
Day 90 - March 31

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

David's Rise to Power

Reading: *1 Samuel 16:1-17:58*

Reflections:

- David as a worshipper of God and King represents one of the most important people in the story of Israel. His heart of humility and faith makes him one of the very best role models within Israel's history and yet, we see how far short he falls as he ends up committing both adultery and murder. As Israel rejects God's kingship and looks for an earthly king, David represents the best version of a human king you can hope for and as we shall learn, he still cannot prevent great sin, even within his own life. Remember the overarching story of Israel is for us to discover all that does not work to change the human heart. This will set up how God ultimately will change our heart through Jesus and the coming of God's Spirit.
- The story of Samuel anointing David continues the pattern God has been clearly establishing. God bypasses the obvious choice and chooses to work through the least, the youngest, the humanly unexpected. Why? It states clearly in this text! Key statement: "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Even Samuel at first thinks that it is the eldest of Jesse's sons that God would choose. But no, God passes by all seven until finally it is revealed that there is still the youngest who did not even get invited to the party. Samuel remains standing indicating the kind of honor David is to receive. It is powerful to think that a teenager like this is immediately given that kind of honor. That is how it is with Christ. We are not given great honor by God because of what we have accomplished but simply because of who we are. We are his chosen ones. We start our journey with God by being fully honored as princesses or princes in his kingdom. In other words, receiving God's highest honor is not something that is earned or attained, it is something given, it is something bestowed because of his grace.
- David is "ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features." He is probably not the tallest of men like Saul but he is still a good looking guy.

- David is anointed with oil and that day the Spirit of God comes on him. Again the word “anointed” here signifies becoming both a king and being filled with God’s Spirit. Jesus is called “Messiah” or “Christ” which means “anointed one.”
- We learn that as God’s spirit departs from Saul and now fills David, an evil spirit sent by God takes up an active role in Saul’s life. Saul’s rebellion leads to his life coming under the control of the enemy as an expression of God’s judgment against him. His life now takes a turn towards destruction and tragedy. You may wonder, why does God use evil spirits? Although this may be hard to get one’s mind around, when it comes to judgment, God has the right and authority to use anything to bring about that judgment. At times he uses natural disasters (as in Egypt). At other times he will throw an enemy into confusion and they end up killing themselves. God can even use the work of Satan or a demon as a way to complete a judgment against someone who is in rebellion.
- A fascinating insight into Saul’s struggle now follows. Some form of emotional battle follows the coming of this evil spirit into his life. Whether it is depression, anxiety or some other negative experience, Saul is now really struggling. One of his attendants suggests music to help comfort him and who gets brought in but David. It is interesting in the text that David’s worship music (we can assume that it was worship music by his later history of writing so many songs to God) brought temporary relief to Saul. One might think that Saul in experiencing this may turn to God and repent. But as we will see, Saul’s heart is totally hardened to God and will only descend further into a life of hate and evil.
- The battle with the Philistines ensues and the well known story of David and Goliath unfolds. As we can now clearly see, once again God demonstrates that the battle is his to fight and that he delights in giving victory to the weak, the lowly, the humble. “God opposes the proud but gives his saving grace to those who are humble and full of faith.” (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5)
- David’s motives are attacked by his oldest brother and so we see that even those who are seeking to do God’s will can expect to be wrongly judged and even put down by their closest family members or friends. In other words, following God can at times be a lonely and difficult journey.
- David had learned to trust God within the daily routines of his life. He had witnessed God at work in the everyday experiences and so when it came to the main stage of this kind of battle, David had learned to put his confidence in God.
- Saul tries to make David into a humanly equipped warrior but David rejects this. Sometimes we try to help God by using human tools or strategies and God chooses to set these aside and just use very simple ways. Remember, the main point of this entire story is that God loves to reveal his power, grace and sufficiency through the weak, helpless and foolish. It is no surprise he wanted to use David’s little sling, just like he

wanted to use Moses' little stick. God chooses to use the things kids play with to conquer the greatest of enemies.

- David is despised by Goliath but he stands strong in his confidence in God as his defender and warrior. Key statement: "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty....the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give all of you into our hands."
- David keeps Goliath's head as a trophy and to most this is a bit sick. But anyway, apparently in those days that was quite the keepsake. Maybe something for the recreation room wall. Stuffed bear head. Stuffed lion head. Stuffed Goliath head. Maybe not.
- This victory causes Saul to bring David into his household which sets the stage for the conflict that is about to erupt between Saul and David, as well as the close friendship of Saul's son Jonathan with David.