

BIBLE SERIES: **"EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"**

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OT-64 11-3-2007

2 SAMUEL 7-10 DAVID THE SHEPHERD KING; GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL PROMISE



David has now brought the ark of God to Jerusalem and desires to honor God by having a fitting place for it. Why was David so popular with the people and enjoyed so much of their support? The Bible says of him, "Now the people took note of it, and it pleased them, since *whatever* the king did *pleased all* the people" (2 Sam. 3:36).

Gill's Commentary explains, "He had the *hearts* of the people so much in mind, such a share in their affections and they had such a high opinion of him, that *all* he did in public and private affairs they considered well done and highly approved by them, *such an interest had he in them.*"

In other words, he truly cared for them, and practiced *agape* love, the greatest virtue in the Bible. This made a huge difference in the way God judged David. God says about David, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man *after My own heart*, who will do *all My will*" (Acts 13:22). God looked into David's heart and saw he sincerely cared for his people and genuinely wanted to obey Him.

He was a true shepherd king and was such a good ruler, God will resurrect him to be in charge of all the tribes of Israel in the Millennium! Ezekiel 37:24 says, "David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them."

Now, David was so dedicated to God and felt so honored to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, he actually composed a beautiful psalm to thank God for the privilege, recorded in 1 Chr. 16:8-36. Some of its parts are included in Psalms 96, 105 and 106.

David showed all his musical and administrative skills when he organized the Levites into large musical groups. It is here that we find the remarkable verse: "And Mattithiah and Eliphelehu and Mikneiah and Obed-edom and Jeiel and Azaziah, with corded instruments *on the octave*, to give the first note of the song" (1 Chr. 15:21, Bible in Basic English). From now on, the Israelites would become world-class musicians, composer and singers until today.

We have the *octave* mentioned in the Bible, which is the basis unit of all the music in the world. It's based on a mathematical law of the vibrations of a cord. Musicians call it the "miracle of the octave." If the length of a string is divided into two, it automatically sounds eight chords lower, or an

octave. By playing two similar octaves, it sounds like just one sound. There is harmony and symmetry in these tones, and this is the way music is composed, which is the combination of tunes made up of these melodies and harmonies.

In our Western music, the octave is divided into twelve intervals, which is called the chromatic scale, and no matter how complex the musical selection, it will always be based on those 12 basic tones and its repetition on a lower or higher scale. On the other hand, Oriental music is not divided into tones and semitones, but into fourths or more, which sound strange to us, but not to them. We don't know exactly what David's music was like, only the words of the Psalms, but it must have been marvelous, for it calmed Saul's troubled mind.

David appointed a very important person to oversee the care of the tabernacle and the sacrifices at Gibeon—Zadok the priest (1 Chr. 16:39-40). Zadok and his clan would be so faithful to the office that in the Millennium, Christ will again use his descendants (Ez. 44:15). The N.T. Saducees, who were priests, took their name from Zadok.

Now David begins to build up Jerusalem and prepares a fitting place for the Tabernacle and the Ark. It would become a magnificent city with a prominent place for the Temple of God.

It occurred to David that he had a beautiful palace of cedar built by the Phoenician craftsmen and yet, God was still dwelling in a tent. The Bible says, "Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, 'See now, I dwell in a house of cedar but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.' Then Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you'" (2 Sam. 7:1-30).

God saw that concern of David to have Him in a more dignified place and so He turns the table on David. He said as a result of David's concern for Him, *He* will now build David, not a physical building, but a *permanent* spiritual house, made up of his descendants over the throne of Israel *forever*. It is one of God's great covenants and an unconditional promise to David and his descendants that is still in effect today. We trace the descendants of David to the throne of England, through King Zedekiah's

daughter, the princess Tea Tephi, where it was temporarily established until Christ's return.

We read, "But it happened that night that the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying, 'Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the Lord, 'Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle...have I ever spoken a word, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar? Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel...When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will 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 his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chastise him with the rod of men...But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever'" (2 Samuel 7:4-16).

David shows his sincere humility by responding, "Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house that You have brought me this far? And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O Lord God, and You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come. Is this the manner of man, O Lord God? Now what more can David say to You? For You, Lord God, know Your servant...Now O Lord God, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever and do as You have said" (2 Samuel 7:1-25).

This unconditional prophecy is reiterated in other parts of Scripture, in particular, Psalm 89:28-37. David is totally humbled by this declaration from God, and glorifies God with praise and thanksgiving.

God, in turn, gives David even more wisdom and power. So David easily defeats his enemies all around, becoming one of the most successful commanders in history, right up there with Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. He defeats the Philistines in the west, the Moabites in the east, the Aramean Syrians in the north (all the way to the Euphrates River), and the Edomites in the south.

As *The Expositor's Commentary* summarizes, "The section leaves no doubt about the fact that David's armies were invincible and that no nation, however numerous or powerful its fighting men, could hope to withstand the Israelite hosts...At the same time, however, a striking summary statement appears twice in the section as if to emphasize that the reader--and David himself--must never forget the identity of the real Conqueror: 'The Lord gave David victory wherever he went'" (1 Sam. 8:6, 14).

Werner Keller notes about David's conquests of the Syrians up to the River Euphrates: "Reference to contemporary Assyrian texts show how accurately these words in the Bible describe the historical situation. King David attacked the Aramean king as he was on his way to conquer Assyrian territory on the Euphrates. Without being aware of it, David was siding with those same Assyrians who later wiped out the kingdom of Israel" (*The Bible As History*, p. 195).

Although God greatly blessed David because of his obedience, He is not a respecter of persons, and there was something God did not approve about David, and there was a price to pay. As 1 Chron. 22:8 mentions, "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have made great wars, *you shall not build a house for My name*, because you have shed *much blood* on the earth in my sight.'" His future son Solomon would build it.

The Bible then describes David's government and key posts. "So David reigned over all Israel and David administered judgment and justice to all his people. Joab...was over the army. Jehoshaphat...was recorder, Zadok...and Ahimelech were the priests, Seriah was the scribe...Benaiah (over the royal bodyguards) and David's sons were chief ministers" (2 Sam. 8:15-18). Regarding David's administration, the Bible says, "So he shepherded them according to the *integrity of his heart*, and guided them by the *skillfulness of his hands*" (Ps. 78:72).

We now see David's generosity by exalting one of Saul's remaining male descendants—his grandson Mephibosheth (his name means "he who removes shame,") who was Jonathan's son. David gave him back Saul's land and possessions, and invited him to eat meals daily with him and his sons. The Bible says, "So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. And he was lame of two feet" (9:13).

Next comes the account of how David defeated the Ammonites to the east. He certainly wasn't

desirous of conquering them, and even sent some of his officials when he had heard the king, whom he had been friendly toward, had died. But this was taken by the new king's counselors as a ruse for spying on them. The new king's lack of experience and haughtiness showed, and he humiliated David's representatives by shaving half their beards off and cutting the back parts of their robes, that showed their buttocks. These men returned very ashamed to David, who told them to remain at Jericho until their beards grew back.

Expositor's mentions, "Forced exposure of the buttocks was a shameful practice inflicted on prisoners of war (Is. 20:4). King Hanun's treatment of David's men was clearly a violation of the courtesies normally extended to the envoys of other states in ancient times...Hanun's foolish miscalculation would bring about his own defeat. The misfortune of the comforting delegation of David is the actual cause of the war against the Ammonite-Aramean coalition."

The Ammonites know they have greatly insulted David, and so they now hire a great Syrian army to help them. David sends his able general Joab against these armies that still greatly outnumber them.

The Ammonites divided their force into two sections, the Ammonites in front of the city gates, and the Arameans in the open field behind Joab. This is called in military jargon a pincer movement—trapping the enemy between two forces. Seeing this, Joab also divides his army into two parts.

The Bible explains, "When Joab saw that the battle line was against him before and behind, he chose some of Israel's best and put them in battle array against the Syrians. And the rest of the people he put under the command of Abishai his brother, that he might set them in battle array against the people of Ammon. Then he said, 'If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the people of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the Lord do what is good in His sight.' So Joab and the people who were with him drew near for the battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him. When the people of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fleeing, they also fled before Abishai, and entered the city. So Joab returned from the people of Ammon and went to Jerusalem" (2 Sam. 10:6-14). Yet, the Syrian-Aramean coalition was not through. They raised even a greater army and went

against David. *Expositor's Commentary* says, "Undeterred by what they consider a minor setback, however, the Arameans regroup their forces. King Hadadezer sends for Aramean reinforcements from beyond the eastern side of the Euphrates River and his army commander Shobach leads them to Helam.

"When David's intelligence network informs him of the exact location of the Aramean forces, he musters his entire army and crosses the Jordan River eastward to engage the Arameans in battle. Although the Arameans 'regrouped,' the Israelites that David "gathered" would prove to be more than a match for them. The contrast between David's leading his own army in this situation and his remaining behind in Jerusalem in the next episode (with Bathsheba) is noteworthy. No braver than the Aramean mercenaries hired by the Ammonites, Hadadezer's reinforcements also flee from the Israelites. This time, however, David and his men press their advantage and inflict huge numbers of casualties on the enemy."

The Bible ends the account, "Then the Syrians fled before Israel and David killed seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand horsemen of the Syrians, and struck Shobach the commander of their army, who died there. And when all the kings who were servants to Hadadezer saw that they were defeated by Israel they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Syrians were afraid to help the people of Ammon anymore" (10:18-19).

David was on an emotional high—and God was blessing all his efforts. Yet, at this time of greatest success, he neglects strengthening his spiritual side. The Bible says, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Instead of leading his troops to battle against the Moabite fortress, he stays behind—and commits the greatest blunders in his life—adultery and murder. So, stay tuned for the next study.