A Biblical Case Study of the Leadership of King David

Beulah Heights University

Dannetta B. Sparks

June 22, 2018

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In the narratives of, Samuel 1 and 2, 1 Kings 2:11 and 1 Chronicles we read the biblical account of King David. David reigned over Israel for forty years, seven and a half in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. 1 Samuel lists David as the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse of Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16: 1-3). In the narratives of 1 Chronicles, we read that David was the youngest of seven sons and given two sisters, Zeruiah and Abigal. The Book of Ruth traces his ancestry back to Ruth the Moabite. Interconnected family dissensions and political revolts marred the history of David's great success as a warrior and empire builder.

In the narratives of 1 Samuel 16: 1-13, we read that David was anointed king by Samuel, the prophet responsible for setting Saul on the throne. King Saul, though a talented king, had stopped obeying God early in his career and had begun turning selfish and evil. God told the prophet Samuel he would remove Saul from being king, and replace him with "a man after his own heart," (1 Samuel 13:14), a man who is "better than Saul (1 Samuel 15:28). Guided by God, Samuel travels to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse among whose sons is the next king. All seven of David's brothers were presented to Samuel, and rejected by God. After Samuel inquired if there was another son, David was brought in from the field. With God's approval, Samuel anointed David in the presence of his brothers. The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward enabling him to do great things.

David gained renown for his military skill by distinguishing himself in the victory over the Philistine warrior, Goliath (1 Samuel 16:14 - 17:58). Although Saul was initially impressed by David's skills as a soldier, politician, and musician, Saul became wary of his successor, so he devised various schemes to take David's life. David's success and popularity in the army gave him the power to be a threat to Saul, and he had the ambition to try to usurp the kingship. The biblical account asserts that at no time had David been either disloyal to King Saul or acted out

of self-interest. It was at this time that Saul's son, Jonathan, befriended David (1 Samuel 18). Though his father was king and Jonathan would have been a natural heir to the throne, Jonathan chose to support David. He understood and accepted God's plan and protected his friend from his father (1 Samuel 18: 1-4, 19-29). Before Saul could capture him, David fled from Saul to the rugged Judean wilderness, which had long given refuge to outlaws and fugitives. On the run, David decided to visit the high priest. He seeks food and weapons from the priest Ahimelech When questioned on his mission; David lies and says that he is on the King's business. Ahimelech helps David. When Saul learns of this incidence, he orders the murder of Ahimelech and his family and the murder of all priests and their families living in Nob. Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, survived. The narratives of 1 Samuel 22:33 imply that David takes responsibility for his moral failure that resulted in the deaths of the people. In those days, a priest could ask God a question, and God would answer. Saul no longer had a priest, having murdered them all. However, David now had a priest, and he used him often to inquire of the Lord, obtaining excellent advice from God.

David, the warrior, gained control over an expanding area in the Negev and Judah. David combined the tribe of Judah with that of Caleb and others to form the nation of Judah. After Saul’s death, David provoked a war with Saul’s successor, Ishbaal. The civil war ended with the murder of Ishbaal by his courtiers (2 Samuel 3-4). After a seven and a half year reign in Hebron, representatives of all the tribes of Israel gathered to call upon David to lead a United Israel as King. David made a strategic move different from all the judges, including King Saul who preceded him. The expansion of David’s kingdom altered the status of Jerusalem. Instead of leading the nation from within the tribal territories, David, however, chose the stronghold of Zion. Jerusalem became the capital of the united kingdoms. David moved the sacred Ark of the

Covenant, the symbol of Israelite religion (2 Samuel 6) there. The narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel display a deep insight into the character of a man who could make an indelible personal impression in a specific situation to serve his persistent and long-range aims.

We read in the narratives of 2 Samuel 24:24 and 1 Chronicles 21:25 that after David established Jerusalem as the new capital, Aravnah, the Jebusite sold him the upper part of the hill above the northern boundary of the city. This hill is Mount Moriah a place of great spiritual significance to Israel. This is where Abraham, sensing God's presence, went up to offer Isaac as a sacrifice and later remarked as the Bible records: "The Lord will see," as it is said to this day, "On the Lord's mountain, He will be seen," (Genesis 22:14). Jacob dreamed here of a ladder going to heaven, and said: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven," (Genesis 28:17). In 2 Samuel 5:9 we read that, David dwelt in the stronghold of Jerusalem and called it the City of David.

In the narratives of 2 Samuel Chap. 11-12 we read of one of the most discussed failures of King David. David sends one of his commanders, Uriah, to die in battle after David had an adulterous affair with Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba, resulting in her pregnancy. God sends the Prophet Nathan to advise David of the consequences of his sin. David’s son by Bathsheba dies. David realizes that the death of the baby and later the deception of his son, Absalom (2 Samuel 15-19), were divine punishments from God. David sought atonement for his actions. David and Bathsheba later had another son, Solomon. This son became king after David.

David takes nine months to number the people as if to quantify his security (2 Sam 24:10). Joab asks David not to do it. David numbers the people. Realizing his disobedient to God, David repents of it, but God demands a price: pestilence takes 70,000 (24:15). God then instructs David to buy the threshing floor of Araunah (Ornan) for an altar (2 Samuel 24:18-25;

1Chr 21:1-17). David offers sacrifices on the threshing floor which God accepts with an angel's fiery sword.

Many of David's problems are self-inflicted. His affair with Bathsheba and the resulting murder of her husband is just one example. The sin of taking a census to determine the size of his army, instead of trusting God, cost the lives of more than 70,000 Israelites reveals another problematic area of David's character. His failure to discipline his sons, as evidenced by this son Absalom rebelling against him and another son Adonijah, seeking to inherit the throne instead of Solomon show David's failure in leadership.

In the narratives of 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17, 22, 28, 29 and 2 Samuel 24:1-29 we read of David's plan to build a new Temple in Jerusalem and the results of his plan and he plans to finance it. The Lord, however, had different plans. David learned that he was not the one to build a temple. Instead, after David's death, his son would be king in his place, and he would build the temple. Furthermore, David's throne would endure forever. A descendant of David would be king forever. David took solace in this promise from God. Still, he could not make himself stand by while the Lord had no temple. Though he was not permitted to build the temple, he applied his considerable wealth and influence to the project. David died at the age of 70 after reigning for 40 years. On his deathbed he counsels Solomon to walk in the ways of God and to take revenge on his enemies.

Christians interpreted the life of Jesus in light of the references to the Messiah and David, describing Jesus as being descended from David. The pivotal events that occurred while he lived include being anointed leader of Israel as a youth, slaying Goliath the giant, making Jerusalem the capital of the United Kingdom and bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. He also writes at least 77 of 150 Psalms found in the Bible. When examined closely in Hebrew, these

psalms consist of carefully chosen and mindfully related words. Through the Psalms, we sense that David's first and foremost drive is to have a relationship with God. We know of the great Psalms such as:

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want (Psalm 23).

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom should I fear (Psalm 27).

I lift my eyes to the mountains — from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth (Psalm 121).

Questions

1. Saul sinned and was deposed by God. David sinned and was allowed to reign. What lessons can be learned in reference to our attitude when we become aware of our sin?
2. What lessons can be learned concerning our reactions when leaders God has placed over us treat us unjustly?
3. When we select leaders and workers, should we select the most qualified, or those whose hearts are right with God?