

THE PSALMS

A THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY

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THE KINGDOM OF DAVID¹

I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. (2 Samuel 7:14)

The story of David covers almost one-third of the Old Testament, if we include the introductory material (Judges, Ruth), the accounts of the sons of David and his Kingdom (1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles), and the writings of David and his son Solomon (Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs). In this light, David takes his place as one of the three major characters of the Old Testament message: Abraham (the Covenant), Moses (the Law), and David (the Kingdom).

And yet most modern studies of David treat him like a minor character in the history of Israel. They focus on his mistakes and make them the central issues of his life; they fail to see the critical function that David served in Israelite history; they miss the testimony of the New Testament saints and their assessment of David's role. So modern students can see that David was obviously a big deal in his day, but they don't know why; they're missing the data about David's Kingdom that make his story so critical to Biblical Theology.

The New Testament writers understood how important David was for the concept of the Messiah. The thing we have to see here is that Jesus is called the Son of David for a reason: *he did what his father David had done*. We have to go back to the story of David and track through his history, identifying exactly what he did that was so important for God's Kingdom then and now.

The nation's needs

The book of Judges is a perfect introduction to the story of David. After Joshua secured the Promised Land and the Israelites settled down into their new homes, there was a period of about 400 years in which they learned to live with their God. Overall the experience can be summarized as a failure.

Admittedly this was a unique moment in history; but the resources were there, and in all fairness God wouldn't have expected it of them if they couldn't do it. God had brought them out of slavery in Egypt (and that included worshipping false gods), made them his nation, and gave them his Law. This Law included everything they would need to love and serve both God and man. It was the only perfect government the world has ever seen. And God gave them their own land to live in – a land of blessings and peace. They had everything they could possibly need. God's expectations of them were in line with the opportunities and resources they now had in hand.

The central idea here is that God was their King, and they were to serve him with all their lives. That should have been enough for them. They were, after all, Abraham's descendants, and they were expected to have Abraham's faith. The Word of God (the Law) should have been clear and inviting to them. God should have been real to them,

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not just a character in the Book. The fear of the Lord is what drives God's people to his Word, and the love for God is what drives their service to him. Faith sees the invisible; it doesn't stumble over it. (Hebrews 11:27)

But without faith, God is not real and the Book turns into nothing more than tradition from the forefathers. At that point the Israelites turned away from the God of their fathers and relied on their own resources – in other words, what they saw their pagan neighbors doing. This is fatal to the life of God's people: they lose the power of Heaven, the purity that God's Law gives to the heart, the fellowship with God. This world, in other words, loses Heaven's sanctifying touch – and dies as a result.

During the period of the Judges, the Israelites struggled to keep in touch with God; they kept turning away and coming back again, from life to death and back to life. It should have been plain to see that walking with God insured peace and prosperity, and leaving him meant certain destruction.

Though the answers for their problems were all in the Law and the Covenant, they failed to act on that knowledge. They were warned about the Canaanites and the idolatry and immorality that they would be tempted into; but they ignored the warning. The Lord, according to his threat, pulled back from them and let their enemies harass and oppress them. A tragically graphic evidence that their God had left them to the "tender mercies" of the enemy was the loss of the Ark of the Covenant during their battles with the Philistines. (1 Samuel 4)

As long as the twelve Tribes were focused on their own desires, and they treated each other with distrust and animosity, there would be no political unity among them – even though the Law prescribed such unity. Unity requires a common Law, and submitting to the King of that Law; but they rejected God's Law. Unity requires a common religion; but they each turned to idolatry as well as diluting and changing the religion of the Tabernacle. So, as the common military saying goes, "divide and conquer" – the Israelites became easy prey to their enemies.

But they could see that the Covenant with Abraham was still in force: whenever they came to their senses, turned to their God in repentance, and "cried out to the LORD in their distress" (Psalm 107), he heard their cry as he did back in Egypt and rescued them for their forefather's sake. Sin doesn't end the relationship with God; he will forgive sin. What ends the relationship is turning away from him for good. But that Covenant is always in the background, waiting for God's people to take advantage of it and return to God for mercy and help. And the generation that did so experienced once again what it's like to live with God – it is certainly far better than life without him. The Covenant principle, which includes faith in the living God, is the foundation of the life of God's people. Israel proved that over and over.

The Judges were special leaders whom God raised up to rescue his people. They weren't meant to be kings, but they were designated to be conduits of God's blessings to his people. They brought their unique gifts to bear on the problems of the Israelites. They each addressed regional situations, not national; but that was in keeping with their role – they weren't supposed to usurp God's prerogatives as Israel's only King. When they were done, the people were supposed to go back to the Law's system, with God as their King, and try this thing again.

The fundamental problem was that the Israelites could not bring themselves to maintain the requirements of God's Kingdom. There were too many "parties," too much self-interest, too many conflicting regional demands. It wasn't because the system itself was faulty; any people who lived by God's Law perfectly would be a righteous people (Deuteronomy 6:25), not a confused and immoral people. The problem lay with the lack of self-discipline of the people themselves.

And they were aware of the problem. That's why they demanded that Samuel appoint a king for them, like the other nations had (1 Samuel 8); they knew that a king would bring order out of the chaos. They were, of course, pushing their responsibilities off on the king – God expected obedience from all of them, not just from their rulers – but they were willing to put up with whatever disadvantages that having a king might entail. A human king brings added difficulties to the situation; one that Samuel mentioned was the conscription for armies that the king would force upon the people. But it was evident to everyone that nobody had the drive and passion and wisdom to make God's Kingdom work.

Designated Heir

At this point we need to reach back to the Abrahamic Covenant for a critical concept: the *Designated Heir*. If you remember, this is the chosen person through whom God gives the Covenant blessings to the rest of Abraham's descendants.

There was another man chosen to be king over Israel before David – Saul, son of Kish. (1 Samuel 9-10) Outwardly he seemed to be a good choice; but over a short period of time he demonstrated his lack of spiritual quality when he deliberately disobeyed the Lord's commands. He had his reasons (we all do!) but he failed to see the essential nature of God's Kingdom: the Lord's will alone rules. And as king, Saul was responsible to carry out God's will. Independence from God does not maintain God's Kingdom.

Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king. (1 Samuel 15:22-23)

So right away the Lord sent Samuel to look for another king, whom he found in the youngest son of Jesse. The Lord anointed David with his Spirit long before he assumed the throne; it would be years before David could come out of the desert as a renegade and take his place over Israel as the rightful king. But it's significant that these two strands appear at the very beginning of the story of Israel's Kingdom: the line of Saul and the line of David.

David is called "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14); and when God examined David's heart (1 Samuel 16:7) he found the king he was looking for. In other words, what God valued, David also valued. The things that God wanted to see happen, David also wanted to see. David shared his God's point of view on what the Kingdom

ought to look like and how it needs to run. He was God's son, designated to rule in God's Name over God's Kingdom in God's way.

I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, so that my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. (Psalm 89:20-21)

He shall cry to me, "You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation." And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. (Psalm 89:26-27)

Only the son has privilege with God, access to God's throne and resources. Only the son will be privy to God's plans and purposes. He stands closer to God than anybody else. And the rest of the people of God must come to this son if they want anything from God – they can't get it from God without him. He has become critical to their well-being. So we see the careful succession of the throne from David to Solomon in particular, and to the rest of David's progeny. That explains why the Northern tribes' rebellion was doomed to failure: they were putting themselves out of the reach of the Designated Heir.

David was not the man that everyone would have expected – he was Jesse's youngest, for one thing, and Saul seemed a more likely candidate for the throne because of his physical bearing. And David spent many years in the wilderness on the run, staying out of Saul's way as a "criminal" in the eyes of the law. (1 Samuel 19-31)

But what characterized David's attitude, indeed his entire rule over Israel, was his close connection to his God. God looks on the heart, and he found a kindred spirit in David. David walked with God. He knew that God's people can only survive, the Kingdom can only succeed, by centering on God; and he knew how to maintain that connection at all times based on his own experiences with living in God's presence. So we have a major difference in political philosophies between David and Saul – David put himself under God's rule.

These two religious/political strands typified the life of Israel for over 300 years – from the days of Saul's jealousy of David, David's years as a renegade, the battle for supremacy between David's forces and Saul's, on into the split of the nation into North and South and the North's final defeat at the hands of the Assyrians. There were always two parties: those who followed David and his special Plan that connected them closely to God, and those who rebelled against David and refused to submit to his special Plan.

It's not that David's party was particularly successful in its later years; they ended up following the example of the North and rejecting the spiritual foundation of their forefather David. But that only proves the point: David's reign, and his son Solomon's reign, was the high-water mark in Israel's history – then is when she was the most God-centered, and was most powerful and prosperous as a result. In other words, David's Plan works.

By extension, the sons of David would also be in this special position of the Designated Heir to God's people. The leaders had the responsibility as well as the position to put Israel in touch with the Covenant Promises.

I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. (2 Samuel 7:12-14)

God promised that *the throne of David* would be the source of Israel's peace and prosperity and security.

The 5-Point Plan: Organizing principles

The problem which Saul and the Judges before him passed on to David centered on the lack of a systematic way to stay in touch with God. All the blessings that Israel enjoyed were based on the Covenant that God made with Abraham; and the rule of law and order was founded on their deliverance from Egypt and the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai. It was not a given that these blessings would continue no matter how the people lived – the Lord told them over and over that *if* they rejected all other gods, and *if* they loved the only God and obeyed him in all things, *then* he would bless them.

And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full. Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the LORD is giving you. (Deuteronomy 11:13-17)

The Lord certainly intended to keep his side of the bargain, so – as Hebrews tells us (Hebrews 8:8) – if this thing wasn't working, the problem was with the people themselves. They were all obligated to keep this Covenant, and the Lord certainly punished them when they didn't. But they were like sheep without a shepherd; they needed someone who would drive them in the right direction and lead them to “green pastures” and “still waters” (life with God) where they would “walk in paths of righteousness.” (Psalm 23)

Charged with this task of shepherding the nation, David put together a five-point Plan to achieve his goal. We can follow his progress through the history of 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles, after he pulled together all the tribes into one nation. We will follow his steps chronologically.

- **David established a capital city. (2 Samuel 5:6-10)**

Ever since the Israelites entered the Promised Land, there had been no one place in the entire land that served as a central location for either political or religious purposes. The Ark of the Covenant changed locations, depending on

who was responsible for its maintenance and where the current High Priest lived, which could be anywhere from Dan to Beersheba. There was no single political leader, only a series of Judges chosen from different tribes who “ruled” Israel through its crises. This state of affairs led to confusion and lack of a reliable central authority to whom the Israelites could take their problems and needs. It also meant that finding God could be nearly impossible for the average Israelite.

So David immediately addressed this problem by taking Jerusalem from the Jebusites, who were one of the Canaanite tribes left over from the Conquest. This move on David’s part established a capital city where he could set up his throne over his new Kingdom. It also was to be the site of the Temple, the focal point of Israel’s worship of Yahweh.

Where the king is, there is the source of supply for the nation’s political and social needs. There was one person, one highest authority from whom the laws were passed down and to whom a person could take his need for justice. From Jerusalem the king would issue the laws that would give prosperity and peace to the entire nation, instead of having to rely on minor officials in local areas trying and failing to achieve this with their limited resources. David had access to hundreds of thousands of potential troops in case of war; he had access to the wealth of the nation for his national projects. In his position of power and authority, David could do what nobody else in the Kingdom could do. He provided the rules, the standards, the procedures that Israel’s king must follow for the benefit of the entire nation; with this, of course, came long-term stability replacing the old days of confusion and frustration.

We must also remember that David, being the Designated Heir, would also be the source of rich spiritual blessings to the rest of the nation. It was his work that so enriched the nation of Israel, so that as long as he ruled there would be blessings for all. “Long live the king!” was not only an affirmation of their love for him, but also the guarantee of their own future well-being.

And when the Israelites, in obedience to the Law, gathered together for their feasts and worship, it now would be in Jerusalem – always there, and nowhere else but there. Here is where their God lived as well as their king; here is the house of God, and here the spiritual blessings of Heaven and the benefits of their relationship to him produced such fruitful results. Being approximately in the middle of the country helped to give universal access to all the Israelites living north and south. And with the Temple sitting on Mt. Zion, they had a sense of awe of the throne and house of God as they “came up to” the Lord (see the “Psalms of Ascents” such as Psalm 121), *ascending* the mountain to meet with him. It was a graphic and picturesque way of approaching their God with reverence to present their requests to him.²

² Later we will see Jesus, the Son of David, setting up his Church for the same reasons as David established Jerusalem; in fact, Jerusalem is the “shadow” of the Body of Christ as it reflects the throne of the King, the location of the House of God, and the source of blessings for his people.

The setting of the capital therefore was answering the need of God's people: *where do we look to for our help?*

- **David defeated Israel's enemies. (2 Samuel 5:17-25; 8:1-14)**

The Law had required the complete eradication of the tribes living in Canaan – for two reasons: *first*, there wasn't enough room for the Israelites to settle down there when other nations already lived there. *Second*, and this was more serious, these pagan nations would inevitably tempt the Israelites into worshipping their false gods. (Deuteronomy 20:18) Intermarriages would happen, which in turn would make idolatry all that much easier to succumb to. And the truly lethal aspect of idolatry was that it leads to immorality and false worship. Only worship of Yahweh leads to righteousness; there can be no communion between the two forms of worship.

The Canaanites were certainly not going to roll over and let the Israelites take whatever they wanted; there was going to be war. And it became a war of ideologies as much as a war for the land – whoever won the war would dictate policy. If Israel won, then the worship of the true God would become the law of the land, and righteousness the goal. So the vicious attacks that the pagans launched against the Israelites during the period of the Judges was motivated by desperation to keep their false gods and deny Israel her God. The Canaanites knew exactly what the issues were.

So did David. He showed at the very beginning a profound understanding of what was at stake here in the struggle against the pagans.

You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin,
but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the
armies of Israel, whom you have defied. (1 Samuel 17:45)

David was fully aware that the Lord himself had a complaint against the Canaanites because of their false worship and immoral lifestyle. God's determination to exterminate them extended back to the days of Abraham (Genesis 15:16). And though Joshua attempted to clear them from the land, there still remained significant threats inside and around the borders of Israel. (Judges 1:27-36) After King Saul proved an overall failure in this regard, David knew it was up to him – the time had come to summarily solve this problem of their enemies.

Because he understood that this was, at bottom, God's battle, he easily won against all the enemies of Israel. He was not merciful; the lesson was severe – *leave God's people alone*. David's treatment of the Moabites is enlightening about his severity and message to his enemies. (2 Samuel 8:2)

An even more important objective was that God's people had their own lives to live, the requirements of their God to obey, and special Covenant blessings that they enjoyed. They were a unique and special people because of their relationship to their God. They would allow nobody to interfere with that relationship in any way. It's not that they had a vendetta against all other

nations; but when those nations demanded that God's people change their rules to fit in with pagan requirements, the Israelites drew the line. Converts to Judaism were allowed; but under no circumstances were the Israelites allowed to even get near pagan worship, or have relationships with someone where that possibility might arise. In other words friends, neighbors, even business relationships were allowed – that was fine; but Israel had to set the rules for the relationship. Otherwise there would be no relationship.³

David achieved peace on all sides and passed on that peace to his son Solomon,⁴ which made for almost eighty uninterrupted years of peace and security for God's people. We can well imagine the first and greatest benefit to this peace: they could follow the dictates of the Law without fear of harassment and worship God fully. Fear of the enemy had been continually crippling their worship and obedience to God; now that there was nothing to fear, the people could come unhindered to Temple worship with their sacrifices, they could provide the Tithe out of their prosperity, they could obey completely the commands of their King, they could raise their families in their own land in the fear of the Lord, not of man.

By defeating their enemies, David was *providing protection for God's people*, the freedom and opportunity to worship and serve God as they ought without outside interference.

- **David brought Israel back to her God. (2 Samuel 6)**

The key to David's Plan was bringing the people back in touch with their God. It had to be a vital relationship, a two-way experience in which the reality of God was palpable and demonstrable.

David's relationship to God was through faith – the faith of his forefather Abraham. You can see that in the prayers that he made, the worship that he instituted at the Temple, the laws he executed throughout the nation, the way he himself took care of his own sins. This was not a man living by tradition and hearsay! He walked with the living God and that affected whatever he did and said.

This is the kind of man who must lead Israel. David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem – not secretly but in great public fanfare, to motivate the people and gather them around their God in praise and thanksgiving. It's the prerogative of rulers: whenever they stage a public event, it becomes a matter for everyone to take seriously. Now everyone knows what the program is, and now everyone must deal with it. It has the *imprimatur* of the King.

³ We can see a good example of this in Nehemiah 13:15-22, when the governor forbade trading with the locals on the Sabbath day.

⁴ In fact the name "Solomon" comes from a root that means, among other things, "peace."

David set the precedent for this new life with God. He was passionate about God; nothing on earth was so important as God to him; God was his very life. David loved the Law of God the King. David grieved over his sins before God, knowing that he had offended his Father in Heaven. David gave all his possessions for the service of God so that God might get all glory. David humbled himself and put himself through self-effacement before this God of majesty; he didn't dare lift up his head in pride before God. As he modeled this kind of life before God, he expected his sheep to do the same – he wasn't leading from behind but from right out in front.

David went even further. One would expect kings to have their own agendas ruling over their kingdoms, but David was different. God's agenda was his agenda. His prayers are instructive here: as we work through the book of Psalms, we read about David pleading with God about Kingdom issues. There's nothing here of David's own desires; he loves what God loves. The five points of his Plan fill his prayers and for good reason: this is how the blessings of the Covenant will continue to flow from Heaven to God's people. These issues were on God's heart, and so David labored mightily to open the floodgates of God's mercy to enrich his people.

And because David made these prayers and worship and program public, he evidently wanted the points of his Plan to be on the minds of his people. A nation united around God, worshiping him on his throne, praying for his faithfulness to the Covenant, and uniting in righteousness and holiness – this is the goal of the work of the King among his people.

David was *making Israel God-centered* so that their Covenant blessings would be guaranteed.

- **David set up a government. (2 Samuel 8:15-18;⁵ 1 Chronicles 18:14-17)**

The problem with ruling over a nation is that one man can't do the entire job. If David had demanded obedience from the people without any system of enforcement, they would have ignored him just as they largely ignored God during the time of the Judges. So David set up a government through which his rule would extend to all the nation, to every person in Israel.

The key here is to understand what kind of government that David set up. It may not be welcome news to moderns that he didn't resort to a democracy; but

⁵ It's said in this passage that "David's sons were priests." However, the Law strictly forbade anybody from being a priest unless he was of the tribe of Levi. David himself saw the Lord deal out a harsh and immediate penalty when even a Levite (Uzzah, 2 Samuel 6:6-7) did what the Law only allowed the priests to do; and Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16-21) found out that there was a severe penalty for even a king who offers worship inside the Temple. The parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 18:17 says instead that his sons were "officials" (or the Hebrew reads "first in service to the King"). I would think that David, of all people, would have supreme respect for the Law of God. (Psalm 119) So this rendering of "priests" must be taken in light of the Chronicles passage, and probably refers to his sons carrying on activities that aided David in his work for the Temple, but not including those services strictly reserved for the Levitical priests.

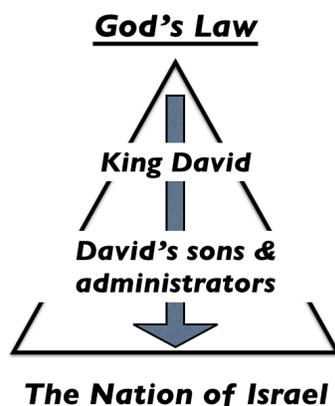
it was for a good reason: democracy is the rule by the many, and the many often can't agree on the simplest issues, let alone complicated moral issues. And since David was concerned that the Israelites get back in touch with God, he set up a government that would do that – a *hierarchy*.

The goal is righteousness, as God defines it in his Law. Only God's righteousness brings about the peace, security, justice and prosperity that people need. So the king is responsible to set up the government to reach that goal.

When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. (2 Samuel 23:3-4)

The king becomes an enforcer of God's Law. The reason we need someone looking over our shoulders like this reveals an unfortunate characteristic of human nature: we just don't like to be forced into doing anything, even if it's good for us. We are weak and lazy, we are self-willed, we prefer our own judgments on things, and are often rebellious against authority. So any government has to take this into consideration and devise methods of enforcing the law, including punishment when the law is broken.

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Now we have the two elements of a hierarchy. The rule is from top-down, from the King all the way down through the rest of the Kingdom. The will of the King – which is another way of describing his **Law** – is the rule of the Kingdom. But the King also has to set up a system of administrators or governors under him who will be distributed across the nation to enforce the King's Law locally. Every administrator has a certain area he's responsible for; but he's not allowed to change the Law of the King in any way.

Moderns don't like this kind of government precisely because we don't trust the man at the top; he isn't infallible, and to pretend that his word is the last word for everybody and every situation seems to be a proud and ignorant claim for a mere mortal. Our modern systems of government have fail-safes built into

them to prevent any single individual from imposing his will on the rest of us for this reason.

What made David's Kingdom different, however, is that it was not based on his will – it was based on God's will. The entire Kingdom adhered to the Word of God and nothing less. Remember that God's will was already published to Israel in the Law given them at Mt. Sinai; every aspect of life was covered there, and if Israel had lived by this Law then she would have had everything she needed in life. The only thing lacking was the leader who would enforce this Law on the entire nation.

David was absolutely convinced of the adequacy of God's Law to rule the nation.

Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the Law of the LORD!
Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,
who seek him with their whole heart,
who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!
You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently.

(Psalm 119:1-4)

This is the only government that can produce righteousness and holiness in God's people. Any deviation from a hierarchy under the Word of God will not be of spiritual benefit to God's people; it will only lead to immorality and ruin. The Word of God alone has to be the source of all the thoughts, actions, feelings and purposes of God's people. This deep-seated love for, understanding of, and respect for God's Word is illustrated most plainly in David's history and writings, in the Psalms in particular; here we find out what it takes from us to make the system work. It can't be a superficial obedience, with no heart in it (as the subsequent history of Israel's kings shows us).

This situation actually takes us back to Creation with its emphasis on the will of the Creator-King. Creatures can't possibly know the entire situation even within the compass of their own lives; only the Creator knows the full picture, only the Creator knows the resources needed from others and from his own treasury that we will need to accomplish our part of the project. So we have to focus on the will of the King to survive; only the King's will is perfect, and only by doing exactly what he says will we all benefit – whether we see the logic behind it or not. Everything will clear up in the end as all the pieces of the complex picture come together to form a multi-level and beautiful whole. We simply have to trust the King to know what he's doing; interfering with his plan will only ruin things.

So by setting up the right kind of government, David was *making sure that God's will shall be done* throughout the Kingdom.

- **David laid the plans for the Temple. (1 Chronicles 22-29)**

The final absolutely necessary step to setting the Kingdom was building the Temple. Having the Ark shifted around the country wasn't working at all; people didn't know where it was when they needed it, it wasn't always convenient for the whole nation during those times of feasts when the Law required its use, and occasionally it was lost to the enemy when the priests who were carrying it in battle were captured. This had to change.

David didn't himself build the Temple; his son Solomon built it. The Lord told David not to build it because "you are a man of war and have shed blood." (1 Chronicles 28:3) That was not a condemnation of David (destroying the enemy *was* one of the items on the Lord's agenda) but rather a statement about what kind of house the Temple would be: a house of peace, not war. War to the enemies, but not within the Family.

And until now the Lord's house consisted of the original Tabernacle that Moses made in the wilderness – a tent of animal skins, wooden poles, and portable articles that were all designed for a life of wandering. Since David was establishing a secure Kingdom for God's people, it was appropriate to build a stationary house for their God.

We are told that David made all the plans for the Temple and its services – from the personnel involved and their duties, to the materials used in its building. He amassed a personal fortune in materials that were designated for the Temple, as well as contributions from the people. He also laid out the blueprints for the design of the Temple – the courtyards outside, the rooms inside. These plans, we are told, came from God himself.

All this he [*the LORD*] made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD, all the work to be done according to the plan. (1 Chronicles 28:19)

David left nothing to guesswork – he designed the entire thing. So even though Solomon actually carried out the construction, he simply followed the detailed instructions of his father David. David (under God) was the real architect of the Temple.

David was providing some much-needed benefits for God's people with this Temple.

- **Stability** – When we study the functions and elements of the Tabernacle in Exodus and Leviticus, it's easy to see that it's a complex system to maintain, and yet it was designed to satisfy the many requirements for worship and spiritual standing before God. It would have been difficult if not impossible to maintain this system when the Ark was being transferred around the countryside amid the vicissitudes of war and social confusion, and the coming and going of priests from all over the country trying to fulfill their legal obligations. By organizing the Temple's service, then, David

was standardizing the system and making it possible, indeed much easier, to maintain the requirements of the Law.

- **Expansion** – We aren't told much about the actual worship, the songs and ceremonies that Israel used before the time of David. But with David we get a rich enhancement to Israel's worship: he created and commissioned a large body of worship material for use in Temple ceremonies (as well as in private worship), and training others to follow in his footsteps. Most likely the book of Psalms is not the complete corpus of worship material that they used, but it would be primary material that was used from David's time onward. David's contribution, of course, would reflect David's perspective on 1) his close relationship with God, and 2) the Kingdom and its maintenance. This new material would continue to be of first-level importance in Israel's worship.
- **Accessibility** – The Temple, being stationary, lost all the disadvantages of the portable Tabernacle and gained an overwhelming advantage – its accessibility for all the Israelites. The location was midway in the country, reachable after a few days ride. There were always priests available at the Tabernacle who worked night and day (see Psalm 134 for special instructions to the "night shift"). There were necessary supplies for the worshipers, the Tithe food was stored in the Temple warehouses for the yearly feasts, and the rotation system for the priests who worked there was orderly and efficient. If any Israelite had problems coming before God, it's not because the system failed him.
- **Functions** – There were critical things that had to happen in the Temple in order to satisfy God's requirements – for example, his holiness demanded a specific type of environment and certain procedures. The Temple also had to provide critical functions for the people – a workable system for their sacrifices, and free access to the Throne of God for the priests to obtain the Covenant blessings for the worshipers. David went to great lengths to make sure that all these functions were not only operating but also fully staffed, according to a strict but workable schedule. The system required skilled workers who were always available.

David didn't institute anything new to the Temple system; he simply "fleshed it out" in a way that would bring out its fullness for God's people. The restrictions of the Wilderness and the confusion of the period of the Judges mitigated against the spirit of what God wanted to see in his House, and a lack of resources inhibited a free worship atmosphere by all his people. With David's enhancements, the full advantages of the Temple were brought out and made available to all who would come.

The two greatest commands of the Law were to love God and to love one's neighbor; David knew that *the Temple service was the means for accomplishing*

both of those commands. With the Temple now built, the Israelites could then live with their God in the fullness of the Covenant blessings without interruption or interference.

David's 5-point Plan turned the nation of Israel around; it was like plugging them back into the life of Heaven, into direct connection with their God. Their problems were directly addressed, the Covenant blessings started pouring out to them from their God, their foundation was made secure. And the point is not David himself; it's what David *did*. The Lord promised him a "house" in which the principles that David set up would continue forever. (2 Samuel 7:29) *In this way* the people are brought back to God and are ruled by God. It can't be done in any other way. This Plan made them a holy people once again; this Plan brought back the high standards of righteousness that their Law demanded of them. It focused them back on the only God, the God of their forefathers, to receive their inheritance rights.

In the end David could report back to God and, as the dutiful son, assure him that he has done his best to carry out the Father's will on earth. "Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

David's House

Many students of the Old Testament focus on David's sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband as if this was the focal point of his life, and the one thing that ruined all else that he might have accomplished. But we have to be more discerning than that. Murder and adultery are some of the worst sins a person can commit, and not even the king is above the law. There are two things, however, that we have to keep in mind while reflecting on this story.

- **First**, David knew very well the seriousness of his crimes. Instead of denying the charges (which most people would have done), he humbled himself before God and man, and fasted and prayed for days. Remember that this was no ordinary man coming to God; he was God's son, God's Designated Heir, the one appointed to bring God's Covenant blessings to the nation. And when we hear him pray, we realize what kind of power he had in the halls of Heaven. Psalm 51 is a model prayer of repentance, humility and pleading for God's mercy. Once again David is the pattern for the rest of us – even as he struggles with his sin and finds mercy from the throne of Heaven. Would to God that we could pray as David did when we humble ourselves before God in our own shame of sin! The result was that God, as his Name describes, set David's sin far from him and accepted him back to full fellowship.
- **Second**, the sin that David committed had nothing to do with the 5-Point Plan. As a man, he fell prey to his lusts and sinned against God and others. But as the appointed King, he never put the Plan in jeopardy during his entire reign. He indeed was a "man after God's own heart." That's why, even in the teeth of the disastrous results of his personal sin, the Kingdom remained strongly in his hands to the end of his days and he was able to pass on that Kingdom to his son

Solomon, “full of days, riches, and honor.” (1 Chronicles 29:28) Even though he made mistakes, his reign is the model, the pattern for all to follow – even into the Messianic age.

His son Solomon, however, didn’t fare so well. He too fell prey to his weakness for women; but the fatal error that he committed was not so much his accumulation of a large harem as it was allowing them to tempt him into deviating from David’s Plan.

For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father ... And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel. (1 Kings 11:4,9)

Personal sin is one thing; but deviating from the Plan had catastrophic national results. Solomon was in the position of power and authority; what the leader does, the people do. The result was that the Northern tribes “followed the leader” and set up idols of false gods at Bethel and Dan. (1 Kings 12:25-33) Now there were two opposing nations consisting of brothers, the children of Abraham, in fierce jealousy and oftentimes war with each other. Instead of one God, there were now many; instead of one capital and king, there were two. And the kings of the North had no intention of adhering to David’s Plan because much of it depended on the resources of Jerusalem (and they weren’t going to cross the border and go back *there*), and all of it required a close, living relationship with Yahweh.

This catastrophe shows us several things: *first*, it’s necessary to follow the entire Plan, not just part of it. By deviating from a single point the enemies of God found all that they needed to bring the house down, like bearing down on a roof that is missing a pillar.

Second, it’s no wonder that the writers of Kings and Chronicles closely examined all of the succeeding kings and compared them to David’s rule. “He did as his father David had done” (2 Kings 18:3), or “He did not do as his father David had done.” (1 Kings 15:3) David’s reign was always the pattern that they used to judge the kings. Not only does this assume that David’s plan was fully necessary, but it also sets the precedent for laying this pattern alongside any work of God that claims to be in his Name and instituted by his authority. If it doesn’t correspond to David’s pattern, the claim is a lie; and if something is missing (and in man’s works there’s usually something missing) it will only be a matter of time till God’s enemies will find the weak point and exploit it.

The Lord made a covenant with David in 1 Samuel 7 regarding his “house.” At first David offered to build a Temple for the Lord, but God instead turned it around and made it clear that something else had to be done first before projects like the Temple would succeed: the Lord promised to create a Davidic dynasty, the “house of David.” David’s “house” can be considered from three different angles.

- **First**, his *physical descendants*. The Lord promised to put his descendants on the throne in Jerusalem for eternity. This would make the question of rights to the throne an easy problem to solve. In fact, when the North split off to form its own nation, the kings there were not descendants of David and therefore were never considered true heirs of David. The storyline keeps comparing their reigns to Jeroboam and judging them all failures *because* they didn’t go

back to Jerusalem and do it God's way; they continued in the rebellion and idolatry of Jeroboam, the first king of the North. At one point Hezekiah and the Israelites in the South even invited their northern brothers to join them at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, making amends and healing the breach; but the North refused. When God finally cut off the North and sent the Assyrians to destroy them and scatter them across the Middle East, he was closing the door forever on rebels who would not be ruled by David's son.

The throne passed down from father to son. That's always been God's plan, even from the Creation. The rights of kingship are only legal when it's done this way. It makes for a peaceable transfer of power, and (supposedly) guarantees the continuation of the father's program in his son's reign. The Lord's insistence on David's descendants ruling after him reflects the coming transfer of power between the Father in Heaven and the eternal Son – who will inherit his Father's throne, power, authority and program because of his generation from the Father.

“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” (Psalm 2:6-9)

For those who truly love God, this transfer of the Kingdom to his Son should be good news – the Son is going to maintain his Father's authority and Plan over the Kingdom. (John 8:42) And in Christ's case, this is particularly good news because, being God himself, he is capable of handling the situation in the wisdom and power of God. The Father's nature is his nature; what the Father can do, Jesus can also do. This is important because there isn't anybody else in the world who is capable of seeing to the great needs of God's Kingdom on earth – we need the hand of God to do the impossible and change sinners into saints and *keep them there*. When authority transfers within the Trinity like this, we can be assured that even when Jesus becomes a man like the rest of us, we are still going to be in the presence of God's power. His divine nature will guarantee the outcome.

And just as a preview, we too will take our places by his throne in Heaven *if we are his sons*. The privileges and responsibilities of the Kingdom of Heaven pass from Father to son, not to strangers or even friends. All the more reason to prove our spiritual descent from the Heir of the Covenant.

- **Second**, David's “house” can be understood in a *programmatically* sense. The father has a system he has created to run his kingdom and take care of the needs and problems that arise, and the system works. So he trusts that his son will carry on his legacy. In David's case, his 5-Point Plan is specially designed to not only maintain the Kingdom in ways that all governments aspire to, but he's also the executor of the Covenant Promises that the nation inherited from Abraham as well as the enforcer of the demands of the Law

that God gave them at Mt. Sinai.⁶ There's nothing new here in David's Plan that the Israelites didn't already have; David's task was to make sure – as the Chief Executive – that the nation continued in those special blessings and responsibilities that set them apart from other nations.

And that's why the kings of the South (Judah) were always graded by comparing their performance to David's original Plan. They weren't supposed to deviate from that Plan at all. If they set aside one point in the Plan, disaster would inevitably result – the enemy always had a way of finding that weak point in the nation and exploiting it. The Prophets continually hammered away at the leaders, trying to get them to see the folly of straying from the Plan and the inevitable results of immorality and destruction that come of it.

The political platform of God's Kingdom – i.e., the 5-Point Plan – guarantees God's people a solid connection with their God. It makes their lives God-centered, which is another way of saying that it makes them a holy people. This is why you will find no other type of government supported in Scripture aside from David's throne. All who are in David's "house" – the following kings and their government – were supposed to adhere strictly to this political program. And that's why the concept of "the son of David" carries such a deep and crucial aspect to it when it's used in the New Testament where Jesus appears to take his father David's place. And when the Church is set up under Christ's rule, it also has to adhere to this Plan in order to make a holy people. Hence the Church's leadership *really* needs to be aware of the Plan in all its details, and skilled at setting it up and maintaining it.

- The **third** aspect of David's "house" is the *political* structure. This wouldn't be so difficult to understand and accept if it weren't for our modern liberal views on government. If I may make so bold as to observe a weakness in modern democratic theory, one problem with our present system is that everyone votes on any issue brought to the table. That may seem like common sense to most people, but it doesn't pass muster in God's Kingdom. There are certain things that we're not supposed to vote on – God already commanded us concerning those issues on what to do and what not to do. It's a matter of education, not discussion or opinion polls.

A kingdom has one will, not many. In David's Kingdom, it was imperative that the people follow David's rule. There were several reasons for this. *First*, obviously they couldn't have a democratic chaos making obedience to God's Law impossible. There had to be one answer for the problems and needs of life, not many – and particularly not man's sinful and ignorant answer. And especially concerning matters where their salvation, and their holiness, were at stake. *Second*, the masses just aren't going to be

⁶ For example, establishing the capital in Jerusalem provides for the House of God and its operations as outlined in the Law; defeating the enemies means that the Philistines won't be destroying and stealing the fruit of the land promised to them in the Covenant; and so on.

self-disciplined enough to follow through on what God's Word says to do. This was the lesson from the book of Judges. They needed someone – the Chief Executive – who would systematize the Plan and enforce it rigorously. The sheep need a shepherd. And since the king was in an ideal position to affect everyone's lives, their survival as a nation depended on maintaining obedience to that head of state. He had access to all the resources, he set up a hierarchy to integrate the entire nation, and he had the authority to reward or punish so that everyone would maintain their loyalty to God and King. Peace and prosperity, in other words, are in the hands of the king, not the mob.

And here is where it gets difficult for modern democratic spirits. Christians, as the sons of David (through Christ), must honor that same political structure in the work of the Church, where the Son of David has every intention of insuring the success of his Kingdom in the same way. We will find that prosperity and peace result from strict obedience to the King, not in following our own wills and opinions. This is the primary reason that the Church is set up with an authority structure (elders and deacons) and we are specifically told to obey our leaders for this reason. And the operations in the Church also reflect the Lord's political structure: teaching and preaching are its primary functions, designed to instruct the people about the will of the King and command their obedience to him. These aspects of the Lord's Church are not optional but mandatory for its life. If our modern church is failing, this is probably the main reason for it.

And another aspect of the King's rule over us in the Church is discipline – again a little-appreciated function that would do wonders for solving the Church's internal problems. The leaders are enforcers, executives under the Chief Executive if you will, who are charged with the peace and purity of the Body of Christ. Their "bark" also has to have "bite." There are standards in Christ's church, and if someone refuses to live up to those standards then the leaders have to take stern measures. For example, in the Old Testament the ultimate threat was expulsion from the Covenant community; and in the same way, the primary method of dealing with serious sin is also expulsion (see 1 Corinthians 5 for an example). If the leaders fail in this area of discipline, the Church will not be a holy or righteous people – they will be just like the pagan nations around them.

Having a king rule over them in this way solves at least two problems that created the need for the king in the first place – and the solution revolves around the fact that *here is a man like them*. One problem it solves is that now they have someone they can hear and see who is in charge of the nation. Living by faith in a God that one can't see challenges those weak in faith; but the king's presence, and his very real actions in the community, are going to be a lot easier to understand and follow. Not that this excuses them, but in their weakness the king will enforce the rules, and watch over their obedience, and make sure the system is working well.

Another problem that the presence of the king solves is that the king (because he's also a man like them) is going to understand their situation and make it possible for sinners and those weak in faith to walk in God's ways. He's going to set the system up

so that it *can* be done by these sheep, as they follow his lead. In other words, he makes God's will workable for them so that they will succeed.

Remember that Samuel rebuked the Israelites severely for demanding a king "just like all the other nations." (1 Samuel 8:20) The Lord expected them to obey him as their King; but that was too much for them to handle – they lacked the necessary spiritual skills (as the testimony from the book of Judges makes plain!) and in no way were they disciplined for a life of walking with God. So God accommodated their weakness by giving them a king.

The king is going to be a shepherd for the entire nation. David was trained by God to be this kind of king – "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." (1 Samuel 17:37) In fact the role of the king in Israel's life with God is patterned after the concept of the *shepherd*, who will not rule over the people for his own gain but for God's purposes.

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the LORD God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice. (Ezekiel 34:15)

To be God's shepherd over his people requires a passion for God – which David demonstrated in abundance. It requires a passion for the Kingdom of God, the desire to see the Law of God extend over the entire Kingdom, ruling in righteousness and justice. It requires energy and determination to see the thing through to the end. We see all of these characteristics in David, who proved himself to be a man "after God's own heart."

What the people may lack, the King will provide. It's not as if the people couldn't do it, it's that they lack the will and self-discipline to do it. So *by law* the King will enforce it on them, for their own good. But he's a gentle and good shepherd, not an autocrat; he wants them to live and prosper, not die. He will "make me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters." And when God's people fail, as long as they come back to the Lord in repentance the King will have mercy and restore them – he has the means and authority to do that.

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:17-18)

Willing subjects

As we read through David's history we see a disturbing trend: not everyone was supportive of David's Kingdom.

The prophet Samuel had told Saul, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you." (1 Samuel 15:28). And the Lord told Samuel, "I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have

provided for myself a king among his sons.” (1 Samuel 16:1) This transfer of power and authority was no secret among the people; later when David was anointed King by all the tribes, they told him that “the LORD said to you, ‘You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.’” (2 Samuel 5:2) They knew very well where God stood on the issue of the right man for the throne.

In other words, the Word of God was plain, and when some of the tribes of Israel rejected David and his descendants, they were deliberately rebelling against God himself. They knew that.

Yet for the first few years of his reign he and his supporters were at war with the Ten Tribes in northern Israel. (2 Samuel 2-4) In any political upheaval there are always divisions; and it’s easy for us, with our historical perspective over the rest of the Old Testament and the New Testament, to wonder why these rebels couldn’t see the obvious. But in their context they didn’t have the benefit of knowing “the rest of the story” as we do; they only had God’s bare Word.

But the point here runs deeper than simply a change in the administration. David was the Designated Heir; only through David would the Lord bless his people. They, in rejecting him, were rejecting the Covenant of Abraham. They were cutting themselves off from the resources of Heaven and going out on their own. This point was made graphically plain when the northern tribes replaced the worship of Yahweh with idolatry (see 1 Kings 12:28-33), as if to say that they had no more need of Israel’s God.

The kinds of problems that Israel suffered through during the Judges could only be solved by David’s 5-point Plan. What previous generations failed to do, David accomplished in one lifetime. It should have been obvious for everyone to see that God was blessing David’s methodology as he administered the Plan. And when he passed on his authority to his descendants, they alone carried the mantle and authority of David and the charge to continue their father David’s program. Of course they would have problems; but the solution was always to “do as their father David had done.” To walk away from the Plan, however, was fatal.

That was in fact the attitude of the writers of Kings and Chronicles as they reviewed each king’s reign. The standard has been, and always will be, David’s Plan for a God-centered Kingdom. No doubt many of those who rebelled against God would have had their own account of what happened and why; but Biblical historians, from their larger perspective, always pointed to the final outcome of their rebellion: idolatry, immorality, and punishment. God punished the North for their crimes *because* they rebelled against David’s principles. The South still had the Temple and a “form of godliness,” and the only reason God gave them over to their enemies is because they too turned their backs on the spirit of David’s principles, even though they maintained the outward ceremonies at the Temple.

One of the major setbacks to David’s Kingdom was the rebellion of his own son Absalom, found in 2 Samuel 13-19. But it’s not good enough to interpret this story as a moralism about how to raise children, as most commentators do – we have to lift it up to the level of theology. Absalom was no less than the King’s son, and as such was charged with helping his father rule the nation. We can see the influence that Absalom had with many sections of the country. But even though he enjoyed an exalted rank in the nation,

that didn't give him leave to differ with his father's Plan, particularly since that Plan had God's sanction. Of all the subjects of the king who should have been supporting David, his own sons should be the foremost. It's actually a parallel case with that of Adam in the beginning: the King's own son rebels against his Father and now chaos ensues; the damage that the son does is far more extensive and irreparable than an ordinary subject's would be. What the story shows even more powerfully, however, is the overwhelming grief of the father over his rebellious son. It's not just love – though it's certainly that – but a shocked disbelief that his own flesh-and-blood would use his unique position to ruin the Kingdom. It cut him to the heart more than an ordinary subject's rebellion would have; it's the rebellion of a ruler, *his own son* (again, paralleling Genesis), who was charged with blessing the Kingdom and not hurting it, particularly to his own ends. The ensuing damage to the Kingdom (which actually strengthened the hands of the future rebels of Solomon's reign) was incalculable. Even though David managed to wrest control back from his son (upon the death of his son, a necessary step toward restoration – again Genesis), it was an excruciating process for David and his Kingdom, and things were never like they used to be. And here is the theological principle of multiple family members (Christians, hearken: we are destined to “rule with Christ” in Heaven – Revelation 20:6) assigned the responsibilities of ruling over God's Kingdom: there is still only supposed to be *one will* in the Kingdom. The son is responsible to carry out his Father's will, not his own. (Luke 22:42)

When God brought the Jews back from Exile in Babylon it was conditioned on the promise that they would obey that Plan of David. They didn't come home to the full glory of David's Kingdom; in fact the Exiles wept at the sight of Jerusalem as they remembered the former days of glory. And when some of the Exiles returned to the sin of marrying the pagan women and embracing their idolatry, Ezra and Nehemiah, aghast that they would be so insensitive to the very sins that brought about the Exile, reacted swiftly to eradicate that cancer before the Lord once again destroyed them. As best they could, the Prophets and the leaders reorganized the nation around the political distinctives that gave them political and religious stability: the Temple and the defense of Jerusalem.

At this point we must expand this concept more fully. David's Plan has never been abrogated. It's the Lord's plan for all of his people, Old Testament and New Testament. It's not without reason that Jesus was called “the Son of David” who would sit on David's throne. We modern Christians consider that to be a quaint way of referring to Jesus' physical descent from David; but it involves far more than that. “David's throne” refers to the program that David created to bring Israel back to God. Anybody who sits on David's throne must also follow that same program or they couldn't claim legitimate political descent from King David. This means, then, that as King Jesus sits on his throne in Heaven, he rules not only the world but also the Church according to David's 5-point Plan.

The question is, then – how willing are we to submit to that Plan? There has never been unanimity on that point, even in David's day. Unfortunately, Saul's supporters still live on in our day. Loyalty to the King, support of his government, obedience to his rule, doing our part to extend the borders of his Kingdom, worship at the Temple that he built – all this is required of his subjects, but not all his subjects will submit to him. It all boils down to this simple question, whether we are loyal to the King as he sets up his Kingdom

according to this particular Plan. The Northern tribes would have supported David's descendants *only* if they would have allowed worship of false gods, in locations other than Jerusalem; *only* if they would have made treaties with the pagans and lived at peace with them on their terms; *only* if they had more of a say in the ruling of the Kingdom. They were, in fact, striking at the very heart of what makes God's Kingdom work. To God, however, these are non-negotiable items – the Plan of David is a test of loyalty to the King.

The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power. (Psalm 110:2-3)

During David's day there were a number of men who sided with him and his cause, and they earned special mention in the Scriptures: "Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32); "Of Zebulun 50,000 seasoned troops, equipped for battle with all the weapons of war, to help David with singleness of purpose." (1 Chronicles 12:33)

All these, men of war, arrayed in battle order, came to Hebron with a whole heart to make David king over all Israel. (1 Chronicles 12:38)

Unfortunately they not only had to fight the pagan nations, but also the rebellious tribes of Israel who refused to submit to David's rule. But that willingness to do whatever necessary, even to go to war, shows their determination to have only God's man on the throne.

Preparing the Son

The verdict of the Old Testament is that David's Kingdom was one of the best things that ever happened to Israel. It not only stabilized their nation, but it also connected them back to the God of their forefathers. It provided a sound foundation for ensuing generations. If things went wrong later in their history, it was only because they failed to adhere to David's Plan, and so fell away from the spiritual treasures and access to the Throne of God that the Plan made available to them.

The proof is in the history. There was no denying that times were better when David and Solomon ruled Israel. In fact that's the primary point motivating the writing of the books 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles. Note that much of this material was written after the Exile; the last stories of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles describe that event. But the running commentary throughout all these books was that when the descendants of David did as their forefather David had done, the Lord blessed them and protected them from their enemies; if David's descendants strayed away from David's Plan, the Lord got angry and turned them over to their enemies. There's a wistful note in these books: "Wouldn't it be nice to go back to the good old days?"

The reason it worked so well was that David was "God's son" (Psalm 89:26) – and therefore had his Father's perspective and passion for God's glory. Being "a man after God's heart," he knows what it takes to glorify God on earth. So only the Son is going to be entrusted with the Father's Kingdom. In the same way, all of God's children, being

true sons of David,⁷ must share that same perspective, the same passion for the Plan, so that the Father's Kingdom will be established on earth.

⁷ Which is why Isaiah 9:6 calls the Messiah the "Everlasting Father" – since the King's sons are the ones entrusted with the task of helping him administer his Kingdom.

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The Psalms: A Theological Commentary



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