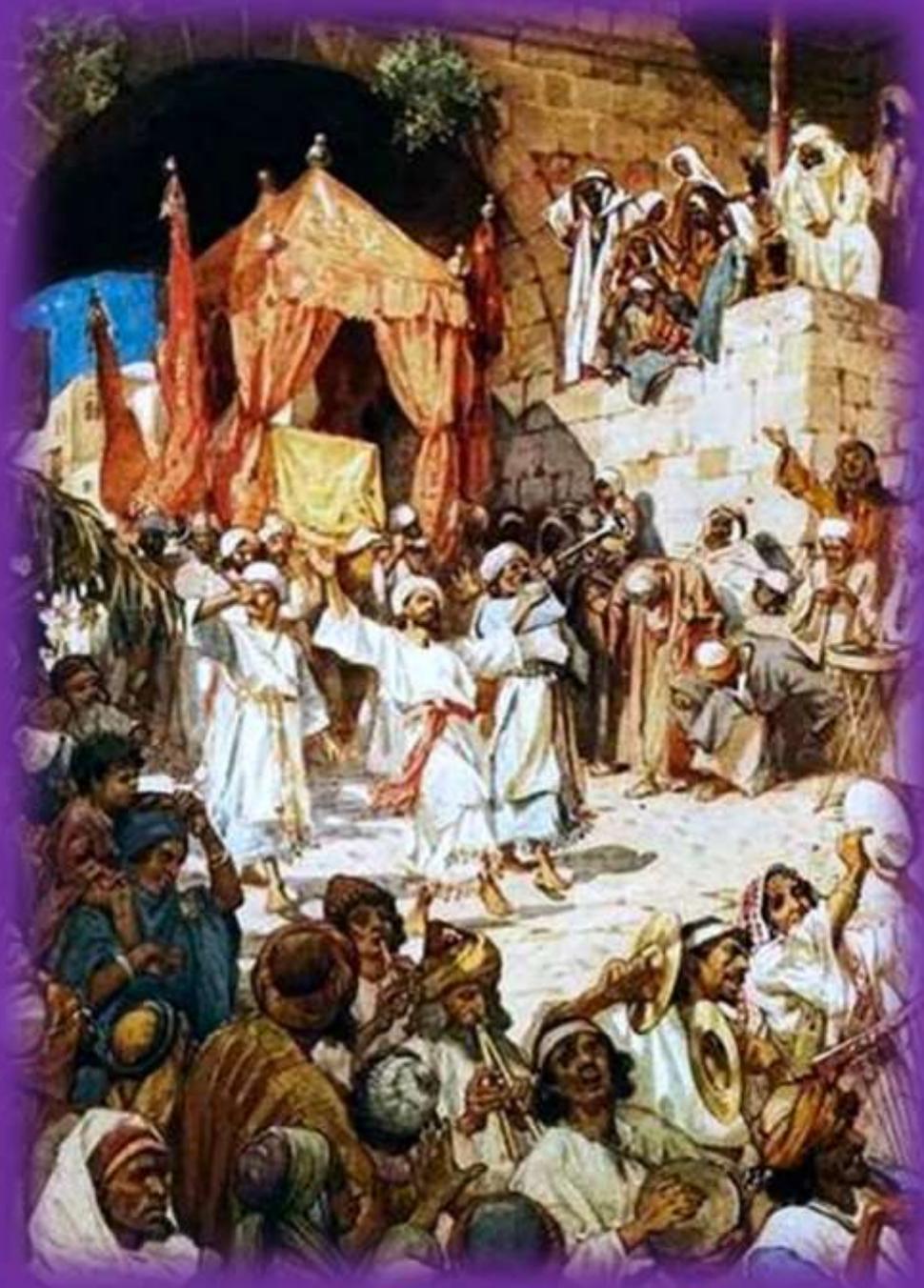


The Climax of David's Kingdom

1 Samuel 5-10



Stephen Gunawan

OUTLINE

	Outline	
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	5: Beginning the Conquest of Land	- LAND
	5: Defeat of Enemy	- SOVEREIGNTY
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ESTABLISHING A KINGDOM

DAVID BECAME KING OVER ALL ISRAEL

Even after the death of Saul, David did not immediately rise to power. He was first made king only over Judah (2:4); and despite his increasing reputation (the elders had been wanting to make him king over Israel – 3:17-18) David still had to wait another 7 years and 6 months before being recognized as king over all Israel (5:2). The elders gave three valid reasons for appointing David: (1) Kinship (2) David's track record as a military leader and (3) God's divine appointment of David.

As newly appointed king of the now united kingdom of Israel, David was no sluggard. He did not sit back and enjoy his (at last) established royalty, but went straight to work doing the following:

- Established the Capital City and the Center Place of Worship: In Jerusalem.
- Defeated the arch-nemesis who stood in the way of his task of conquest: The Philistines
- Restoration of Mosaic worship: Bringing back the Ark of the Covenant

In doing these work, the summary as given to us by the writer was this: *“And he (David) became more and more powerful, because the Lord God almighty was with him”* (5:9). We have come to the revelation of the secret of David's successes. Whereas prior to this the description was purely physical: *“David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker”* (3:1), now we are given that the real reason for David's success was because it was God's will and providence for him.

However, even after all these successes, and even after he was officially appointed king over all of Israel, it took David one particular event to make him realize that God had indeed firmly planted him as king over all of Israel. And this event, strangely, was when Hiram the king of Tyre paid homage to him, bearing gifts and building him a palace (5:11-12). What was so special about this recognition? Did a foreign acknowledgement mean more to David than all of his kinsmen appointing him as king? I believe not. The coming of the King of

Tyre made David realize that he had been made king over Israel and that God had elevated his kingdom “for the sake of His people Israel” (5:12). Tyre’s recognition of Israel’s power ushered in a new age when Israel was no longer a subject of oppression but was now able to be blessed and to be a blessing. Hiram, from then on, enjoyed a mutually beneficial trade with Israel that continued to the days of Solomon (ref. **1 Kings 5:1-12**). David realized that it was finally time for Israel to be the blessed, and to be a blessing; thereby fulfilling God’s promise to his forefather Abraham (**Gen 12:1-3**). David had interpreted the events happening to him in accordance to the Scriptures; waiting patiently for God to fulfill His promises to make him king, only in His time and ways.

A SEED OF WEAKNESS

In between God’s blessing to David, we see some very suspicious sentences:

“After he left Hebron, David took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem, and more sons and daughters were born to him. These are the names of the children born to him there: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet” (5:13-14).

Now, since this account was given to us amongst all the descriptions of God’s blessing and providence to David, does it mean that these descendants were God’s blessing as well? It is indeed easy to think this way, given how descendants was indeed perceived to be God’s ultimate blessing. We will discuss about it further next week when we start witnessing what actually happen to David’s family. However, for the time being, it suffices for us to place David’s performance against the requirements of a king as listed in **Deut 17:14-20**. An Israelite king was forbidden by law to multiply three things:

Things an Israelite King must not multiply	David’s Performance
Horses (Deut 17:16)	David did not multiply horses (8:4)
Silver or Gold (Deut 17:17)	David did not multiply gold or silver but rather dedicated these to the Lord (8:11-12)
Wives (Deut 17:17)	But David multiplied wives (5:13-14)

This weakness, told to us now as an unbiased historical account, is a seed of weakness that will fully bloom in the pages to come, and tarnish David’s otherwise beautiful biography.

LEARNING THAT GOD IS KING

There is a famous saying of Lord Acton: “*Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.*” Let me put this proverb into Christian perspective. Man is made in the image of God, and as we have learned in our earliest lessons, one of the aspects of this is that man is made to rule (**Gen 1:26**). So, in a sense, man was made to receive power. And the power that God meant for man to have, surely, is not corrupt, but pure and holy (by the principle of **James 1:13-17**¹). So, it would be more accurate for us to ask, what kind of power were we meant to receive? And the answer to this, again coming back to the lessons of the Book of Genesis, is that we were never meant to have *autonomous* power. Our power, which comes as a result of us being God’s image-bearers is thus meant to reflect His nature and His rule and His Kingship over all. And so, it is autonomous power that corrupts; a power apart from God’s delegation.

However, being made king is a sure way to come face to face with the very temptation of autonomous power. Of deciding with one's own wisdom, intelligence and prowess. Even when one thinks that he was deciding for the common good, reliance upon self-abilities is still a trespass. And this was why, apart from the prohibition to multiply gold, horses and wives, an Israelite king was also supposed to write for himself a copy of the Law of God and read it all the days of his life and obey it (**Deut 17:18-20**). This was to ensure that even the king submitted to the Law, and not consider himself as of better worth than other image-bearers of God (**Deut 17:20**).

God will teach David exactly this, firstly in two occasions: (1) The incident with the Ark of the Covenant (2) God's refusal for a "House."

We will deal with these in greater detail now.

1. God is King (1): Retrieving the Ark of the Covenant

In 2 Sam 6, we read about the account wherein David brought back the Ark to Jerusalem. Now, to put this into the proper context, we need to remember that the Ark was initially captured from Israel in **1 Sam 4**; only to miraculously cause the Philistine God Dagon to be utterly defeated and the nation put under a curse in **1 Sam 5**. The Philistines reluctantly returned the Ark back to Israel, repeatedly testing if the plagues they received were merely coincidental (**1 Sam 6**). The men in Israel fell under a plague for disrespecting the Ark, and they sent it away until it finally settled in Kiriath Jearim guarded by Eleazar the priest.

Now, David had just conquered Jerusalem and defeated the Philistines. His next plan as the newly appointed king was to restore the Mosaic worship. The 2 Samuel account of this was less complete, and we must look forward to **1 Chr 13:1-4** for David's discussion of this plan with his trusted men.

*David conferred with each of his officers, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. He then said to the whole assembly of Israel, "if it seems good to you and if it is the will of the Lord our God, let us send word far and wide to the rest of our people throughout the territories of Israel, and also to the priests and Levites who are with them in their towns and pasturelands, to come and join us. Let us bring the Ark of God back to us, for we did not inquire of it during the reign of Saul." The whole assembly agreed to do this, because it seemed right to all the people. (**1 Chr 13:1-4**)*

David's intention for bringing the Ark to Jerusalem was noble. He wanted a centralization of worship where the Government of Israel could serve under God's direct rule and reign. He wanted the Ark, the very symbol of the presence of God with His people to be there. And the reason for bringing the Ark of God back was "*for we did not inquire of it during the reign of Saul*" – which was umpteen times better than Saul's utter disregard for God's presence amongst His people.

Yet, when they proceeded to bring the Ark back, Uzzah was struck dead by God when he reached out for the Ark because the oxen stumbled (**6:6**). Uzzah was just trying to help, wasn't he? What was he to do? Let the Ark fall? Why would the writer call this an "*irreverent act*" (**6:7**)? These were all activities done out of the best of intentions; and it ended up in a tragedy. And then we are told that David became angry because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Uzzah. Who was he angry

with? At God? At Uzzah? At himself? The verse itself was silent on this. Perhaps it was a combination of the three; but knowing David it was probably more of the last one.

See, David would have thought hard about what he had done wrong. As a king would be required to make a copy of the Law and familiarize himself with it, David would have known what went wrong; and it was these requirements of the Law:

- **Ex 25:12-15** demands that the Ark be transported with poles on the priests' shoulders. The people of David set the ark on a new cart (**6:3**) probably because ① it was the easier way to carry it downhill; because Abinadab's house was on a hill (**6:3b**) and ② they might have thought that the Ark had come to Kiriath Jearim in the very same manner – which was on a new cart (**1 Sam 6:7**). And the Philistines who sent it back were not adversely affected. Herein we must also be reminded that being a child of God means that we would be reprimanded and disciplined when others often go scott free. As the writer of Hebrews explains it:

*“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastens everyone He accepts as His son.” Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as His children. For what children are not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined-and everyone undergoes discipline-then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all” (**Heb 12:5-8**)*

- **Nu 4:15** says that the Ark must not be touched, which Uzzah did. Holiness demands respect, and carries with it the ultimate warning.

So David lost heart a little when he saw how severe God disciplined Israel, especially Uzzah. My Opinion is, he got the most angry with himself; and blamed himself as a leader who failed to protect his people by obeying God's command. But the severity of the discipline discouraged him for a little while, until he found out that God was still blessing His people through the Ark of the Covenant (**6:11-12**). Knowing that God was still willing to bless His people through the means of the Ark as the symbol of His presence, David knew he still had to get it back to Jerusalem after all, so that his whole kingdom, as opposed to one household, can receive the same providence and the same accompaniment of God.

So David went the second time to retrieve the Ark of the Covenant; this time ensuring that the requirements of the Law was met this time. They carried the Ark this time (**6:13**), whilst making sure that they sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf as a sign that they were able to do this only by the grace and providence of God.

When they returned, though, Michal despised David for having humiliated himself and not acting like a true and dignified king (**6:14,20** – by disrobing himself of the royal clothes and wearing the clothes of a common priest). David's answer shows us how much he had learned from his mistake, *“it was before the Lord... He appointed me ruler over the Lord’s people Israel- I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes (literally, “I will humble myself even more than this”)*. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor” (**6:21-22**). Here was what David said, “look, I did that which you thought was undignified before the Lord who appointed me ruler over His own people Israel. The kingdom was

His to begin with, and also the people. I took off my royal robes in honoring His kingship over this nation; and if you thought that was undignified and humiliating, then let me tell you that I will be even more undignified than that. But those slave girls did not look down upon me because I did those things. On the contrary, they honor me because they know that I am not a king who serve my own needs, but am one who was graced to become their representative and to shepherd them for their own good. God had taught David that he was to rule over the people not only with sincerity and foolish zealotry, but in the very Truth of God. As it was later written, *“it is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way”* (**Prov 19:2**).

As a side note, this lesson is very important for our age where sincerity is held above truth. “It is the thought that counts,” says most. But when it comes to worship, this story reminds us that God wants to be worshipped not only with a willing heart, but also with a true and holy heart. He wants worshippers who will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth (**Jn 4:24**).

2. God is King (2): The House of God and the House of David

Now that everything was in place – David is beginning to fulfill the promise of conquest of the whole promised land; Jerusalem is captured and made capital; centralized worship is once again established; and the Ark of God is once again part of the worship sacrament – David thought of saw that they were still worshipping God in a tent; whereas David had already got himself a beautiful palace. David felt that this was not right, and he wanted to build a permanent temple for his God. This time, David has learned enough to consult a prophet, Nathan, who made his premiere in this scene (**7:2**). Even Nathan initially thought it was a good idea (**7:3**).

In his neighbouring nations, being able to erect a temple for the gods was a sign of the king’s ability to ensure lasting success. Now, David did not care about all that, he was sincerely wishing to give his best for the God whom he loved.

But how do we know he really didn’t care about that glory? After all, now that he had everything he needed, if we listen to the theory of Abraham Maslow, David would indeed aim for self-actualization. He would want to make a lasting name for himself by erecting a permanent temple as a signature that his victory was permanent and there was no longer any need for Israel to be wanderers, all thanks to him.

There was only one way to know, and only one way to find out; and it was for David’s desire to be declined, flat. And God did just that, say a very clear and resounding “no” to David. And David’s response showed just how pure his motivation was. But before we get to that, let’s first address the issue about building God a house.

Why Did God Refuse David as the Builder?

One question will puzzle us. Why did God refuse David as the builder of the temple, saying instead that one of his sons will do it? We all know that Solomon was not a better person than David, or a better king. Why refuse the best king Israel has ever had, only to give the job to a worse one? Well, I have written a more general answer to this in an article entitled “Whose Ambition?” but let me elaborate a little bit more for this particular event.

Let us look at the verses and see why God refused David. God's refusal to David can be found in **7:5-7**; but also elsewhere in **1 Chr. 22:8-10** and **1 Kings 5:3**. The reasons as summarized from these verses are:

- *"Are you the one?"* – meaning that David was not to be the one.
- *"I have not dwelt in a house and have been moving from place to place"* – meaning it is not time for permanence.
- *"I have not requested or commanded anyone to build me a house"* – meaning this might be more of man's idea and not God's will.
- *"you have shed much blood, and are a man of war"* – I don't think this means that God blamed David for the enemies he killed, because the wars David waged were mostly done in the name and under the commandment of God. Rather, this means that David was not a man whose life signified what the Temple should signify, which is peace.

Let me now try to piece together a comprehensible explanation.

See, moving from a tent to a house signifies a position of permanence. It will mean that that was it. That was the climax of David's kingdom, as well as the Kingdom of God. That from that point onwards, the kingdom of David would never fall, and that God's plan for Israel would be accomplished and perfected in the reign of David. But we know that WASN'T it. God's dwelling in the tent of meeting was only a means to an end. Surely, as Solomon later recognized it when he finally did build a temple for God, no house or temple could contain God, for even the highest heavens weren't enough (See **1 Kings 8:27**; **2 Chr 2:6**; **2 Chr 6:18**). And the Book of Acts sums this up perfectly after it talked about Solomon's Temple: *"But it was Solomon who built a house for Him. However the Most High God does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says, 'heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. What kind of house will you build for Me? Says the Lord. Or where will My resting place be? Has not My hands made all these things?'"* (**Acts 7:47-50**). So the point of God dwelling with man was really to be achieved in its finality by One whose name signified this very thing: Immanuel, God with man. And until such a time come, the dwelling – whether tent or temple, was but a foreshadow of things to come.

And the fact that God chose Solomon rather than David to build the Temple was because David had to still wage many wars to come until he had completed his task of conquest, and until the Lord had finally put all his enemies under his feet (**1 Kings 5:3**). In contrast, Solomon was a man of peace and rest (**1 Chr 22:9**) and lived during a time when God had given him rest on every side (**1 Kings 5:4**). This was important, not because Solomon was of better worth than David; but because the Temple signified this time of rest attained after a magnificent victory, as can be seen in this verse: *"Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. What kind of house will you build for Me? Says the Lord. Or where will My resting place be?"* (**Acts 7:49**; **Isa 66:1**).

Sure, David's kingdom signified what it was like when a human king truly ruled under God. Sure, it was a time when Israel foretasted a time when righteousness and justice was upheld. But the best human king surely wasn't good enough. And God started to reveal this.

God's answer to David was that David was not going to build God's house (**7:5**). On the contrary, God was going to build David's house (**7:11b**). And out of this house of David, will come one who will build God a house (**7:13**). So God is not rejecting David's desire to build God a house, but rather

revealing to Him how it was to be done. That somehow, through this lineage of David's royal dynasty will come the true King who can accomplish the true House of God.

This promise, then, found only its partial fulfillment in the times of Solomon, when he finally did erect a Temple for God in Jerusalem. The prophecy must be understood in its duality. Physically, Solomon's temple was an accomplishment of this promise, that Solomon, one from the body of David, finally erected a Temple. However, again we must understand that this was not to be God's permanent dwelling with His people. For if it was so, then the later destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians in 586 BC would mark the end of God's dwelling with His people, and that the Israelites were right to lament this loss on the fasting day of Tisha B'Av. And if this was right, the Temple as built by Herod marked only as a compromise of the greatness of the first. Despite the fact that the Temple was probably more luxurious than the First, it was not built by God's chosen but rather a gentile serving the Roman empire. And when even the that second best Temple, was again destroyed in 70 AD (a mere 4 years after it was completed), Israel should taken this to mean that God was no longer dwelling amongst them.

Unbeknownst to all, at the time of the destruction of Herod's Temple, another Temple was already erected – the true Temple that was promised to David; the eternal Temple that would never again be destroyed. The Builder of this Temple? A Son of David, surely; or better still, THE Son of David. This Jesus Christ foretold the utter and complete destruction of Herod's Temple (**Mat 24:2**) and then claimed that He would build the next only in three days when the Herod's Temple took 46 years to complete (see **John 2:20**).

See, this is the ultimate fulfillment of the House that God built for David. Through the lineage of David came Jesus Christ who builds God's eternal Temple. And this Temple is the Body of Christ, the believers. As Paul explained it, "*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple*" (**1 Cor 3:16-17**). The Church, the Body of Christ, the believers are *collectively* the Temple of God. This means that God dwells with the believers. When we receive Christ as Lord, He baptizes us with the Spirit into His Body (**1 Cor 12:13**) so that by this Spirit we received we are able to call God our Father (**Rom 8:15-16**). We have become a people belonging to God, and Immanuel dwells in the midst of the universal Church, *permanently* (to the very end of the age - **Mat 28:20**). By becoming the very Temple of God, Christ has fulfilled His prophecy when He said that a time is coming when there will be no designated place of worship ("on this mountain or in Jerusalem") but that God's worshippers will know Him and will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth (**Jn 4:21-24**).

And it is also interesting to note that the birth of this House, this Body of Christ came not in parallel with Christ's incarnation, but after he ascended into heaven. It was that fateful day, on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers that the Church of Christ was born. It was a day when Christ had returned to the Father, victorious, that the building of the Temple began. From that day onwards, every believer had been baptized into one Body and they are included in this House of God (**1 Cor 12:13**). And just as Solomon could only build the temple when God had "*put his (David's) enemies under his feet*" (see **1 Kings 5:3**), Christ is equally now reigning on God's right hand "*until He has put all His enemies under His feet*" (see **Matt 22:44; Acts 2:35; 1 Cor 15:25; Heb 1:13**).

In all finality, this is the Temple that would no longer be destroyed; for God's own Spirit now dwells within the believer as a guarantee of this glorious event to come (**2 Cor 5:5**) until the final Consummation which was described in the Apostle John's vision: "*I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God almighty and the Lamb are its temple*" (**Rev 21:22**). The Temple is the sign of God's dwelling amongst His people; and when we are with Him in eternity, when we dwell with God and He with us in perfection, the need for a physical Temple disappears. When God the Father finally puts His enemies under Christ's feet, we will head towards our final resting place, and God will truly dwell amongst us.

But we are not yet in that perfect place. And during our times here on earth, the Apostle Paul reminds us yet again of the difference between a tent and a house. "*For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands*" (**2 Cor 5:1**). God dwelled in a tent, foregoing the permanence of a house, and wandering with His chosen people wherever they were. Would we now acknowledge that this earth should not be a place of permanence, that it should be but a tent – to be destroyed in time? That is but the only way we get an eternal house from God; a place where He dwells with us, our Immanuel. Oh, what glorious truth was revealed to David, though he saw but a shadow!

ⁱ James herein explained that God is only the source of good and never evil. So, if the power that comes from being the Image-bearer was God-given, then it could only be pure and holy and good.

ⁱⁱ Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible