

Session #5

The Davidic Kingdom

1 Chronicles 10-11:24

13-18

21-23:1

28-29

2 Chronicles 1-9

2 Samuel 11-12

Saul, Israel's First King

Time did not allow us to take too close of a look at the Judges who led Israel after the death of Joshua. The same goes for Israel's first king, a man named Saul. The bible speaks negatively about the lack of order and authority that existed during the later period of the Judges (Judges 19-21), but it also contains serious reservations about the decision to centralize authority by choosing a king. This is shown in 1 Samuel 8-12. These chapters detail the anointing of Saul as king by the Prophet Samuel.

Saul went beyond the bounds of his political authority and attempted to usurp the religious authority that belonged to Samuel. It was then revealed to him that as a result his kingship would be taken away and another would serve in his place. (1 Samuel 13) It was the Lord's will that Saul's son Jonathan would not become king. Instead a young shepherd named David, the youngest son of a man named Jesse, would rule after Saul. (1 Samuel 16-17, 19-20).

The assigned readings for this section begin with the story of Saul's death. (1 Chronicles 10)

An Introduction to 1 and 2 Chronicles

It is important to note that while in the bible 1 and 2 Chronicles follow 2 Kings they are not a continuation of the story of 2 Kings. Instead 1 and 2 Chronicles are essentially a condensed version of 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings. A helpful comparison might be to the gospels of Mark and Matthew. Both tell us about the life and ministry of Jesus, but Matthew does so at greater length and in more detail than Mark's gospel.

Your assigned readings were largely from Chronicles because I wanted you to be able to read the most concise account of the basic events of the reigns of David and Solomon. 1 and 2 Chronicles are less concerned with the political, military, and personal events that were a part of the lives of the kings of Israel. These books focus on their lasting impact on the spiritual and liturgical life of God's chosen people.¹

¹ Patrick Henry Reardon, *Chronicles of History and Worship* (Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 2006), 12-13.

One result of the approach that is taken in these books is that the shortcomings of key figures in the history of Israel are often overlooked. As a result I will be drawing on key passages from 1 Samuel-2 Kings in order to allow us a fuller, and more mixed picture of the ancient leaders of God's people.

In some senses we would have been better off if your assigned reading had been from the books of Samuel and Kings. I chose to assign chapters from Chronicles because their more concise approach allows you to more easily get the big picture of biblical history. Fr. Reardon's book was another reason I decided to focus so much on 1 and 2 Chronicles. Finding a book this brief and this accessible which covers this portion of biblical history is not an easy thing. An author and theologian of Reardon's quality writing a book like this is a real gift to the Church, so I decided to take advantage of the commentary he has provided us with.

David

After the death of Saul David was joyfully named king by the people of Israel. Shortly afterwards, in an act of tremendous and lasting significance down to our own day, David conquered the city then known as Jebus. David made this city his capital and renamed it Jerusalem. (1 Chr 11:-:9)

The Ark of the Covenant, which contained the tablets the Ten Commandments had been inscribed on, was the most sacred object possessed by the Jewish people. David, with the enthusiastic support of the people arranged for the Ark to be brought to Jerusalem. (1 Chr 13:1:-:5) This was an essential part of the lasting impact King David had on the religious life of the Jewish people.

While the Ark was being translated an unfortunate man named Uzzah was struck dead for touching the Ark. (1 Chr 13:9:-:10) The reason for this was that this duty had been reserved to the men of the tribe of Levi. (1 Chr 15:2, :13) You'll remember that the Levites had been set aside to play a unique role in the worship of God's people. (Exodus 32:25:-:29) This story brings to mind God's threatening of the life of Moses in the book of Exodus. (Exodus 4:24:-:26) When it comes to worship and our encounter with God there can be no compromises. In his love for us God stands in opposition to any trends in the behavior of his people that would pull them away from him.

The Ark was brought to Jerusalem. It's first resting place was a tent constructed for this purpose. (1 Chr 16:1) Out of respect for the sacredness of the Ark David wanted a temple to be built to house this sacred object. David is told that he will not be the one to build this. Instead this work will be completed by his son. (1 Chr 17:1:-:15) Like the parallel story in 2 Samuel 7:1:-:17 it's clear that there are elements of the promise made here that were fulfilled by David's son Solomon, but that the full realization of this promise points beyond anything accomplished by Solomon. The ultimate Son of David is Jesus Christ himself. (Matthew 15:22, 20:30, Mark 10:47, and elsewhere)

We see that throughout his kingship David was someone whose life exhibited, to put it politely, a high degree of tension. On one hand we have the faith and devotion shown in passages like 1 Chronicles 17:16-:27.

And then we have things like the story we hear in 2 Samuel 11:1-:27. This is one of the stories that was left out of the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles. David abandoned his responsibility as the leader of his kingdom's army, sleep with and impregnate the wife of one of his soldiers, and then arrange for that man's death. The only thing that can allow us to make sense of this is the type of repentance we see in 2 Samuel 12:1-:14. This occurred when David was confronted by the prophet Nathan. Psalm 51 is believed to have been written by David after this repentance. It's worth reading for anyone who wants to understand how someone who has sinned so greatly can be brought back to the Lord.

The reign of David continued after God's revelation to him that Solomon would build the temple and not him. David won victories against his nation's enemies, ensuring the security and stability of his people. (1 Chronicles 18-20).

He also unfortunately conducted a census of his people which was seen as an act of pride and lack of trust in God, leading to punishment for David and his people. (1 Chronicles 21) This does show us that the books of Chronicles do not ignore all of David's shortcomings.

Some of the last recorded acts of David's reign are those which served to prepare his people for a life of proper worship. Materials were set aside for the construction of the temple which was to be undertaken by Solomon. (1 Chronicles 22) Steps were taken to ensure the proper ordering of the Levites and others who were to undertake an official role in Jewish worship during the latter periods of Old Testament history. (1 Chronicles 23-26)

Some of the last recorded words of David are the words of praise and worship found in 1 Chronicles 29:10-:22. This seems appropriate enough as we consider David's legacy as the leader of the people called to worship the true God.

Solomon

1 Chronicles 23:1 shows us Solomon began to reign as his father's successor prior to David's death.

Now we're going to move very quickly. 2 Chronicles 1-9 details the reign and successes of Solomon. We hear of his wisdom (2 Chr 1:1:13), his wealth (2 Chr 1:14-:17, 9:13-:28), his building of the temple (2 Chr 3), the furnishing of this temple (1 Chr 4), the placement of the Ark within the temple (2 Chr 5), his treaties with foreign powers and wise administration of the kingdom, (2 Chr 2:2-:18, 8, 9:1-:12), as well as examples of his personal prayer and piety (2 Chr 6).

We see in Solomon someone who devotedly prayed to God, constructed the temple which was at the heart of Jewish worship, and ensured the security and stability of his kingdom. 2 Chronicles focuses on what Solomon was able to pass on to his people. These books show us those ways in which he used God's gifts to bless the nation that he was called upon to lead and to serve.

In talking about these things 2 Chronicles does not give us the fullness of the biblical account of the life and reign of King Solomon. To fill in some of the missing details we should turn to 1 King 11:1-10. We see the two familiar evils of the Old Testament. The idolatry of Canaanite religion coupled with sexual sin. Like his father David Solomon accomplished great things as he led his people, and was God's instrument when it came to ensuring that generations of the Jewish people would be centered around God in worship. Like his father David Solomon sinned gravely. The bible explicitly details David's repentance. We are not given such information about Solomon. The belief that the book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon in his old age, as an expression of regret over the emptiness of the hedonism that had crept into his life, gives us some hope that this repentance did in fact occur. But we are left with great uncertainty when it comes to whether or not this did in fact take place.