

3. The Davidic Kingdom

I. The Need for a King

Joshua's last act prior to his death was to gather all the tribes to Shechem and lead them in a renewal of their covenant with the Lord (Josh 24). The people acknowledged that it was the Lord their God who had brought them up out of Egypt, preserved them on the way, and driven out (נִרְשָׁ) the inhabitants of the land before them; therefore they would not forsake him to serve other gods (24:16-18). But Israel's resolve did not last into the next generation.

The Book of Judges

After Joshua's death there arose another generation who did not know the Lord or what he had done for Israel (Judg 2:10). The tribes were unable to fully drive out the inhabitants of the allotted territory, so that the Canaanites lived among them or vice versa (Judg 1).

Israel lived a recurring cycle of sin, judgment and grace (Judg 2:10-19):

1. sin
2. foreign aggression: God's punishment
3. call for help
4. God provided a deliverer (judge), who rescued then ruled
5. this judge maintained peace and prosperity throughout his lifetime
6. return to sin after death of the judge

God provided Israel with a series of twelve judges of declining quality (3:7-16:31).

Judges ends with two epilogues about two tribes:

Dan (17-18): unable to take possession of its allotted territory (Judg 1:34-36), Dan was looking for an inheritance in which to dwell. It relocated to the far north of Israelite territory, voluntarily placing itself on the periphery.

Benjamin (19-21): because of the abomination and outrage (20:6, cf. Sodom Gen 19) committed by the Benjamites of Gibeah, the tribe of Benjamin was nearly eliminated in civil war.

Common theme: In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

Israel's Nadir

Israel reached its lowest point at the end of Eli's life (1 Sam 2-4), ca. 1075 BC:

1. the word of God was rare (3:1)
2. Eli's sons, the priests Hophni and Phinehas, were corrupt and wicked (3:12-17; 22-25)
3. the ark of the covenant was captured by the Philistines (4:11). The Lord went into voluntary exile: Ichabod: The glory has departed from Israel! (4:21)
4. the tabernacle at Shiloh was destroyed

The People's King

Israel asked Samuel, "appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam 8:5). But God had called Israel to be unlike all the other nations (Lev 20:26; Num 23:9)! God gave them the sort of king they wanted, a man head-and-shoulders taller than anyone else. His name was Saul (Shaul, "asked").

But he did not heed the Lord, so the Lord changed his mind and rejected him (1 Sam 15).

2. King David

The Lord guided Samuel in selecting the man of his choice to be king: “I have provided for myself a king” (16:1), a man after his own heart (13:14).

After years being pursued by Saul, and 7 years as king over Judah in Hebron following Saul’s death, David became king over all Israel. Immediately:

Completion of the Conquest: David captured Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:6-10, henceforth the City of David) and defeated the Philistines (5:17-25; 8:1), completing the Conquest of the Land. The Lord gave him rest from all surrounding enemies (7:1). David built his palace.

Entrance of ark into Jerusalem (2 Sam 6). Saul had left the ark on the periphery for 20 years. David put the Lord back at the center. The entrance of the ark symbolized the Lord’s entrance as the Great King and his endorsement of Jerusalem as his city (the city of God).

Establishment of David’s rule (2 Sam 7): only after the Lord’s rule had been established.

The Lord had promised he would choose a place for his Name (Deut 12), where Israel was to go on pilgrimage. Jerusalem was now that place.

The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7)

With his own palace (house) and at God-given rest, David wanted to build God a house. But God had other plans (7:8-14):

1. a great name for David
2. a place for Israel
3. rest for the nation
4. a house for David: a son who would be in a son-Father relationship with God. This son would be a temple-builder.

Though not called a covenant here, it is referred to as such elsewhere: the covenant with David.

3. Solomon and the Temple

Although David is regarded as the ideal ruler, Israel reached its zenith early in the reign of Solomon (c. 970-931 BC). The Abrahamic promises seemed fulfilled (1 Kgs 4:20-34):

1. seed: as numerous as the sand on the seashore (4:20)
2. land: Solomon was king (מֶלֶךְ) over all Israel (4:1) who lived from Dan to Beersheba, but ruler (מוֹשֵׁל) over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the border of Egypt (4:21), and ruler (רֹדֵה) even beyond the Euphrates (4:21). Israel had peace on all sides (4:24), dwelt in safety, enjoying the bounty of the land.
3. blessing to the nations: men from all nations came to listen to Solomon’s wisdom (4:34), cf. Queen of Sheba (10:1-13).