

## ***David's Early Reign***

### **I. Introduction**

1. Saul's reign was crucially important in the salvation history and development of the doctrine of God's kingdom. *It wasn't an example of a failed man as much as a profound revelation of the antithesis between God's kingdom and the human notion of kingdom and kingship.*
2. Human existence finds each person determined by a *self-centrism* that has one's self as the lens and gauge through which all of life is perceived and assessed. This dynamic is the essence of *idolatry* in which every person exists as his own effective god. \* Isa. 44:9-17
  - a. This idolatry expresses itself in the *religious* sphere, but extends to every dimension of human life, and preeminently to human *relationships*, hence the "procedure of the king."
  - b. Self-interest binds together all of the dynamics of human existence, which helps to explain the unbreakable union between religion and social structures. This is true even with secular societies; *people groups always identify themselves by, and find their coherence in, certain fundamental axioms mutually accepted as true.*

***In the ancient world, the most important distinction between people groups was their gods and their relationship with them (Isa. 10:5-11). The same is true in the modern world, but the "gods" are more often ideological and institutional.***

3. This intertwining of *religion* and *kingdom* reflects man's essential nature as image-son, but it's perverted by the self-centrism that defines human existence. Religion and kingdom function together synergistically as instruments of personal advantage: *A person, ruler or nation justifies its political/societal ends by attributing them to its gods (or transcendent principles); in turn, they call on those powers to give success to the ends they pursue.*
4. David and Saul, then, represent the two forms of human lordship and kingdom: dominion reflecting man's intrinsic idolatry, and dominion reflecting man as divine image-son. *Thus Saul's disqualification and David's role as the preeminent prototype of the true King.*

### **II. David's Early Reign (2 Samuel 1-6)**

#### **A. David's Ascent to the Throne – King of Judah (1:1-4:12)**

1. David mourned Saul's death and sought Yahweh's leading for himself. That led him to Hebron in Judah (ref. Josh. 20:1ff), where the men of Judah crowned him their king. But Saul's dynasty continued, with his son Ish-bosheth eventually assuming his father's rule.

*David was anointed king of Judah at Hebron, while Abner brought Ish-bosheth to Mahanaim ("two camps" – Gen. 32) to crown him king over Israel in the place of his father.*

2. Yahweh's covenant household was divided into two parallel camps, and continual hostility persisted between David's house and Saul's house for the next seven and a half years. Israel was divided, *and it was notably a division within Ish-bosheth's own court that led to the nation's reunification.* To that point, Abner had been willing to spurn Yahweh's will for His kingdom, but a personal affront by Ish-bosheth caused him to suddenly become the Lord's ally and take up His cause to put David on the throne over all Israel. \* 3:6-21

3. It's unclear whether Abner developed any genuine loyalty to David, but David's nephew Joab was unconvinced and murdered Abner (partially in retribution for the death of his brother Asahel – 2:12ff). David was outraged when he learned of this, and he pronounced a curse on Joab and his house and then called for a public lament for Abner. \* 3:22-39
4. Abner's death and David's response to it had two effects: First, it disheartened Ish-bosheth and encouraged those inclined to exploit his weakness, but it also unnerved the Israelite people and made them rethink their own allegiance. As a result, two of Ish-bosheth's commanders assassinated him, and when David's response was to have them executed, he won over the other tribes of Israel. He had shown himself to be what Yahweh said he was: *a man after His own heart; a man who loved Israel's God and His people; a man without personal and political ambitions whose only zeal was for righteousness and justice.*

## **B. David's Consolidation of the Kingdom – King of all Israel (5:1-5)**

1. For the first time since Joshua's death, the tribes of Israel were reunited in solidarity – not through manipulation or coercion, but in sincere devotion to their king. \* cf. 1 Chron. 11:1ff
2. Whereas Saul built and maintained his rule for his own sake through deception, conspiracy and fear, David gained the kingdom through single-minded devotion to the true King. *In contrast to the procedure of the king, David was a genuine shepherd of Israel.*

## **C. David's Conquest of Jerusalem (5:6-10)**

Notably, this is David's first recorded act after unifying all Israel under his rule (cf. 1 Chron. 11).

1. Jerusalem was an ancient city and a Jebusite stronghold at the time Israel invaded Canaan under Joshua. Though the Israelites attacked Jerusalem many times, it remained the last unconquered Canaanite refuge in the land of Israel (cf. Judges 1:8, 21, 19:10-11). *By God's design, that awaited the emergence of His chosen servant-king.*
2. The significance of Jerusalem's conquest is seen in the role it was to play in the Israelite kingdom, particularly as that kingdom predicted and portrayed Yahweh's final kingdom.
  - a. Through Moses, the Lord had spoken of a future fixed dwelling place He would appoint for Himself (Deut. 12:1ff, 16:1ff). David believed Jerusalem was to be this place.
  - b. Moreover, by calling Jerusalem by his own name – the *City of David* (5:9), *David was indicating his conviction that Yahweh's dwelling place is also the proper inhabitation of His regal son. This conviction emerged from Israel's history with God, but as that history originated with the Lord's intent revealed in Eden. Man was created image-bearer in order to rule on the Creator's behalf as image-son dwelling in His garden-sanctuary.*

## **D. David's Restoration of the Ark (6:1-23)**

Jerusalem was now the seat of Yahweh's reign through His chosen king, but David's vision was to dwell there with Him. Toward that end, he had a tabernacle ("tent") constructed in Jerusalem (6:17) and set about bringing the ark of Yahweh's presence from Abinadab's house.

1. David's new tabernacle at Jerusalem was not the one that had been at Shiloh and moved to Nob and Gibeon (one of the Levitical cities). \* Josh. 21:17; 1 Chron. 16:37-40, 21:29

2. The text doesn't explain David's action, but it created a situation where Yahweh's symbolic presence was in Jerusalem while worship also continued at Gibeon. \* 2 Chron. 1:3-4
3. David's first recorded failure as king came in connection with bringing the ark to Jerusalem. Having prepared its dwelling place on Mount Zion, he mimicked the Philistines by moving it on an ox cart. This resulted in a man's death at Yahweh's hand, which shocked and angered David and caused him to leave the ark in the house of a man named Obed-Edom. \* 6:1-10
4. The ark remained with Obed-Edom for three months, but when David learned how the Lord had been blessing his house, he determined again to bring it to Jerusalem. *This time, however, David followed God's prescription for transporting the ark and had it carried into Jerusalem in a triumphal procession.*
  - a. The focal point of this event was David's presence and participation, and the text is careful to portray him functioning in the priestly role.
  - b. David's actions – and the Lord's favor toward them – were remarkable given His response to Saul's priestly violation. *But what was forbidden to Saul was acceptable for David – not because of who he was personally, but because of whom he prefigured.*

***Yahweh's later covenant with David would reveal that his person, reign and kingdom were to find their fulfillment and true significance in a regal and priestly son to come from him.*** \* cf. Psalm 110; Matthew 22:41-46
5. David celebrated and danced before the Lord as he led the ark procession into Jerusalem, but his wife Michal had a very different take on his actions. David was immersed in jubilant worship, but Michal was embarrassed and ashamed; in her judgment, the king was humiliating himself and denigrating his throne before his subjects. In this way she showed herself to be a true daughter of her father Saul: *She conceived of the kingdom and kingship in personal and political terms rather than theocratic ones.* Her dignity and standing were her concern, not the Lord's honor and worship, and, as with her father, Yahweh stripped her of a legacy in Israel. Even more, He made a complete separation between Saul's line and David's.
6. By bringing the ark to Jerusalem David had symbolically enthroned Yahweh on Mount Zion, *and he had done so as the Lord's elect king-priest. So it would be with David's covenant son.* \* cf. Psalm 110; Zech. 2:1-3:10, 6:9-15; also Psalm 2 with Heb. 5:1-6

### III. Conclusions

1. David was Yahweh's chosen king, and his reign and accomplishments were the nearest approximation to the kingdom and kingship the Lord intended.
2. David had received the throne as the culmination of patient trust and faithfulness, and he brought the Israelite kingdom to its pinnacle, not just through conquest, but most importantly, by establishing Yahweh's sanctuary-throne in Jerusalem. *David ruled Yahweh's covenant house and kingdom from Jerusalem as the seat of the Lord's throne and dominion.*
3. And yet this unique man after God's own heart would fall short of His ideal for His regal image-son. But this, too, was by design, for Yahweh ordained that David would be the great *prototype* of His messianic king. David's kingship was non-ultimate, such that both he and his rule as Yahweh's king were to find their fulfillment in one of his descendents.