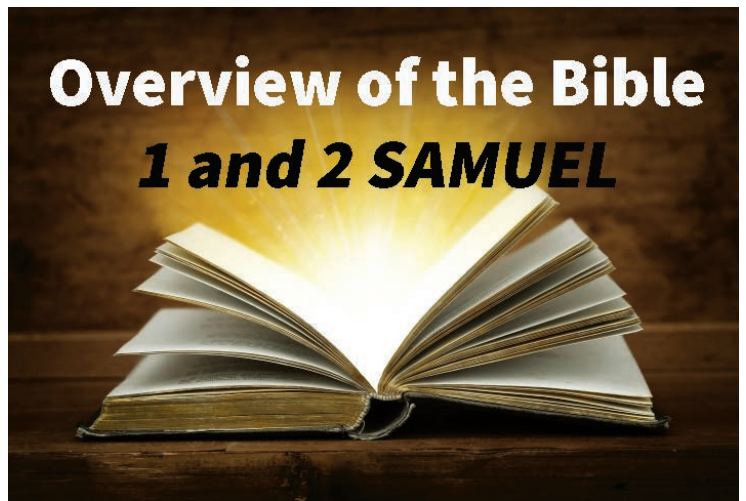


DAVID THE CONQUEROR

2 Samuel 5:6–25

Lesson 76

Wednesday, March 3, 2022



Big Idea: *The Lord accomplishes his purposes through those who promote his kingdom agenda and act in accordance with his reliable promises.*

The Text in Context

Israel has been humiliated by the Philistines and torn by civil strife, but finally the tribes have united and made David king in accordance with God's purposes. David immediately takes the ancient site of Jerusalem as a prelude to establishing a central sanctuary there. He also seeks the Lord's guidance and experiences his supernatural intervention in battle as he defeats the Philistines. Though Saul is dead and gone, the narrator continues to make his case for David's legitimacy. Saul led Israel to a humiliating defeat, but David reverses that disaster and turns the tables on the Philistines through the guidance and empowerment of the Lord, something that has been denied to Saul (1 Sam. 28:6). David obeys the Lord's command (2 Sam. 5:25), in contrast to disobedient Saul (1 Sam. 13:13–14).

Historical and Cultural Background

This chapter records two prebattle oracles of victory (vv. 19, 23–24), both of which are fulfilled (vv. 20, 25). In verse 24 the Lord instructs David to wait until the Lord marches ahead of him into battle.

Interpretive Insights

5:6 *marched to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites.* In the initial conquest of the land, the men of Judah defeated and burned Jerusalem (Judg. 1:8), but neither the Judahites nor the Benjamites were able to establish complete control over the city (Josh. 15:63; Judg. 1:21). The Jebusites, a Canaanite people whom Israel should have destroyed (Deut. 7:1–2; 20:17), remained entrenched in the city, confident that no one could conquer their well-fortified position, located on what is the southeast corner of later Jerusalem. In obedience to God's ancient command to Israel, David now defeats the Jebusites. David emerges as a leader who intends to finish what Joshua and Judah started.

Key Themes of 2 Samuel 5:6–25

- The Lord enables David to conquer Jerusalem in obedience to his original command to defeat the Jebusites.
- The Lord fulfills his promise and empowers David to make his kingdom secure.

5:8 *Anyone who conquers the Jebusites will have to use the water shaft to reach those “lame and blind” who are David’s enemies.* The Hebrew text reads, “Whoever strikes the Jebusites, and he will touch the *tsinnor*, and the lame and the blind hate the soul of David [or, “the ones hated by the soul of David,” reads the MT mg.]” The passage poses several interpretive challenges: (1) The meaning of the word *tsinnor* is uncertain. Many assume that it means “water shaft.” In this case the text may refer to the way in which David’s men invade the fortress. Some identify this water shaft with Warren’s shaft, a fifty-foot vertical shaft discovered in 1867. However, the lexical basis for this interpretation is shaky, and some contend that this shaft was not accessible in David’s day. Interpreters have offered several other alternatives for the meaning of the word and the statement. (2) If one follows the reading of the Hebrew text, then the lame and blind are described as hating David. The terms “lame” and “blind” are figurative, playing on the boastful claim of the Jebusites that even the blind and lame can defend the city (v. 6). If one follows the marginal reading, then the lame and blind are the objects of David’s disdain. But this does not mean that David dislikes those with handicaps (cf. his kind treatment of Mephibosheth); it refers instead to his attitude toward the Jebusites, who use the imagery in their taunt. In either case, the final statement in the verse apparently refers to any surviving Jebusites being banned from the royal palace (Hebrew, “the house”).

5:9 *David then took up residence in the fortress.* Designating Jerusalem as his capital makes good sense politically since the city is situated near the border of the north and south (Judah). The city also symbolizes David’s military prowess and intention to carry out the Lord’s ancient command to defeat Israel’s enemies. After all, he has uprooted a people that remained entrenched in the city and defied Israel since the time of the original conquest of the land.

5:10 *because the LORD God Almighty was with him.* This divine title (a variation on the traditional “LORD of Hosts”) highlights the Lord’s sovereignty and military might, envisioning him as one who sits enthroned over his heavenly council (see the comment at 1 Sam. 1:11). He sits enthroned above the cherubim of the ark of the covenant, the earthly symbol of his heavenly throne (1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2). Perhaps the use of the title here anticipates the account of the ark in the next chapter.

5:12 *David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel.* Hiram, king of Tyre (located north of Israel in Phoenicia), recognizes David’s royal status and supplies the materials and expertise for the building of David’s royal palace. To David, this recognition by a foreign neighbor confirms the fact that the Lord has established him as king.

for the sake of his people Israel. In accord with the Lord’s royal ideal (Deut. 17:14–20) and the Lord’s oracles to David (2 Sam. 3:18; 5:2), David realizes that the Lord has raised him up for the sake of his people, Israel.

5:21 *The Philistines abandoned their idols.* Following Saul’s death, the Philistines “proclaim the news in the temple of their idols” (1 Sam. 31:9). But now, ironically, the Philistines abandon those same idols as they flee from David. David has reversed Israel’s fortunes and brings humiliation to their enemy by carrying off their so-called gods. There is also an echo of an earlier humiliating defeat when the Philistines carried off the ark as a trophy of war (1 Sam. 4:11).

5:24 *the sound of marching.* This is an echo of Judges 5:4, where Deborah and Barak, in celebrating the Lord’s victory over the Canaanites, describe him as marching from Edom to do battle. (To this point in the Former Prophets, the root *tsa’ad* [march] is used in only these two texts.) It is as if the Lord is renewing his mighty deeds through David.

the LORD has gone out in front of you. This may echo Deborah’s words to Barak (Judg. 4:14).

5:25 *David did as the LORD commanded him.* The narrator depicts David as an obedient servant, who carries out the Lord’s commandment. As such, he is a model of how God’s covenant people should act (see Deut. 5:32). The contrast with disobedient Saul is undoubtedly intentional (cf. 1 Sam. 13:13–14).

Theological Insights

Through his obedient servant David, the Lord reverses Israel's humiliation and begins to establish David's kingdom for the benefit of his covenant people. In the process he renews his mighty deeds as he intervenes for Israel in battle and again demonstrates his ability to overwhelm Israel's enemies. Surely all of this resonates with the exiles. The Lord has promised to give them a new Davidic ruler, who will lead them to unprecedented heights and establish a secure kingdom (Isa. 9:1–7; 11:10–16; Amos 9:11–15).

David's Expanding Harem

The narrator informs us that David continues to expand his harem, adding concubines and wives, who give him at least eleven more sons (vv. 13–16). The pattern is the same as in 3:1–5, where a comment about David's growing strength is followed by a harem report. In light of the positive assessment of David in 5:10 and 12, one is tempted to say that this note about an expanding harem is included to impress the reader with David's growing status and to picture him as one whom God blesses with numerous offspring, who in turn make his royal house stronger. After all, verse 10 does say that the Lord is with David.

But throughout David's story the narrator includes negative aspects of David's career, often without comment. As in 2 Samuel 3:2–5, we must look beyond the surface and not allow the positive aspects of David's career to color our interpretation of every detail. Deuteronomy 17:17 prohibits Israel's king from multiplying wives. While David's harem, composed mostly of "local girls," does not turn his heart from the Lord, his acquisition of more and more wives suggests that he has bought into the thinking of the surrounding culture to some degree, and it sets a bad precedent that proves detrimental to Solomon. As for the reference to God's being with David (v. 10), this hardly implies that all of David's actions must be interpreted in a positive light. Judges 1:19 observes that the Lord is with the men of Judah, but then informs us that they are not able to defeat the Canaanites. Here the reference to the Lord's presence contributes to the tragic irony of the report. The same may be true in 2 Samuel 5. Despite God's enabling presence (v. 10), which David himself recognizes (v. 12), David continues to operate according to the wider cultural pattern, in violation of the Deuteronomic ideal

The reliability of the divine word is an important theme in this chapter. In the face of the Philistine threat, we see David at his best, seeking the Lord's guidance and winning victories through the Lord's power. In the past, whenever he sought the Lord's will, the Lord answered him with an assuring word that was a precursor to success (1 Sam. 23:1–5; 30:7–8; 2 Sam. 2:1) or with a word of warning that enabled David to escape danger (1 Sam. 23:9–12). In his song of thanks, written after the Lord delivers him from all his enemies, David affirms that the Lord's word is "flawless" (or "purified," like metal that is refined and free of impurities) and that "he shields all who take refuge in him" (2 Sam. 22:31). This affirmation appears in a context where David celebrates that the Lord trained and energized him for battle. The "word" of the Lord to which he refers is the prebattle oracle that assures him of success and enables him to charge fearlessly against his enemies.

Teaching the Text

1. *The Lord accomplishes his purposes through those who promote his kingdom agenda.* David's first act as king over a united Israel is to take care of some unfinished business. When they conquered the land, Israel failed to take the Jebusite stronghold in Jerusalem, but now David conquers it and builds a palace there, thus declaring, "This city now belongs to Israel." His desire to obey the Lord's ancient command regarding the conquest of the land is exemplary. The Lord honors David with his enabling presence and secures his reign, for David's actions are consistent with God's goal of establishing his kingdom on earth. Surely today God's chosen servants do not promote God's kingdom by fighting wars and killing Philistines! But God promises his enabling presence to those who carry out his commission as a prelude to the consummation of his kingdom (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 28:31).

2. *The Lord accomplishes his purposes through those who act in accordance with his reliable promises and trust in his power.* In carrying out God's purposes, David confronts opposition from the Philistines, but he seeks the Lord's guidance, follows the Lord's instructions, and experiences the Lord's supernatural intervention. God's word proves to be completely reliable. Today God's chosen servants do not "inquire" of the Lord the way David did, receive specific customized orders, or hear God's army marching in the trees above them. But God has communicated his purpose for this age and made promises that his people can trust.¹

¹ Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *1 & 2 Samuel*, ed. Mark L. Strauss, John H. Walton, and Rosalie de Rosset, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 206–211.