*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 19 - 24

David and the Ark

**Monday, July 19 2 Samuel 6:1-15**

*“Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem”*

David has captured Jerusalem, driven the Philistines back to their traditional borders, and unified the tribes of Israel with Jerusalem as their new capital city. The entrance of the Ark of the Covenant into the city is the culmination of a long and painful journey since the capture of the ark by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:12-22). Now, the ark is restored to a prominent role in the nation’s religious life, and its presence in Jerusalem represents a powerful sign of God’s support for David and his new capital city.

The unfortunate Uzzah illustrates the holiness of God present in the ark. To touch the ark is to impinge on God’s holiness, to draw too close and presume too much. The Israelites have not taken his power and holiness seriously enough, and now David is left with the question, “How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?” The ark does come into David’s life, but God’s power and holiness come with it. Such warnings are healthy, indeed needed, in order to protect God’s people from tendencies to trivialize God’s holiness.

*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 20 2 Samuel 6:16-23**

*“Michal’s contempt”*

It is possible, of course, to analyze Michal’s motives psychologically, as though she were reacting against her hard life since marrying David or dealing with the loss of her father, Saul, and brother, Jonathan. But the text does not invite us into such psychoanalytic speculation. Instead, it leaves subtle literary hints to consider. Note that Michal is identified in her first appearance as the “daughter of Saul” rather than the “wife of David.” In her objections and demeanor, she manifests her father’s disposition rather than her husband’s. While nation and king celebrate the joyous occasion, Michal sulks as though Saul would have done better. She has forgotten that Saul had neglected the ark (and God!).

Michal functions in this text as a remnant of the old Saulide line. Thus, the narrative makes its point: Saul’s house is to have no ongoing part in the kingship of Israel. Every offshoot of that branch has been torn off and abandoned. Saul, Jonathan, and Ish-Bosheth are dead; Mephibosheth is crippled; Michal is barren.

*I celebrate before you, Lord, for you have chosen me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 21 2 Samuel 7:1-17**

*“The Lord’s plan for His temple”*

David has been crowned king and transformed Jerusalem into a new capital city in which he intends to build a temple for God. Nathan the prophet supports the plan, but during the night God reverses the plan. God’s objection to David’s plan has historical reasons. God has not needed a physical home since the time of the Exodus until the day of David. Furthermore, God has not requested such a house.

Instead, God has an alternate plan. The plan is stated first generally and then specifically. The general statement emphasizes the special relationship God has with David, signaled at the outset by the term “my servant David.” God has done everything for David, and he promises to continue these blessings in the future. Specifically, God’s blessing will be to build a “house” for David, that is, an enduring dynasty. David will be succeeded by a son, that son will build the temple, and David’s line will be established forever. More sons will follow, so that David’s line will not end.

*You know the plans you have for me, Lord, plans for good. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 19 - 24

David and the Ark

**Thursday, July 22 2 Samuel 7:18-29**

*“David’s prayer”*

David humbly expresses a sense of overwhelming unworthiness, but he also prays that God will fulfill his promise. His prayer of grateful deference and bold demand has been described as “managing both to yield and to insist at the same time. It is this marvelous blend of yielding and insistence that marks David’s faith and Israel’s prayer at its best.” Perhaps here more than anywhere else we see the contrast between David and Saul. Put simply, David accepted the word of the Lord, whatever it may mean for him, whereas Saul always looked to negotiate.

In response to Nathan’s vision, David enters in and sits before the Lord, presumably inside the temporary tent housing the Ark of the Covenant. David’s opening question admits that his tribal family has no legitimate dynastic expectations. David moves from humility to adoration of God’s greatness. He rightly understands that this promise to establish a permanent Davidic dynasty is related to God’s great saving acts of old, his deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the conquest of the Promised Land.

*You chose Israel and you chose David, Lord, and you have chosen me. Amen.*

**Friday, July 23 2 Samuel 8:1-6**

*“The Lord gave David victory”*

After the important narrations of God’s promises to David and David’s responding prayer in chapter 7, this chapter again picks up the refrain of David’s military successes as a demonstration that those promises are in fact becoming a reality. The recurring phrase in prior parts of 1 and 2 Samuel, “God was with David,” has emphasized that God’s presence with David caused him to succeed where Saul failed and verified David’s legitimacy as the true anointed one. Now we have another recurring phrase, making the same point in a more specific manner: “The Lord gave David victory wherever he went.”

In verses 1-6, this recurring phrase refers to military victories. The Philistines have been Israel’s perennial enemy, and during Saul’s reign they began to dominate Israel and occupied much of the Israelite countryside. But the Philistines are unable to continue encroaching on Israelite territory once David is anointed king over a unified Israel. David is able to drive the Philistines from Judah’s heartland and confine them to their own lands.

*You are with me, Lord, and you give me victory. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 24 2 Samuel 8:7-18**

*“David solidifies the kingdom”*

The recurring phrase, “The Lord gave David victory wherever he went,” referred to military victory in verses 1-6. Here it relates to collecting the spoils of war. David’s response to God’s provision becomes the central theme in the story, in that David consistently dedicated the captured articles to God. Once again in contrast to Saul, we learn who may suitable serve as Israel’s king. When God blesses, the true anointed one gives thanks. Not only is Israel being established as a dominant power in the region, but she is becoming wealthy, as well.

The list of royal officials indicates a new governing institution for Israel. The organization of the state under these officials is considerably different from the tribal organization operative at the beginning of 1 Samuel under the leadership of the prophet Samuel. The previous social structure based on kinship has given way to a structure based more on skill and ability. Functional roles (generals, recorders, priests, secretaries, and advisers) have replaced the elders of Israel and Judah as the governing structure.

*All I have is from you, Lord, and I dedicate it to your service. Amen.*