

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Samuels, Lecture 4

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“We now come to the final point in our consideration of the theme of kingship and covenant in 1 and 2 Samuel. Namely, kingship as practiced by David was an imperfect, but true representation of the ideal of the covenantal king. And as I mentioned earlier, we find David’s reign described in the book of 2 Samuel. After Saul’s death at the end of First Samuel, David was initially acclaimed as king by the tribe of Judah, over whom he reigned for a time in the southern city of Hebron (2 Samuel 2:1-7). Then, subsequently, he was accepted as king by the remaining tribes of Israel after the failure of Saul’s son, Ishbosheth, to perpetuate his father’s dynasty among the northern tribes. It’s in 2 Samuel 5 that David finally begins his reign over the entire nation. We read in verse 3 of 2 Samuel 5. “When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.”

The first thing that the narrator mentions after describing the beginning of David’s reign over all Israel is his capture of the stronghold of Zion. At the time, Zion was a small but heavily fortified city inhabited by the Jebusites. It was located on the southeastern ridge of what would later become the temple mount of Jerusalem. From a political standpoint, Zion was ideally situated for a new seat of government. It was centrally located and belonged to neither Judah, which was David’s tribe, nor Benjamin, which was Saul’s tribe, being positioned on the border between the two. In addition, because the site was surrounded on three sides by deep valleys and was strongly fortified, it provided Israel with a nearly impregnable national capital. Even though this accomplishment of David is described in only a few verses (chapter 5 verses 6 -10), its importance cannot be overstated. This was an event of far-reaching significance because, as David’s capital city, Zion was not only to become the religious and political center of Israel, but, in time, it would come to occupy a very important place in the history of both Judaism and Christianity and, indeed, in subsequent world history, as well.

2 Samuel 5 then launches the reader into a series of narratives that portray the reign of David in all of its splendor, while at the same time, revealing something of its intrigues and complexities, as well. We find those narratives in 2 Samuel 5 through the end of the book in chapter 24. 2 Samuel 6 and 7 deal with matters that lie at the heart of the entire book of 1 and 2 Samuel. As we've noted in previous discussions, kingship and covenant are the two most important themes in 1 and 2 Samuel. As we have also noted, when the elders of Israel ask for a king like the nations round about in 1 Samuel 8, they denied the covenant and, in essence, rejected the Lord, who was their king. But, when Samuel was instructed by the Lord to give the people a king, he did so in the setting of covenant renewal that both established Israel's monarchy in the context of the renewal of allegiance to Yahweh and, at the same time, integrated human kingship into the structure of the theocracy in a way that provided for the continued recognition of Yahweh as Israel's divine King.

We looked at that particularly in connection with 1 Samuel 11:14 to 12:25. From this point forward, the human king in Israel was to be an agent of Yahweh's rule over his people. He was not to be an autonomous king, as were those of the surrounding nations. He was obligated to obey the requirements of the Mosaic Law, as well as the instructions of the prophets. But Saul, Israel's first king, proved to be a disappointment. He did not function in his royal office in a way that demonstrated continued recognition of Yahweh as Israel's true sovereign. He repeatedly disobeyed the word of the Lord given through the prophet Samuel. When confronted for his disobedience, he attempted to justify his actions, rather than acknowledge his sin. This led to the Lord's rejection of Saul and the anointing of David to replace him on the throne in Israel.

Now that David has become the ruler over all of Israel, we are told in 2 Samuel 6 of a very important decision by David that has a close connection with the theme of kingship and covenant (the major theme in the book). This was David's decision to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (Zion), his newly acquired capital city. I mentioned that briefly at the beginning of these lectures. Implicit in bringing the Ark to

Jerusalem was David's recognition that Yahweh was Israel's' divine Sovereign. Let me say just a few words of the Ark of the Covenant. When God gave Moses instructions for building the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant was the very first component to be described. The Ark was a rectangular box made of wood and covered with gold that measured about four feet by two and a half feet by two and a half feet. It was to be placed behind a curtain in the Most Holy Place, into which the high priest would enter only once a year on the Day of Atonement. The space above the Ark, between the cherubs, on either end of its cover, was the focal point of God's dwelling amongst His people. In Exodus 25:22 Moses is told that 'I will meet with you there' (this is Yahweh speaking to Moses); "I will meet with you there and talk to you from above the atonement cover, between the gold cherubim that hover over the Ark of the Covenant. From there I will give you my commands for the people of Israel." In 1 Samuel 4:4 and 2 Samuel 6:2, the Ark is referred to as the throne upon which Yahweh is invisibly seated. Using a similar metaphor, 1 Chronicles 28:2 and Psalm 132:7 refer to the ark as the footstool of the throne of Yahweh. Moses was instructed to deposit a copy of the Ten Commandments inside the Ark. So, among the symbolic functions of the Ark, two of the most prominent are those of container and throne. Because the Ark was a box containing a copy of the law of God, who was invisibly enthroned above it, it was a visible symbol of Yahweh's divine Kingship over his people Israel. So, by bringing the Ark to Zion, David and the people of Israel were publically acknowledging that Yahweh was their great King.

After David brought the ark to Zion, this city came to be recognized as the place where the Lord had caused his Name to dwell, as anticipated in Deuteronomy chapter 12 verse 5 and verse 11. From this point forward, numerous texts in the Old Testament speak of Zion, not only as David's royal city and the capital of the nation of Israel, but also as the place from which Israel's divine King, Yahweh, reigned over the whole earth. Psalm 9:11 – "Sing praises to the Lord who reigns in Jerusalem." Psalm 76:2 – "Jerusalem is where the Lord lives; Mount Zion is his home." Psalm 99:2 – "The Lord sits in majesty in Jerusalem, exalted above all nations." Psalm 132:13 – "For the Lord

has chosen Jerusalem; he has desired it as his home.” Isaiah 8:18 – “We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty, who dwells in Mount Zion.” Jeremiah 8:19 – “Listen to the weeping of my people; it can be heard all across the land. ‘Has the Lord abandoned Jerusalem?’ the people ask, ‘Is our King no longer there?’” According to biblical teaching, Zion, Jerusalem, the dwelling place of Yahweh, Israel’s divine King, will continue to be a focal point of human history until the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, and there are many texts that speak of the role of Jerusalem in the unfolding of redemptive history.

So, while in 2 Samuel 6, David honored the Lord by affirming his kingly rule over the nation in a very visible and tangible way by bringing the Ark to Jerusalem. We find in the very next chapter, 2 Samuel 7, that the Lord reciprocated and honored David by promising him a dynasty that would endure forever. 2 Samuel 7 is, in fact, the high point of the entire book of 1 and 2 Samuel. Here we find that the line of the promised seed that is stretched from Abraham to Judah is now narrowed and sharpened. Here we learn that the seed of the woman, spoken of in Genesis 3:15, who would ultimately crush the serpent’s head - the seed of the woman will come from the royal line of David. David is the one who will be the ancestor of the great Messiah King to come. This promise, of course, is ultimately fulfilled in Christ. Reflecting on the Lord’s promise to David, described in detail in 2 Samuel 7, the Lord says in Psalm 89:3 and following - and I’m not going to read all of that, but a few verses from it. There is a recapitulation of the promise that the Lord made to David in 2 Samuel 7, where the Lord says, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, ‘I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.’... I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him. My hand will sustain him; surely my arm will strengthen him... I will maintain my love to him forever, my covenant with him will never fail. I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure. If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes, if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity

with flogging; but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness - and I will not lie to David - that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun; it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.” In the New Testament, we find that Jesus is born as the Son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1). The angel Gabriel said to Mary that her son would sit on the throne of his father David (Luke 1:32 and 33). Jesus is addressed in Matthew 20 verse 30 by two blind men, sitting by the roadside, as the Son of David. “Have mercy on us, O Lord,” they said, “thou Son of David.” Jesus says of Himself, “I am the root and the offspring of David and the bright and morning star.”

It should be noted, however, that in the biblical portrayal of David, it’s not so much his accomplishments or his qualities as a leader, as it is God’s purposes that were to be filled in and through him that are most significant. For this reason, David is not idealized. He’s not placed on a pedestal. His weaknesses are evident, they’re not covered over or hidden. The most well know, but by no means the only, failure of David was his involvement in adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. In this incident, described in 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, David suddenly began to function as a king like all the other nations have, who took from their people in order to satisfy their own desires. Remember the description of that in 1 Samuel 8. Suddenly, David saw himself as above the law and became a law unto himself, rather than behaving as a king who was submissive to the law of the Lord and the words of the prophets. Suddenly, David acted in ways inconsistent with the behavior of a true covenantal king. The last phrase of chapter 11, which says, “the Lord was displeased with what David had done,” leads directly into the opening line of chapter 12, which says, “So the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story.” The juxtaposition of these two clauses, “the Lord was displeased with what David had done,” and “the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story,” is the hinge on which the narrative moves from a description of David’s sins that we find in chapter 11 to the description of the Lord’s calling of David to

account, which we find in chapter 12. Nathan was the same prophet who had told David that his dynasty would endure forever (in chapter 7). Now, however, in 2 Samuel 12, he brings David a radically different message. It was Nathan's duty to confront David with the enormity of his sins, and then to announce to him the severe consequences that his sin would spawn in the life of his family and of the court. At the heart of Nathan's rebuke, he makes a contrast between the Lord's gracious acts toward David, described in verses 7 and 8 - "I anointed you, I saved you, I gave you, I would have given you much more" - a contrast between his gracious acts and David's failure to live up to his covenantal responsibilities in 12:9 - "You have despised the Word of the Lord." David's sins are designated as murder and as the stealing of the wife of another man (verse 9b). Because of these sins, David will suffer a threefold punishment. First, the sword will afflict his family just as he had inflicted it upon Uriah (verses 9 and 10). Second, insurrection will arise from within his own household (verse 11a). And third, his wives will be publicly humiliated by another man, just as he had privately humiliated Uriah (verse 11b and 12).

The ensuing narratives in 2 Samuel and the early chapters of 1 Kings include descriptions of the fulfillment of these punishments. Upon hearing Nathan's indictment, David immediately responded with words of repentance and contrition. He said in verse 13, "I have sinned against the Lord." If you look at that in the Hebrew text, just as Nathan had spoken only two words in the Hebrew text when he told David, "You are the man," so David speaks only two words in the Hebrew text when he confesses his guilt. These two very brief statements embody the heart of the dynamics of the entire narrative unit. As Ariel Simon notes, "Nathan's 'Thou art the man' and David's response 'I have sinned against the Lord' drive their force from their quintessential brevity." David's confession was complete, unqualified, and unequivocal. 'I have sinned.' In contrast, we remember Saul, who attempted to shift responsibility and justify his sinful behavior when he was confronted by Samuel. David assumed full responsibility for his sinful acts. From Psalm 32:3 and 4, it appears that his unconfessed sins had weighed heavily on his spirit. He says there, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning

all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.” So, he was ready to repent. His acknowledgement that his sin was against the Lord, “Against you, and you alone have I sinned. I’ve done what is evil in your sight” (Psalm 51:4) is not intended to deny any offense against Uriah and Bathsheba and, by extension, against the entire nation of Israel, but rather, it’s a recognition that all sin is, in the first instance, a breaking of God’s law. At its root, David’s sin was exactly as Nathan had described it. It was a ‘despising of the word of the Lord’ (verse 9). In this instance, the Word of the Lord was the Mosaic Law, that the king in Israel had been commanded to read all the days of his life, so that he might learn to fear the Lord by keeping all the words of these instructions and decrees (Deuteronomy 17:19) in the law of the King. As we have noted, the true covenantal king was not above the law, nor a law unto himself. He was obligated to honor the law of the Lord, in the same way as every other Israelite.

In the fuller description of David’s confession, found in Psalm 51, David asks the Lord to have mercy on him and to blot out the stain of his sins, to cleanse him from his guilt, and to purify him from his sin (Psalms 51:1-2). He then pleaded with the Lord not to banish him from his presence, nor take his Holy Spirit from him (Psalm 51:11). The phrasing of this latter request seems to reflect David’s acute awareness that these things were exactly what the Lord had done to Saul. In 1 Samuel 16:1 and 14, the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him. His petition, therefore, was a direct appeal to God’s promise that, unlike the house of Saul, his own dynasty would not be cast aside, but would endure forever, according to the promise of 2 Samuel 7. To the Lord’s granting of David’s request, Nathan’s reply, “Yes, but the Lord has forgiven you and you won’t die for this sin,” is therefore also to be seen as rooted more in this gracious covenantal promise of God to David than it was in David’s repentant spirit, as important as that was.

There’s something both disturbing and reassuring about this narrative. On the personal level, it provides one of Scripture’s most vivid reminders that all human beings,

no matter how elevated their status might be in the eyes of those around them, no matter what special calling they may have received from the Lord - all human beings are still fallen creatures and capable of the most unimaginable iniquities.

It's for this reason that the Bible encourages us to place our trust in the Lord rather than in human beings. Psalm 118:8 – “It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.” Psalm 146:3 – “Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men who cannot save.” Human beings will always disappoint, but the Lord will never fail those who are his. None of the heroes of the Bible are portrayed as sinless saints, including the most godly of Israel's rulers in the Old Testament period.

Over against human sinfulness, however, this narrative also portrays a God who not only graciously intervenes in David's life to confront him with his sin, but who also graciously spared his life, and then gave him another son who would carry the line of promise forward. So, in spite of the disturbing reality of human sinfulness that's so fully displayed in this narrative, it is, at the same time, a narrative that is also full of the reassurance of grace. Just as in the Garden of Eden the Lord pursued Adam and Eve after they disobeyed the probationary commandment and confronted them with their sin, so, on this occasion, the Lord did not allow David to think that his evil acts were hidden from divine scrutiny. Just as in the Garden of Eden God's pursuit of Adam and Eve was not conditioned on their prior repentance, so in David's case, the Lord took the initiative. He sent him Samuel to confront him and to bring him to repentance, although God's forgiveness of David did not exempt him from the consequences of his sin.

D.R. Davis has said, “Yahweh forgives the guilt of sin but inflicts the consequences of sin. He cleanses sin's defilement but may continue its discipline.” And I think that's what happens here in the case of David. God showed Himself to be faithful to his promise to preserve his house, and as David later declared, the Lord continued to be his “hiding place,” (Psalm 32:7) and the One whose unfailing love surrounded him, no matter how difficult the experiences of his life might become.

Toward the end of 2 Samuel, in chapter 22, we find a song of David, and I think this song could appropriately be titled “David’s Song in Praise of the Reign of God.” This remarkable song of 51 verses places some of the central themes of 1 and 2 Samuel in a theological perspective. Among other things found in 2 Samuel 22 is a strong affirmation by David as Israel’s anointed King that he continued to recognize Yahweh as his, and Israel’s, ultimate Sovereign, when David says in verse 29 that “the Lord is the lamp that lights up his darkness,” the reader is reminded that in the previous chapter, chapter 21, David himself was referred to by his warriors as the one who was the lamp of Israel. That’s in 2 Samuel 21:17. A comparison of these two statements suggests that David understood that whatever light his life might project is merely a reflected light. He had no light to give in and of himself. He was Israel’s light only to the extent that his own life and reign reflected something of the light of Yahweh. Although Yahweh is not referred to in the song by the term “King,” specifically, universal divine sovereignty and David’s wholehearted affirmation of it and praise to God for it is the dominant theme.

A question that has drawn much attention in the study of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, is why the Lord removed Saul from the throne for disobeying the word of the prophet Samuel (as we have seen in 1 Samuel 13 and 15), when David, who also sinned grievously in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba, was forgiven for his sin (2 Samuel 12), and given a promise that his dynasty would endure forever (2 Samuel 7). I think the answer to this question can be found in this song. In verses 21 to 27 of 2 Samuel 22, David says twice that the Lord rewarded him for doing right (verses 21 and 25). In verse 21, we read, “The Lord has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me.” In verse 25, “The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight.” David also claims that he followed the Lord’s laws and never abandoned His decrees (verse 23), and therefore he was “blameless before God” (verse 24). He goes on to say that the Lord shows himself faithful to those who are faithful and pure to those who are pure, but to the wicked he shows himself hostile (verses 26-27). In addition, he says the Lord rescues the

humble but he humiliates the proud (verse 28). These statements are made immediately after David has described in the vivid language of theophany (verses 8 to 16), how the Lord rescued him from the throes of death. His crisis, which he describes as the throes of death, are described in verses 5–7, and then further in 17–20. I might read just a few of those verses. In verse 5, “The waves of death swirled about me; the torments of destruction overwhelmed me. The chords of the grave coiled around me; the stares of death confronted me.” In verse 17, “He reached down from on high, took hold of me, drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes who were too strong for me,” and so forth. There’s an extended description of this rescue from the throes of death. The reason why the Lord rescued him is stated in verse 20: it was because the Lord delighted in him. You read in verse 20, “He brought me out into a spacious place; He rescued me because He delighted in me.” And the reason why the Lord delighted in him was because he did right. Or, “The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness” (verse 21 and 25) that I mentioned a minute ago. “The Lord has dealt with me according to my righteousness” (verse 21 in the NIV translation). Verse 25 – “The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight.” So, the reason the Lord delighted in him, was because he did right (verses 21 and 25), he was faithful (verse 26), he was pure (verse 27), humble (verse 28) rather than proud (verse 28) or wicked (NIV says, “crooked,” in verse 27).

In the context, it seems that David uses these categories, as a means of drawing a distinction between himself and Saul. The Lord rescued the humble (that is himself), but he humiliates the proud (that is Saul). It appears that the rescue in which David speaks here (verses 5 to 7, 17 to 20) is his rescue from the hand of Saul, who had attempted to kill him on numerous occasions. We go through numerous narratives in 2 Samuel where Saul attempts to take David’s life. I think it also seems clear that David is not claiming sinless perfection. Nor is he making prideful, self-righteousness pronouncements. Rather, he is simply, humbly saying that, unlike Saul, the general pattern of his life demonstrated that it was his heart’s desire to walk in the way of covenant faithfulness.

So why did the Lord forgive David for his sin but remove Saul from the throne for his? I think it was because, in spite of his failures, David's heart was right toward the Lord. And when he sinned, he repented unequivocally and sought the Lord's forgiveness. In contrast, when Saul sinned, instead of bowing before the Lord and Samuel the prophet in true humility and contrition, he sought ways to explain and justify his sinful behavior. I think it's useful to see how this significant section of David's psalm connects with what precedes in 1 and 2 Samuel. Set in this larger context, it seems clear that the author of the book has placed this song of David at this particular place in what is often called the Samuel conclusion (that's chapters 21–24) in order to call attention to the clear contrast that is to be found between Saul and David. It's from Saul that the Lord had rescued David from mortal danger. Saul had rejected the Lord, and for this reason the Lord had rejected him. In contrast to Saul, serious sins notwithstanding, David could still legitimately lay claim to remaining loyal to Yahweh. I think this is what David means by his statements about doing right in verses 21 and 25, and keeping the ways of the Lord in verse 22, etc. In a general sense, it is appropriate to say that David's life was characterized by faithfulness to the covenant. And this all-important fact set his reign and his manner of life apart from that of Saul in clearly discernable ways.

When David, for example, says that he is 'blameless' before God (verse 24), this is not to be understood as a claim of moral perfection, but rather as a claim of covenant faithfulness. When David says in verse 24b that he had kept himself from sin, John Calvin comments that, "The verb he uses does not denote one fall only, but a defection which utterly removes and alienates a man from God. David, it is true, sometimes fell into sin through the weakness of the flesh, but he never desisted from following after godliness, nor deserted the service from which God had called him."

Gert Kwakkel, in a volume titled *According to my Righteousness: Upright Behavior as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26 and 44* (and I might say that Psalm 18 is basically the same as II Samuel 22 - those are two different versions of the same psalm) - but Kwakkel calls attention to a statement by Moses in Deuteronomy

18:13 that the Israelites are “to be blameless before the Lord their God,” where the expression in the Hebrew text is the same as David’s claim in 2 Samuel 22:24 when he says he was blameless before the Lord his God. And Kwakkel points out that, in its context in Deuteronomy 18:13, that statement implies that one does not engage in divination, sorcery, witchcraft and the like, but, on the contrary, that one gives evidence of loyalty to Yahweh by listening to what he will reveal about the future through the word of his prophets. If you remember that passage in Deuteronomy 18, the question is, where will Israel get a word from the Lord when Moses is gone? And Moses says, “You don’t get it by going to these soothsayers or diviners. The Lord will raise up a prophet. He is the one to whom you are to listen and whom you are to obey.” So, when Moses says Israelites are to be blameless before the Lord, implying by that that they should not engage in divination, sorcery and witchcraft, but listen to the word of the prophet.

You find that that has relevance here to the contrast between David and Saul, because Saul did engage in witchcraft and he did not listen to the words of Samuel the prophet, while the Old Testament contains no record of David ever engaging in false worship and provides numerous examples of his responding obediently to the instructions and corrections of the prophets whom the Lord sent his way. Even if one might justifiably question whether the nuances of being blameless in 2 Samuel 22:24 are identical with those in Deuteronomy 18:13, given their different contexts, it seems it still would be legitimate to conclude as Kwakkel does that being blameless “was evidently related to the acceptance of Yahweh’s commandments as the decisive directive for his life.” That is what David, in essence, is claiming by that statement that he was blameless before the Lord. David could legitimately make that claim. Saul could not.

A secondary issue that surfaces in connection with David’s obedience as contrasted with Saul’s disobedience is that of whether or not David’s obedience merited divine favor in the same way that Saul’s disobedience merited God’s judgment. I think here it’s clear there is a difference. A distinction must be made. Although Saul’s disobedience certainly merited the judgment he received, David’s obedience was far from

perfect, and therefore incapable of meriting God's favor. But this conclusion does not mean that David's obedience was unimportant or of no significance in connection with his role in the fulfillment of God's redemptive purposes. In fact, it is striking that there are statements in 1 Kings that seem to suggest that David received the promise that is of this enduring dynasty precisely because of his obedience. 1 Kings 6:3, "You showed faithful love to your servant, my father David." Why? - "because he was honest and true and faithful to you." 1 Kings 15:4 and 5 - "But for David's sake, the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem to raise up a son after him and to establish Jerusalem." Why? "because David did what was right in the sight of the Lord and had not turned aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite."

A similar situation exists with the promise covenant that God made with Abraham where there are also texts that raise the question of the relationship between Abraham's obedience and the promulgation of the promises that the Lord had given to him. In Genesis 22:15 to 18, after Abraham had shown his willingness to obey the Lord in the taking of Isaac's life and the Lord intervened and provided a ram, the angel of the Lord comes to Abraham and says, "This is what the Lord says: because you have obeyed me and have not withheld your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky, the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies." And this important promise: "Through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed." Why? - "all because you have obeyed me." Genesis 26:4 and 5 - this promise is repeated to Isaac and there we read, "I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars in the sky. I will give them all these lands and through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed." I will do this why? - "because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees and instructions." And then you stop and you wonder. That promise to Abraham - "In your seed all the nations in the earth will be blessed..." - which Paul says is the gospel,

preached before unto Abraham, in Galatians - is that promise conditioned on the obedience of Abraham?

Although there's not enough time here for a thorough analysis of the implications of these statements, I think, all things considered, it seems clear that the bottom line is: God took Abraham's and David's obedience up into the promulgation of the promises that he gave to them. Not in the sense of an efficient cause or a meritorious reward - certainly not. But, in the sense of a divinely ordained means of the administration of promise. It was God who was at work in both Abraham and David to will and to do his good pleasure so that their obedience was the fruit of the grace of God operative in their lives. You read in Genesis 18:18 and 19 of Abraham. Abraham "will surely become a great and powerful nation and all nations on earth will be blessed through him." Why? "For I have chosen him," the Lord says, "so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just," so that, or with the result that, "the Lord will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him."

This is the same principle of Ephesians 2:8-10: "For by grace are you saved through faith, not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, so any man boasts. We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." So, the obedience of Abraham and David, while not meriting the reward of the promise, was nevertheless intricately bound up with the administration of the promise. And God's choice of Abraham and David as instruments of his redemptive purposes did not preclude their response of faith and obedience in the sense of obviating the importance of that response, but rather included it, as an inevitable accompaniment of the working of divine grace in their lives. I think this means, of course, that, ultimately, that David's favor with Yahweh rested in Yahweh's sovereign choice of David to be a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:22). On the level of David's place in the unfolding drama of redemptive history, we find that, while he embodied the ideal of the true covenantal king in a way that neither Saul nor any other

Israelite king after him ever did, his kingship was still a flawed kingship. At its best, it was proleptic of the kingship of the great future messianic role, who will establish a kingdom in which peace and justice are full and complete.

As David's failures were multiplied and expanded by those who followed him on the throne in Israel during the Old Testament period, the prophets began to point forward to the king who would come from the line of David who would be known as a 'righteous Branch' (Jeremiah 23:5). This king would be a person who would not only reign with wisdom and do what is just and right (Jeremiah 23:5), but he would be a person known by the remarkable title: "The Lord is Our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6). What Jeremiah here anticipated, but didn't fully explain, is that David's greater Son would do something that far surpassed what any human ruler could ever hope to accomplish. He would be a king who was not only sinless himself but, by making atonement for the sins of others, he would extend his righteousness to those over whom he ruled. His name would be called Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. He will sit on the throne of his father David; his kingdom will have no end. So, in general, it can be said that David sought to rule as God intended the occupant on the throne in Israel to rule. He strove to pattern his reign on the requirements on the Book of the Law; he served the Lord in his capacity as king with his whole heart. His reign is summarized in 2 Samuel 8:15 as a King who "did what was just and right for all his people." This verse characterizes the whole course of David's reign in a single sentence. In this generalized, yet significant, statement, the narrator characterizes David as a ruler who exhibited the qualities that the Lord desired of all His people (to do what is just and right), but, more particularly, as a person who possessed the qualities essential for someone with royal authority. To do what was just and right was to be obedient to the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant.

If you look in Ezekiel 18, verse 5 and verse 9, it reads, "Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right. He follows my decrees and faithfully keeps my laws. That man is righteous and he will surely live declares the sovereign

Lord.” In speaking of the great messianic king of the future, Isaiah says, ‘The Shoot that will come out of the stump of David’s family’ (Isaiah 1:11) “will judge the needy with righteousness and the poor with justice. Do what is just and right.” As we noted earlier, Jeremiah says, “The righteous Branch that will sit on the throne of David will be a king that does what is just and right. The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will rise up to David a righteous Branch, a king who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days, Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: the Lord our Righteousness.” He’s, in fact, doing what is just and right. The very qualities that characterize God’s own governance of all his creatures and there are many texts that speak to this. In Psalms 89:14 and 97:2, you have the statement that speaks of righteousness and justice as the foundations of the throne of God. So, in this brief but sweeping statement (2 Samuel 8:15) that David’s reign is characterized by his doing what is just and right, that is telling us that, in spite of the falls and failures associated with his life, his kingship nevertheless exhibited something of the character of God’s own reign. In contrast to Saul, David was a true, albeit, imperfect representative of the ideal of the covenantal king. Escalion Keyes has noted there are numerous references to David in 1 and 2 Kings that speak of his righteous behavior. He’s said to have done what was right in the eyes of the Lord in numerous texts, to have kept Yahweh’s statutes and commandments, to have been upright in heart, to have been righteous, to have been faithful, to have been wholly true to Yahweh, to have followed Yahweh with all his heart, to have walked in integrity of heart, to have walked in the ways of Yahweh - expressions of this sort that characterize the reign of David and set David up as the model which other kings in Israel were to follow.

So, here, then, in 1 and 2 Samuel, we find this story about the establishment of kingship in Israel. The establishment of kingship in Israel points forward to and provides the organizational apparatus for something greater that was to come: the Messiah, the king of all the earth. From this time forward, in both the Old and New Testaments,

kingship and messianic expectation become a central thing here in the unfolding of God's redemptive purposes. This all begins to take shape in 1 and 2 Samuel. Thank you.”

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