

In the book of Numbers, on two occasions a census was taken. The purpose of these seems to have been to give the leaders of the wandering nation an idea of how many men they had available for an army, and to give them confidence that they did have the strength and numbers to face a battle. They took these censuses because God told them to.

Here towards the end of his life, we see David taking a military census. God did not tell him to do it. In fact, God was angered by the fact that he did it. Why?

Throughout his reign, David had been faithful to look to God for military guidance. He had experienced victory after victory because he followed God's battle plans. His vision was upward. For some reason however, his vision turned inward on this occasion. He began to count his marbles rather than simply trust God to provide him whatever marbles he needed. David was thinking of trying a military strategy of his own making rather than continuing to rely on God.

This story is included in both 2 Samuel and in 1 Chronicles. It is surprising that 1 Chronicles includes it because that book leaves out almost everything negative about David's life. There is an interesting nuance in the two books. 2 Samuel says that God incited him to take the census. 1 Chronicles says that Satan caused him to do it. Can one take these two stories and piece together an inference that God and Satan are one and the same? That may seem like a ridiculous question, but some people try to do exactly that. And even if one is not prone to ask that question, why does one account name God and the other name Satan as having done the same thing?

Satan is a created being. He may have an agenda that is opposed to God, but the fact is that he is subject to God. God can use even Satan to accomplish his purposes. One of the things that God does with his people is to test them. He tries their hearts. He often uses Satan to accomplish this purpose.

David was tested. God provided the testing. He used Satan to do so. David failed the test. Satan tempted David with pride and whispered to him that he could rely on his own devices and did not have to look to God for victory. David bought it.

Just as we saw that Saul's failure in leadership brought consequences on the land (the treatment of the Gibeonites in 2 Samuel 21), David's failure brought problems on the nation as well. God intended to bring punishment for what David had done. He gave David a choice. There could be three years of famine, three months of harassment by enemies (presumably without God's protection), or three days of plague on the land. The second option is ironic, because it would have meant subjecting David to exactly what he had wanted (to run the army himself) for three months.

David chose the plague. He felt it would be better to be in the hands of God than in the hands of man. Thus a plague swept across the land. It may have manifested itself as a sudden and deadly illness. We do not know the nature of the plague, but we do know that it was spread by an angel of death and seventy thousand people died in three days.

As the angel was about to enter Jerusalem and bring the death there, God felt that the people had had enough. The angel was at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite when God told him to stop.

David bought the threshing floor from Araunah, built an altar, there and made sacrifices. The plague stopped.

The 1 Chronicles version of this story tells us that this threshing floor of Araunah became the site for the temple that Solomon would build. This would have been about a half to three-quarters of a mile outside of the City of David.

Embedded in this story is a hard concept. When David ordered the census, Joab protested because he knew it was wrong. David made him do it anyway. Even though some of his subjects knew it was wrong, David forced the nation into corporate sin and the nation corporately paid the price for sin. Leaders are held to higher standards and their sins can have greater consequences than the sins of a "normal" person. We must be careful about the kinds of leaders we choose and what they do in our name and on our behalf. As sure as it happened in Israel, the folly of national leadership can bring destruction upon a land. It has happened over and over again throughout history as we have seen and continue to see nations rise and fall.

1.20 Preparations for the Temple

1 Chronicles 22:2-29:20

Even though David was not to build the temple, he had a great heart for it. He had concern that it should be done properly. He made a great number of preparations for its construction even though the task would be executed by his son.

In 1 Chronicles 22:6-10 we read of the initial charge that David gave to Solomon about the building of the temple:

Then he called for his son Solomon and charged him to build a house for the Lord, the God of Israel. David said to Solomon: "My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the Lord my God. But this word of the Lord came to me: 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign. He is the one who will build a house for my Name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.'"

This is a significant passage. First of all, it gives the reason that David was not allowed to build the temple. God did not want it to be built by a man of war. It was to be built by a man of peace. The passage gives David instruction about which of his sons will be the next king. It also tells him that during the reign of Solomon the nation will transition from a focus on war and securing of the borders to a time of peace and the establishment of the temple and its associated rituals.

David had craftsmen start on making articles that would be used in building the temple. They began cutting stone, making nails, hewing timber, etc. They drew up architectural plans for the temple. David made sure all of these people knew that Solomon would lead the actual building, and that they were to support him in this effort.

The next several chapters give information about the various people who were organized to support the activities in the temple once it was built. David put in place the Levites and the

priests (descendants of Aaron), the singers, and the gatekeepers. They also describe other national servants who were put in place – treasurers, army officials, etc. David was preparing the infrastructure necessary to support the nation through its transition to a peacetime mentality.

David tells the people of the nation about his desire to build the temple and God's instructions to have Solomon do it instead. David asks people to contribute to the building and leads by example. He donated a great deal of wealth to the furnishing of the temple and the people followed and did the same.

Thus when David was ready to die, the work of building the temple was ready to begin.

1.21 Solomon Made King, The Death of David

1 Kings 1:1-2:12, 1 Chronicles 29:21-30

We saw in 1 Chronicles that Solomon was God's designated heir to David's throne. The 1 Kings account tells us that David had another son, Adonijah, who had different ideas. Adonijah was David's third oldest son, after Absalom. Since Amnon and Absalom were dead, by human standards Adonijah would have been the next king. The trouble is that God had chosen Solomon and Adonijah knew it.

When David was quite old, Adonijah decided to take matters into his own hands. He plotted with Joab and some other high officials to host a feast where Adonijah would be crowned as king. Excluded from the invitation list were David, Solomon, and Nathan, David's trusted and prophetic advisor.

Nathan found out what was going on and went to Bathsheba (Solomon's mother). They decided to take action to prevent Adonijah from becoming king. Bathsheba ran into where David was and said, "What's going on? Adonijah is holding a festival and being crowned king. I thought Solomon was to be the next king." About the time she finished, Nathan rushed in and said the same thing, confirming her story. They immediately took action. They found Solomon and held a ceremony to declare him king. They sat him on the throne of David. They praised him and prophesied over him. They blew trumpets to celebrate the coronation.

The noise from Solomon's coronation reached Adonijah's celebration. A messenger came and told Adonijah that David had just set Solomon up on the throne and there was great celebration in the city because of it. Adonijah's supporters scattered. He was afraid, and ran to the altar of God and clung to it for protection. He begged mercy from Solomon. Solomon told him that if he caused no trouble he would be left alone, and he sent him home.

David knew his time of death was near. He charged Solomon to walk closely with God and reminded him of God's promise to keep David's descendants on the throne. He reminded Solomon of Joab's misdeeds and told him not to let Joab go to the grave peaceably. He named a few other people who had either treated David well or treated him poorly, instructing Solomon to deal with them accordingly.

David died. He had ruled over Israel forty years. Solomon's rule was firmly established.

1.22 David's Epitaph

King David continues to be an exalted leader for the Jews, even in the twentieth century. His burial place in Mount Zion is one of the holiest places in the world to the Jews, second to the

Western Wall. Before the Jews had free access to the Wall, they used to go to David's tomb to pray. The modern nation continues to honor him with everything from King David hotels to MacDavid's restaurants. Yet, as we have seen, David was not perfect. What has caused this reverence?

1 Samuel 13:14 describes David as a man after God's own heart. That simple fact is what set him apart in God's eyes and in the eyes of his people. He was sold out to God. He spent his life seeking God's will and seeking to be faithful.

David was human. He failed sometimes. He raised a dysfunctional family. He did not nurture his children as he should. He failed to deal with the treachery of Joab and left his son to deal with it. His sin with Bathsheba was great, but it was followed by great repentance (see Psalm 51). He rushed to restore his relationship with God. That is what made David great. When confronted with his sin, he admitted it and submitted to God, wanting nothing more than to have his relationship restored.

Because of his heart for God, God established his throne forever. Until the fall of the Southern Kingdom (Judah), a son of David remained on the throne. Eventually the King of Kings and Lord of Lords was born from the line of David to be King forever.

David is a hero. Although he was mighty in military matters, he was a hero because of his spirit. That is why he is revered by Christian and Jew alike. Who among us would not like to be called a man after God's own heart?

2 The Reign of Solomon

2.1 *Solomon Establishes His Rule*

1 Kings 2:13-46

1 Kings 1 tells us that in his latter days, David was unable to care for himself. Furthermore, he was cold all of the time. A young woman named Abishag was brought in to care for David and to lie with him to keep him warm (the text says that they did not have sexual relations.)

After Solomon became king following David's death, Adonijah (Solomon's older brother who tried to crown himself king) came to Bathsheba with a request. He told her that he was resigned to the fact that Solomon was king by God's choosing. He wanted her to go to Solomon and ask permission for him to take Abishag as his wife.

Bathsheba thought it was a reasonable request and brought it to Solomon. Solomon however, saw it as a challenge to his authority. Remember when Reuben slept with Jacob's concubine? It was an act of defiance and an attempt to take over the leadership of the family. Remember when Absalom started the revolt against David? One of the first things that he did was to publicly sleep with David's concubines. It was an act of defiance and a statement that he was taking over David's throne. Giving Abishag to Adonijah would have been giving him David's place. This request was a thinly veiled step towards trying to take the throne from Solomon. Solomon consequently had Adonijah executed.

He then decided it was time to carry out the other mandates that David had left him. When Joab heard that Solomon had executed Adonijah, he feared retribution himself. Solomon had him hunted down and killed. Solomon dealt with all of the enemies of his father and executed them or subdued them in some other way.

By the end of this exercise, nobody questioned Solomon's authority as the new king.

2.2 *Solomon Asks for Wisdom*

1 Kings 3-4, 2 Chronicles 1

1 Kings 3 opens with information about Solomon that would eventually lead to his downfall:

Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter. He brought her to the City of David until he finished building his palace and the temple of the Lord, and the wall around Jerusalem. The people, however, were still sacrificing at the high places, because a temple had not yet been built for the Name of the Lord. Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

Solomon married foreign women and allowed them to bring their foreign religions into Israel. He allowed them to continue offering sacrifices to their gods within the national borders. He also participated in sacrifices at the "high places" – places other than the single place where God mandated in the law that sacrifices were to be made.

There was a time when Solomon went to the tabernacle and made a thousand offerings in one day. That night God appeared to him and told him that he could ask God for whatever he wanted. Solomon said that he felt that a very great responsibility had been placed on him – leading God's chosen people. He was young and unsure of his ability to lead them wisely. In true humility, he asked God for discernment and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

God was pleased with his response. Solomon could have asked for wealth or long life but instead he asked for a discerning heart. God replied that since Solomon had asked so wisely and unselfishly, God would grant his request for discernment and would give him wealth and long life as well, provided that he continued to walk with God.

God did make Solomon enormously wealthy. His wealth was known internationally. He imported many horses and chariots and other fineries from neighboring nations. Part of his wealth came in the form of tribute received from other nations that had been subjected to Israel during David's lifetime. During Solomon's reign, the nation lived in peace and safety.

Soon after God granted his request for wisdom, Solomon was put to test. The story is very well known. Two women came to him with a dispute. They both had given birth to babies within a few days of each other. One night, one of the women rolled over on her baby and smothered it to death. She discovered what had happened and she got up quietly and switched babies so that she would have the living one. The next morning the other woman woke up and discovered a dead baby. She then realized that the dead child was the other woman's baby and that the other woman had taken her baby. The woman in possession of the living baby would not give it back and insisted that it was hers.

So they came to Solomon. It may seem strange to take disputes like this to the king, but remember that Solomon was the government, which included the judicial system. He would rule on the matter and what he said would be the resolution. There was no higher court.

Solomon heard their dispute. Then he told a servant to bring a sword and cut the living baby in two, giving half to each woman. One woman pled with him not to do this. The other said that it sounded like a reasonable solution. Solomon then said not to harm the baby but to give it to the one who wanted it to live because she was the real mother.

It was a wise way to resolve the situation. People were impressed and Solomon's reputation for wisdom spread rapidly throughout the kingdom. He also gained an international reputation. People from other nations would come to get his ruling on matters and to solicit his insight on issues.

2.3 The Temple is Built and Dedicated

1 Kings 5-6, 1 Kings 7:13-8:66, 2 Chronicles 2:1-7:10

Solomon's first big building project was the construction of the temple. It was an enormous undertaking. When Hiram, the king of Tyre (in Lebanon) heard that Solomon was beginning to build the temple, he offered to supply him cedar wood. Solomon made an agreement with Hiram that they would use the cedars of Lebanon and that Solomon would pay them for the lumber and the labor.

The building required a great amount of resources – both materials and labor. 1 Kings 5:13-18 gives us information about how the labor was supplied:

King Solomon conscripted laborers from all Israel – thirty thousand men. He sent them off to Lebanon in shifts of ten thousand a month, so that they spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor. Solomon had seventy thousand carriers and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hills, as well as thirty-three hundred foremen who supervised the project and directed the workmen. At the king's command they removed from the quarry large blocks of quality stone to provide a foundation of dressed stone for the temple. The craftsmen of Solomon and Hiram and the men of Gebal cut and prepared the timber and stone for the building of the temple.

If you read between the lines of the passage above, you will see the beginning of the end of the united kingdom. The temple was only the first of Solomon's many building projects. Solomon paid for these projects by taxing the people of the kingdom. Furthermore, the men were forced into labor one month out of three. Thus they had two-thirds of the year to make a living, and out of what they were able to make they had to pay heavy taxes to finance these projects. Furthermore, there is something significant about the wording "conscripted laborers from all Israel." Because of the fact that the nation later split, the term "Israel" is often used to describe the tribes other than Judah. Apparently Solomon exempted his tribesmen from the conscripted labor and perhaps from the taxes. Thus he showed favoritism to his own and alienated the other tribes. This sort of special treatment for Judah caused very hard feelings with the northern tribes. This is precisely why the northern tribes split away after Solomon's death.

But for now, the building project is in full swing. The temple was built on Mount Moriah, which is where Abraham offered to sacrifice Isaac. It was specifically built at the threshing floor of Araunah (this is where God stopped the plague that resulted from the census that David took towards the end of his life.) The exterior was built with huge stones. The interior was covered with cedar and much of it was overlaid with gold. It was full of golden cherubim. It was quite elaborate. It took seven years from the time that the foundation was laid until the time the temple was complete.

A craftsman was brought in from Tyre to make further decorations for the temple. He also fashioned the temple furnishings out of gold and bronze – the altars and the lamp stand and the table of shewbread, etc. The temple had the same sort of furnishings as the tabernacle. In essence, the temple was a permanent substitute for the tabernacle.

Solomon sent for the Ark of the Covenant. The priests brought it and set it in the Most Holy place in the temple. When they did, the Spirit of God filled the temple and manifested in the form of a thick cloud. The presence was so thick that the priests could not minister in the temple.

Solomon prayed a great prayer of dedication, asking God to dwell with them there. He prayed that the temple would become the center of religious life not only of the Jews but also of all people who seek the Lord. There was a great time of sacrifice. People from all over the nation came to observe the dedication of the temple, which lasted seven days. When it was over, they returned to their homes.

2.4 Solomon Builds His Palace

1 Kings 7:1-12

Solomon spent seven years building the temple. He spent thirteen years building his palace. 1 Kings chapter 7 gives a lengthy description of the palace that he built for himself. He also built one for the daughter of the Pharaoh, who was his wife. The description of the building of the palace is given in the middle of the discussion about the building of the temple, which would imply that the two building projects overlapped (although 2 Chronicles 8:1 implies that they were

done sequentially). We are not sure. Maybe he started the palace when he finished the temple, but they probably went on simultaneously. Another thing that is not stated in the text but that may be inferred is the manner in which Solomon paid for the building of the palace. It was a massive and expensive project just like the temple. Solomon would have taxed the people to pay for the materials and he would have used conscripted labor to do the work. If that method worked for building the temple then it would work for the palace as well. Unfortunately, it resulted in thirteen more years of sowing seeds of discontent among the people.

God granted Solomon the gift of wisdom. It was up to him whether or not he used it. Solomon did not show wisdom in many of the things that he did. His treatment of his people relative to his building projects was not one of his better moves.

2.5 God Appears to Solomon

1 Kings 9:1-9, 2 Chronicles 7:11-22

After Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple, God appeared to him. God told him that he had chosen the temple to be his place of residence and that he would dwell with the people, provided that they remained faithful. If Solomon himself remained righteous, then God would fulfill the promise made to David to keep one of his heirs on the throne (again, the promise to David was contingent upon faithfulness). God warned that if the people turned away to other gods, he would abandon them. The temple would be destroyed and people would be appalled at what would happen to both it and to the land. He reminded Solomon that sin would bring rebuke. But he also gave him hope. 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 says,

When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Sin brings consequences, which could take the form of a natural disaster. When the people realize that they are being chastised, they should seek to understand why. Once they realize that they are in sin, they should:

- Humble themselves – confess the sin.
- Pray and seek God's face – seek to restore the relationship. Seeking God's face implies looking to him for direction once again. If you have your eyes fixed on his face then you no longer focus on the distractions of the world.
- Turn from their wicked ways – the confession and prayer must be followed by repentance or it is not real.

Having done these things, then God will hear and he will forgive and he will heal.

2.6 Solomon's Other Activities

1 Kings 9:10-28, 2 Chronicles 8

This section describes the other major building projects of Solomon. Other than building the temple and his palace, he fortified (i.e. built up the walls around) Jerusalem, Meggido, Hazor, and Gezer. He built up other cities in the kingdom. He built a palace for his wife, the daughter of Pharaoh.

Solomon regularly offered sacrifices at the temple.

Solomon built a fleet of ships. They seem to have been used for commercial purposes, bringing imports into Israel from other parts of the world.

These building projects took labor. We have already seen that he conscripted the Israelite men into labor one month out of three. This section says that he forced the aliens living among them (the descendants of the Jebusites, Amorites, Hittites, etc. who were still living in the land) into slave labor to work on the projects.

2.7 *The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon*

1 Kings 10:1-13, 2 Chronicles 9:1-12

Solomon's fame spread far beyond the borders of Israel. This section tells of a time when the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon. (Sheba is on the Arabian peninsula. It is located approximately where the peninsula comes to a "V," where the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden come together.) She had heard of his great wisdom and his exceeding wealth. She heard such extreme stories that she did not believe they were true. But she wanted to find out for herself. She came to Solomon bearing great gifts: gold, spices, etc. She observed his wealth and was quite impressed. She asked him a number of very hard questions and was pleased with the answers he gave. After a time she returned home, convinced that all she had heard was true.

The point of this seems to be that Solomon was an internationally known figure. David spent his reign building up the kingdom by extending its borders. Solomon enjoyed peace during his reign. He built up the wealth of the kingdom and built its reputation as a nation of international importance. During the reign of Solomon, Israel was a dominant nation in the middle east. It was a posture that would not last beyond his death.

2.8 *Solomon's Splendor*

1 Kings 10:14-29, 2 Chronicles 9:13-28

This section continues to explore Solomon's wealth and his international reputation. Many dignitaries from other lands came to seek Solomon's wisdom and brought expensive gifts in the process. The Queen of Sheba seems to have been just the first of such visitors. Solomon had fabulous wealth. Things made of gold were very common in his house. He had shields made of gold and thrones made of gold and golden goblets and other household items made of gold. There is a note in the text saying that nothing was made of silver because it was not considered to be valuable in those days.

Solomon's trading ships brought him imports from other parts of the world, including gold, silver, ivory, apes, and baboons. We are not really sure what they did with the apes and baboons.

Solomon also imported a great number of horses and chariots. He kept them in "chariot cities," which seem to have included Meggido and Hazor. Ruins of the walls and the stables built by Solomon may still be seen in those cities.

2.9 *Solomon's Wives*

1 Kings 11:1-13

The Chronicles tell the "rosy" picture of David and Solomon. They leave out the negative parts of their lives. This is a negative aspect of Solomon's life.

He had seven hundred wives! If that was not enough, he had three hundred concubines on the side! I cannot figure out how he pretended to remember all of their names.

A large number of these women were Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites – the very people God had commanded the Israelites not to marry. The reason that God did not want the Israelites to become intimate with these people is because he knew they would lead them into idolatry. This is precisely what happened to Solomon. Later in life, Solomon gave into the influence of these women and began to worship their gods alongside God. He built high places (places of sacrifice) for these gods and he himself participated in the sacrifices. He worshipped and sacrificed to Ashtoreth (the goddess of the Sidonians) and Molech (the god of the Ammonites) and Chemosh (the god of Moab).

God was very angry with Solomon. He told Solomon that he would tear the kingdom away from his son because of Solomon's disobedience. Yet because of his promise to David, God would let Solomon's son continue to reign over the tribe of Judah and he would let him keep Jerusalem.

2.10 Solomon's Enemies

1 Kings 11:14-40

Because of Solomon's disobedience, God raised up several leaders in the land who opposed his leadership. Among them was a man by the name of Jeroboam. Jeroboam was one of Solomon's trusted officials. A prophet appeared to Jeroboam and told him that God was going to give him ten of the tribes and make him king over them after the death of Solomon. He explained that it was because of Solomon's idolatry. He told him that because of the promise to David, Judah would remain with Solomon's descendants. The prophet told him that if he remained faithful, God would establish his dynasty over Israel in the same manner as had been promised to David – that his heirs would reign over the land indefinitely. If they would be faithful, God would use the family of Jeroboam to humble the descendants of David – but not forever. 1 Kings 11:39 is interesting:

I will humble David's descendants because of this, but not forever.

God was still looking forward to the time when one of David's descendants would be born King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Solomon somehow learned of the promise to Jeroboam and he sought to kill him. Jeroboam fled to Egypt.

2.11 The Death of Solomon

1 Kings 11:41-43, 2 Chronicles 9:29-31

After a forty-year reign, Solomon died. His son Rehoboam succeeded him as king.

2.12 Solomon's Epitaph

Solomon grew up in a dysfunctional home. He was a product of a relationship that started out as an adulterous and murderous affair. Solomon's father already had multiple wives and yet lusted after one more woman. In order to satisfy that lust, he committed multiple sins. He dishonored himself, dishonored Bathsheba, dishonored and murdered her husband, involved other people in

the act (e.g. Joab), and dishonored God. Solomon grew up in a home where brother murdered brother. His role model was a father who had a real heart for God but failed to apply sufficient amounts of God's wisdom to his personal life and family. The saying, "Like father like son," certainly can apply here.

One of Solomon's first official acts was to put his own brother to death. The treachery he had seen in his own family while he was growing up followed him to the throne.

Like David, Solomon started out with a real heart for God. When God agreed to grant him the desire of his heart, he asked for wisdom so that he might be a fit leader for the people. God was pleased and gave him abundant wisdom.

In spite of his great wisdom, like David before him Solomon lacked a certain amount of common sense in dealing with people. He alienated the people of Israel because of the heavy burden he put on them with his building projects, both in the form of taxes and of conscripted labor. While his people labored under these burdens, Solomon became one of the wealthiest men in the world.

Saturated by material wealth, Solomon's attention turned further to the satisfaction of his flesh as his years progressed. What in the world could one man do with a thousand wives and concubines? There were bound to be some of them that he would not even recognize if he passed them on the street. Could he have known the names of all of his children or even been sure how many he had? And if he grew up in a dysfunctional home with no strong father figure, what sort of father figure could his children have had?

David's real moral failure centered around the satisfaction of his flesh. The same is true of Solomon. These women that he brought in to satisfy his fancies brought their foreign gods with them. Not only did he marry too many women, but also he married women that God said not to marry. God said that if the Israelites married these people they would become idol worshippers. Solomon did marry them and he did become an idol worshipper.

In spite of these failures, Solomon was a great leader. He is still revered by the Jews today. His accomplishments include:

- He made Israel an international player.
- The kingdom was wealthier under Solomon than it ever was before or since.
- He had a great deal of wisdom. He gave the world the books of Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and most of Proverbs.
- He accomplished the building of the first temple. He established the temple as the center of Jewish life. Zerubbabel's (i.e. Herod's) temple was what it was as a direct result of the importance of Solomon's temple.

His failures include:

- He failed to apply his wealth of wisdom to the manner in which he treated (i.e. used) people to accomplish his ends.
- Too much of his attention was devoted to satisfying the desires of his flesh – wealth and women.
- He fell into idolatry and took the nation with him.

God's real intention was for Israel to have a throne that was occupied by God. The king of Israel was to subject to God and he was to act accordingly.

When Saul became king, the first thing he did was to hop up into the throne to give it a test drive. He wanted to know what it was like to make the rules. God quickly set him aside and determined to tear the kingdom away from his house.

Although David was not perfect, David spent his life kneeling before the throne. When he strayed, he ran back to lay prostrate before the throne with the cry of his heart being "restore unto me the joy of my salvation" (Psalm 51:12). God honored David because of his humility and his heart.

Solomon began his reign kneeling before the throne as well. He maintained that position for a long time. In time, however, he got curious to know how the throne felt. He decided that it could not hurt to sit there every once in a while. So he continued to observe the ordinances of God, and he continued to make sacrifices, etc. But he also let unrepentant sin become part of his existence. He defied God's instructions about whom to marry and about idolatry. He knelt before God's throne when he felt it was appropriate but sat in the throne whenever his knees got tired. The trouble is that being subject to God is not something you do until your flesh tells you otherwise. God is not looking for leaders who will compete with his authority.

So by the time of Solomon's death, the kingdom was ready to split. On a spiritual level, it divided because of Solomon's idolatry. God said he would tear most of the kingdom away from Solomon's son because of Solomon's failure. On a physical level, the kingdom was ready to split because the people of the northern tribes were exhausted from the heavy burdens that Solomon had placed on them. They wanted no more of this treatment.

The united monarchy is finished. The twelve tribes of Israel are no more. But God's promise to David stands firm. One of his descendants will be king forever. The words of Jacob spoken so long ago are still true (Genesis 49:10):

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

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