

INTRODUCTION

One could argue that David is the most famous king in history. He united Israel and Judah, conquered Jerusalem, developed one of the most prominent kingdoms of his time, is revered as an ideal Jewish king, is an ancestor of Jesus Christ, wrote some of the most touching poetry ever, and is a significant figure in the Bible and the Quran.

However, before we delve into the Davidic story, it is important to have a grasp of the larger biblical narrative in which David plays a significant role. Understanding the socio-political climate of Israel before and during David's time is crucial. This not only helps us gain a better understanding of David, but also allows us to position him within the biblical timeline.

Israel, as a nation, was established through God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12. However, it took more than 400 years for the nation to become a political entity under the leadership of Moses and Joshua. Both Moses and Joshua acted as God's representatives and intermediaries with Israel, and they set the criteria for citizenship in the theocracy established by God.

THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES: A THEOCRATIC SOCIETY

For a period of over 500 years after the death of Moses and Joshua, the nation lived under the Torah and the priesthood in a largely successful theocracy. This period is recorded in the book of Judges and consists of 93 years of servitude and approximately 450 years of harmony. Few nations could claim such a peaceful and prosperous history. The nation was organized by tribes, with local authorities handling political matters while the Torah and the priesthood oversaw spiritual and moral affairs. Though there was a cycle of sin, servitude, supplication, and salvation (Judges 2:11-19), the nation spent more time in a peaceful and quiet society than in any other state. During this unique era, it can truly be said that God reigned over the nation.

THE DEMAND FOR A MONARCHY: 1 SAMUEL 8

Eventually, the "bottom up" political scene of the theocracy shifted. By 1 Samuel 8, the leaders asked the Prophet and Priest Samuel to appoint a king for them, stating that they wanted to be judged like all the other nations (1 Sam. 8:5). Despite Samuel's plea, warning them about the negative consequences of having a human king (1 Sam. 8:11-18), the people insisted on their request. God informed Samuel that it was not Samuel they had rejected, but God Himself, as they did not want Him to reign over them (1 Sam. 8:7).

THE ANOINTING OF SAUL: A COMPLEX PRELUDE TO DAVID

God allowed Israel's desire for a king, even if it meant veering from His original plan. He selected Saul, a man who met the Israelites' superficial criteria

for a king (1 Sam. 9:2). Saul's 40-year rule oscillated between faithfulness and disobedience, serving as both a lesson and a precursor for David.

EARLY SUCCESS AND DEPARTURE

Saul's initial military victories offered centralized leadership but diverged from God's theocratic intent. His early receptivity to prophetic advice showcased a fleeting spiritual sensitivity.

DOWNFALL: A CRISIS OF OBEDIENCE

Saul's key failure was his incomplete obedience in dealing with the Amalekites, revealing a flawed understanding of divine obedience. Consequently, God rejected him as king (1 Sam. 15:23), and David was anointed in his place (1 Sam. 16).

A TROUBLED MIND MEETS ITS SUCCESSOR

Plagued by a tormented spirit, Saul met David, who would eventually replace him. David, a skillful musician described in 1 Sam. 16:18, was ironically the one who alleviated Saul's anguish temporarily.

THE RISE OF DAVID

Saul's dwindling years functioned as a formative period for David, illustrating the dangers of disobedience and misuse of power. Though Saul's demise was a long process, it prepared David for his eventual rule.

SAUL'S MIXED LEGACY

Saul's life offered David vital lessons, revealing both the pitfalls and complexities of leading Israel. His reign serves as a multifaceted backdrop that informs our understanding of David.

GOD USES A FLAWED SYSTEM TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES

God permitted the Israelite monarchy, demonstrating His ability to accomplish His will through imperfect systems and individuals. This principle is evident elsewhere, such as in the deceitful Jacob who became Israel, the father of the Twelve Tribes. Even King Cyrus, a non-Israelite, was used by God to return the Israelites from Babylonian exile. Likewise, Paul transformed from a persecutor of Jewish believers to an essential Apostle after his conversion.

God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:15, "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever," contrasts with the end of Saul's lineage. It emphasizes that the eternal Davidic throne will bring forth the Messiah, illustrating how even flawed human choices can serve God's perfect, overarching plan.

WHAT WE WILL LEARN

In addition to learning about the events in the life of David, we will also study prophecy, poetry, and the account of one of the world's greatest individuals. This knowledge will deepen our understanding of the God who saves us, strengthen our Biblical worldview, and provide us with historical knowledge and personal insights that will guide us in making godly decisions for ourselves, our families, and our society.