

Second Samuel At A Glance

We will address the principles and truths of Second Samuel by focusing on the following key areas in the life of David, the central character of the text: (1) David's respect for *anointed*, (2) David's intent to act *anointed*, (3) David's concern for the proper worship of God, (4) David's personal and spiritual life, and finally, (5) David's reign and its Messianic connections.

David's Regard For "Anointed"

David's regard for King Saul, God's anointed, appears frequently throughout the book. In spite of Saul's failures, including attempts to kill him, David held Saul's family and the idea of *anointed* in high regard. That shows in the way David treated Saul's family: (1) He had the Amalekite killed who claimed to kill Saul (2 Sam. 1:1-16). (2) He lamented, in song, the death of both Saul and his son, Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:17-27). (3) He mourned for Abner, Saul's cousin, when he was "murdered" by Joab (2 Sam. 3:22-30, 30-39). (4) He executed those who killed Ishbosheth, Saul's son, even though they were enemies at one time (2 Sam. 4:1-7). (5) He showed kindness to Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, and to Ziba, his caretaker. He sought them out, made provisions for their care, and personally supported Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:1-13). And (6), long after the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, David continued to show kindness to the house of Saul by gathering and burying their remains in their homeland (2 Sam. 21:11ff).

David's refusal to stretch out his hand against God's anointed in First Samuel (1 Sam. 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 23) continues in this book (2 Sam. 1:14, 16, 21), especially through the respect shown to Saul's extended family. Regardless of whether or not he lived up to God's expectations, if God made Saul king, David would respect God's *anointed*.

David's Intent: To Be An Anointed King

David did not just respect the concept of *anointed* in the life of Saul, he intended to act like an *anointed* king: (1) He sought to unite the kingdom, even in the midst of rebellion of Abner and Ishbosheth (chapters 2-3). (2) He drove out the Jebusites from Jerusalem, something that had not been done since the days Israel first conquered Canaan (2 Sam. 5:6-10). (3) He began

building projects in the new capital, Jerusalem, that set the stage for Solomon's own projects, including the construction of the temple (2 Sam. 5:9-12) (4). He expanded the borders of Israel, conquering the Philistines (2 Sam. 5:17ff; 8:1ff), Moabites (2 Sam. 8:2), Hadadezer (2 Sam. 8:3), Syria (2 Sam. 8:5), Ammon (2 Sam. 11:1) and others.

(5) He usually inquired of God about his own actions that involved the nation (2 Sam. 5:19ff). This is contrasted with the heart and actions of his predecessor, Saul, who often acted impulsively without any divine direction (1 Sam. 13:12).

(6) David, though king, was a team player. His appreciation and support for those who helped him appears throughout Second Samuel. His generosity extended beyond his devotion to the house of Saul and the construction of the temple. He exhibited kindness to Hanun, King of Ammon when his father died, even though it was misunderstood (2 Sam. 10:1ff). Because of his kindnesses toward others, his friends and supporters often reciprocated. Ittai, a foreigner, refused to leave David even as he fled from Absalom in despair (2 Sam. 15:15ff). In that same context, Ziba, caretaker of Mephibosheth, brought David and his cohorts food and supplies (2 Sam. 16:1ff). When Shimei, a member of Saul's family, cursed David as he fled from Absalom, David refused to retaliate against him (2 Sam. 16:5ff). Even after David returned to the throne he still refused to retaliate (2 Sam. 19:18ff). David wanted to reward Barzillai for his kindness and support during the flight from Absalom, but Barzillai, then an old man, refused the kindness and asked David to help his servant instead. David gladly did so (2 Sam. 19:31-39). Finally, when he realized that Saul failed to keep the covenant that Joshua and Israel made with the Gibeonites, David avenged Saul's treatment of them (2 Sam. 21:1ff).

As David neared the end of his life, he realized that he who rules must be just, ruling with the fear of God in mind (2 Sam. 23:3). David was fully aware that God was using him to magnify Israel before the nations (2 Sam. 5:12), and David, mindful of that, acted like the *anointed*.

David's Concern For The Proper Worship Of God

David's concern for the proper respect and worship given to God was unparalleled. David's zeal for God was not just to establish Israel physically, but also to establish Israel spiritually at the outset.

(1) David's concern for the ark of God: David's zeal for Jehovah clearly shows in his desire to move the ark of God to Jerusalem. Though the error of Uzzah literally stopped the process, David insisted on completing it when he learned the proper order (2 Sam. 6:1ff; 1 Chron. 13, 15:1ff). His zeal is further seen in the enthusiastic behavior he demonstrated as the ark came into the city. Though his wife, Michal, was embarrassed, David willingly humiliated himself for the glory of God (2 Sam. 6:14, 16ff, esp. 22). Even when fleeing from Absalom, David exhibited concern for the ark, actually taking it with him to protect it (2 Sam. 15:24ff).

(2) David's contributions to God: David's military exploits not only increased the borders of Israel, it also yielded great wealth for the nation and for David personally. This allowed David to invest in spiritual things. David received tribute from King Toi, through his son, Joram. David dedicated these treasures to the Lord (2 Sam. 8:9ff). The text also indicates that he did the same with resources gained through his military and geographic expansion of the nation (2 Sam. 8:11ff). The extent of this devotion to God through his personal finances appears scant here, but Chronicles provides a full account of David's contributions for the temple (1 Chron. 22:1-4; 14-16).

These areas of concern for respect and worship of God show David's truest, and most consistent, character: He continually sought to honor and magnify the God of Israel through worship.

David's Personal Life Was More Spiritual Than Carnal

David's personal life, though dotted with abhorrent sins still reflected a life that was more spiritual, more God-oriented, than not.

Though David's twin sins against Bathsheba and Uriah were high-handed, he still demonstrated a level of contrition that excelled Saul's. When Saul was told that he violated the will of God by offering the sacrifice at Mizpah (1 Sam. 13:7ff), it appears that his repentance was

“genuine and effective,” and that he attempted to make the appropriate supplication of God (2 Sam. 13:12; Arnold, 875). His failure regarding the Amalekites two chapters later, however, did not appear as conciliatory. His confession in this context came only incrementally, and only after insisting, twice, that he had obeyed the Lord. Later, when he “acknowledges wrongdoing instead of repudiating it; Saul regrets his actions because they leave him vulnerable, not because they were self-destructive and wrong.” (Ibid.) His words in this context are filled with “defensive argumentation, deflection and rationalization,” and shows a greater interest in “placating Samuel and the people of Israel than in seeking forgiveness and restoration from Yahweh.” (Ibid.)

We must, of course, admit sin, and we must do so willingly, not out of coercion. But there must also be some sense of repudiation and condemnation of sin.

In several striking examples in the biblical text, key characters not only acknowledged their sins, they also acknowledged that their sins were a direct affront to a holy God. Achan sinned against himself, his family and his nation. But stealing the forbidden treasures after the battle of Jericho violated God’s will first (Josh. 7:20). Likewise, the young man we call the prodigal son acknowledged that his actions were sins against both his heavenly and earthly fathers (Lk 15:18).

David’s response to sin reflected that same level of contrition. His statement in Psalms 51 echoes that of Achan and the prodigal. Though he, like Achan, sinned against himself, his family and his nation, his statement of contrition displays his primary concern: “Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight-- That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.” (Ps. 51:4)

David’s spiritual focus clearly appears in the final chapters of Second Samuel. His psalm-like song/prayer (chapter 22) indicates his reliance upon, devotion to, and worship of, God (2 Sam. 22:4). Through the trials of life, David saw God as his rock, fortress, strength, shield and refuge (2 Sam. 22:1-3). When his world turned upside down (2 Sam. 22:4ff), God drew him out of the waters of despair, delivered him from his enemy and supported him (2 Sam. 22:17-20). Through it all, God delighted in David (2 Sam. 22:20). In spite of his notable failures, David kept himself from sin, was counted as blameless, and was rewarded for his righteousness (2 Sam. 22:21, 24, 25).

This song makes us wonder. How could a man so plagued by murder, adultery and vanity be so assured of his righteous standing by God near the end of his life? How does any one change so dramatically? Ezekiel 18 indicates that it's not only possible, but desirable. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and affords all an opportunity to repent (Ezekiel 18:23, 30, 32). Revelation's Jezebel was wicked (Rev. 2:20), but God "gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality." (Rev. 2:21; cf. 9:20-21; 16:9-11) Though God represents man "warts and all" in his word, there is always an opportunity for change. It's always possible that we could become men after God's heart as David was.

David's Reign And Its Messianic Connections

Though David wanted to build a house for God, God, instead, created a house for David. David's *house*, the continuation of his reign through his descendants, extended through Solomon to Christ. Though David was *anointed* as king, the term has greater implications when applied to the Son of God, Jesus the Christ (*anointed*). Christ was/is the Messiah in that he was *anointed*, as part of David's lineage, but in a very special way and for a very special reason.

Christ was David, in an antitypical, superlative sense. He fulfilled what was anticipated in David's life. Christ was the perfect shepherd, the perfect king, the perfect spokesman for God.

Consider David's sin in the final chapter. David ordered Joab to number his army, an obvious act of pride. But something else occurs. David realized that he had "sinned greatly," that he had "done foolishly," and asked that his sins be taken away (2 Sam. 24:10).

Again, David relied on God's mercy. He subjected himself to God's punishment and showed that he was willing to pay the price necessary to please God and halt the plague (2 Sam. 24:24). David refused cheap grace. He refused to serve and worship God for less than the greatest cost.

Fittingly, the site of Araunah's threshing floor (2 Sam. 24:16), was located at Mount Moriah where Solomon's temple would be built (2 Chron. 3:1). Abraham offered Isaac (Gen. 22:2, 14) in a region name Moriah, but insufficient geographical details allow us to know its exact location. The similarity of name, and the significance of what happened in each place,

makes us pause and wonder, but without more definitive information, we must be careful not to read more into the text than it presents. We are mindful of the general area where the second temple would be built during the period of restoration. That mountain, Mount Zion, is in some contexts distinguished from Mount Moriah, but in other settings all of Jerusalem is referred to as if it were a single mountain (Isa. 66:20). The locations may not be identical, but the areas appear in some contexts to be contiguous, a fact that may be more than incidental.

It was, of course, in the vicinity of the “mount” that is Jerusalem, historically tied in principle if not in specific geographic identity with Abraham’s Moriah, that Christ, the perfect David (Isa. 22:2). would live and die.

Ezekiel ties the coming Messiah, the Christ, to David in several passages. This coming Messiah would be “one shepherd,” “he shall feed them,” and he will be “My servant David.” (Ezek. 34:23) The following verse indicates that “My servant David” would be a “prince among them.” (Ezek. 34:24) Three chapters later Christ is further identified as “David,” this time as “king,” as well as “servant” and “prince” (Ezek. 37:24-25).

As noted, David the shepherd, prince/king and servant anticipated antitypical roles by the Christ. Christ’s version of each was consummately perfect, but David’s typical roles teach a key principle. Though we are not Christ, we must strive to be like him. One day, we will not only see him as he is, but be like him (1 John 3:2)

Conclusion

The way David responded to God, over all, is the way that we must respond to God. The way God dealt with David is the way God deals with us. God’s dealings with David are commensurate with the way Christ deals with us and David’s responsibilities mirror our’s before the Christ.

God blessed David even though he was not perfect. This does not provide an excuse to be less than what God wants, to aim low, or to overtly refuse to try to meet God’s goals and standards. David, in Second Samuel 23:5, clearly grasps grace: “Although my house is not so with God, Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in all things and secure.

For this is all my salvation and all my desire; Will He not make it increase?” David says, in effect, I can never be perfect, but God blesses me anyway when I serve him with a full heart of humility and obedience.

God rewarded David for that heart. He kept him as the head of the nations (2 Sam. 22:44) and God showed mercy to David and his descendants (2 Sam. 22:51). What David showed to Saul and his family, respect for being God’s *anointed*, God showed to David. God respected David’s contrite heart and the life that it produced.

David was not perfect, yet God made a covenant with him (2 Sam. 23:5) David’s imperfections did not abrogate God’s ability to save him. Nor do ours.

Sources

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