



# The Story Of Salvation

NCTM Tuesday Night Studies 2010

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## **13. David and His Sons**

[This study covers a huge section of Scripture. David is introduced in **1Samuel 16**, his life under Saul is traced in the following chapters, and then he becomes king on Saul's death in **2Samuel**. He dies at the end of that book, and then **1 and 2 Kings** traces the life of Israel under David's descendents, including the dividing of the nation into two after Solomon. **1 and 2 Chronicles** then gives another look at the period, from a wisdom perspective rather than a prophetic perspective.]

### **1. David Under Saul**

The choosing of David to be the king in Saul's stead was God's work (1Sam. 16:1, cf. Deut. 17:15). As has been seen time and again through this unfolding story of salvation, God's choice was contrary to human choice: "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart (1Sam. 16:7)." David was the youngest and least likely of Jesse's sons to be suited to be king, but he was chosen. In 1Sam. 13:14 Saul was told that the LORD would seek a "man after his own heart." This phrase does not point to some character of David, but rather to the LORD's own elective choosing.

Another aspect of God's choosing is seen in the unfolding story. The LORD protected and kept David for this purpose. Through his lifetime he was delivered from a bear, a lion, (1Sam. 17:34-36) the Philistines' giant, Goliath (1Sam. 17:45ff), Saul himself (1Sam. 18:10-11; 19:11ff; 23:7ff; etc), and even his own son Absalom later (2Sam. 15ff). Again and again, we see the story of salvation is brought to the brink of utter disaster. It is only God's personal intervention that preserves the outworking plan.

This certain choosing by God was the key to David's refusal to seek to grasp the promised kingdom himself. Time and again through the years of Saul's dwindling kingship, David had the opportunity to kill Saul and take the kingship, but he consistently refused to do so. When the kingship became his, it was clearly the hand of God that had brought it to be. Listen to his song on his deathbed as he recounted the faithfulness of God to him through his life:

The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my saviour—from violent men you save me. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.

The waves of death swirled about me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called to the LORD; I called out to my God. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came to his ears.

The earth trembled and quaked, the foundations of the heavens shook; they trembled because he was angry. Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his canopy around him—the dark rain clouds of the sky. Out of the brightness of his presence bolts of lightning blazed forth. The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded. He shot arrows and scattered the enemies, bolts of lightning and routed them. The valleys of the

sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of breath from his nostrils.

He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me. (2 Samuel 22:2-20)

## **2. David's Reign**

David fulfilled what had begun centuries prior under the leadership of Joshua, when Israel arrived in the Promised Land. He subdued all Israel's enemies and even went beyond Israel's borders to defeat other nations. David knew that the establishment and exaltation of the kingdom was by the LORD "for the sake of his people Israel (2Sam. 5:12)."

One of the most significant developments under David's rule was the conquering of Jerusalem, the very first of his military victories after his coronation (2Sam. 5:6-10). This city was to become the place of God's dwelling in the temple. Jerusalem became known as Zion (the pre-Israelite name of the hill on which the Jebusite fortress was located), the city of God. During David's time it was the capital city of Israel, the home of the throne.

Not long after Jerusalem was captured, the ark was brought up there, but resided outside the city for a time (2Sam 6:1-11), being brought into the city centre only later, where it was placed in a tent that David had pitched for it (2Sam. 6:12ff). The matter of the dwelling place for the Name of God would occupy David's thoughts, as he was struck by the incongruence of his dwelling in a palace while the Ark of God was in a tent. However, God made clear to him that in fact He will build David's house (2Sam. 7:11-16):

The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you. "When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever."

In that promise, there are lines drawing out to the future Messiah, and to the establishment of the eternal kingdom. Certainly, neither Solomon nor any of the kings that follow from him fulfilled the dynamic promises made by the LORD here. David stands throughout the Bible as an anticipation of the Messiah, by whom God's intentions for His creation will be brought to fulfilment. See Psalm 2, 45, 72, 110; Isaiah 11:1-9; 9:7; Zechariah 3:8-10; 6:12-13. The New Testament picks up the abundance of Old Testament references to David's great descendent and applies them to Jesus who is called the Christ, the Messiah.

Following David's sin with Bathsheba (2Sam. 11), he received discipline from the LORD, in particular through his sons' sinfulness, particularly the rebellion of Absalom. What is striking through these accounts is the humble way in which David received the discipline. What is also striking again is that the story of salvation is again brought to the brink. The reader wonders how this kingdom will ever be able to last a generation, let alone be an eternal kingdom.

### 3. The Post-Davidic Monarchy

The LORD, in calling Abraham had the nations in view in establishing Israel as a nation. In his final song, David had sung:

You have delivered me from the attacks of my people; you have preserved me as head of the nations. People I did not know are subject to me, and foreigners come cringing to me; as soon as they hear me, they obey me. They all lose heart; they come trembling from their strongholds. (2Sam. 22:44-46)

Through the reign of Solomon it seems that the Abrahamic covenantal promise, that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through his descendents, took greater and greater effect. Firstly, Hiram, king of Tyre (in modern day Lebanon) supported the building of the Temple and blessing flows to him and his people through this (1Kings 5); later the Queen of Sheba (perhaps modern day Yemen, or less likely Eritrea or Ethiopia) visited (1Kings 10:1-13) and was overwhelmed not only by the success of the kingdom, but also by the wisdom of Solomon, a wisdom grounded in the covenant law of God.

The highlight of the reign of Solomon was the building of the Temple: the writer of the books of Kings devotes four whole chapters to this (1Kings 5-8). His prayer at the dedication of the Temple is prophetic: he prayed for God's people under various judgments, and saw the Temple as the promise of ongoing grace and mercy from the LORD (1Kings 8:35, 37, 46).

However, by the end of the books of Kings, Israel was in a vastly different situation to their heyday under Solomon. Instead of the nations being blessed through their blessing of Israel, Israel was cursed by the triumph of the nations over them, and with Israel far the Promised Land, in exile in Babylon, their kingly line at a seeming end, and the Temple and the city burned to the ground. It looks like utter disaster; not only does it look like God's salvation story has come to the brink, but plummeted over the edge. And it is God Himself is the One who pushed it over!

A long and tragic story led to this point. Firstly, Solomon himself had failed at the end in faithfulness to the law of the king in Deuteronomy. He had acquired many wives and concubines (in political alliance making—1Kings 11:1-13), many horses (as military strength—1Kings 4:26-28), and much gold (financial might—1Kings 9:14, 10:10, 14-15). In particular his wives and concubines led him astray to the worship of other gods (1Kings 11:4-8). This became the cause of the LORD's judgment of his dynastic line: the kingdom would be divided.

The nation was then divided under the rule of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, through Rehoboam's foolishness. The northern kingdom had been invaded and destroyed by the Assyrians. All this was due to the entirely to false grounds on which it had been founded: there was an immediate rejection of the Temple worship, and the adoption of a "Jewish Baalism" in its place, along with the cutting of ties with David's kingly line. From the very beginning the prophetic word of God stood against this development, even though the prophetic word of God had also demonstrated that the LORD was working His purposes through it (1Kings 13:1-6; cf. 1Kings 12:21-24). 2Kings 17:7-23 spells out the case against the Northern Kingdom:

All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshipped other gods and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced. The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city they built themselves high places in all their towns. They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the LORD had driven

out before them had done. They did wicked things that provoked the LORD to anger. They worshipped idols, though the LORD had said, "You shall not do this." The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets."

But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their fathers, who did not trust in the LORD their God. They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the LORD had ordered them, "Do not do as they do," and they did the things the LORD had forbidden them to do. They forsook all the commands of the LORD their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshipped Baal. They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practised divination and sorcery and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left, and even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God. They followed the practices Israel had introduced. Therefore the LORD rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence. When he tore Israel away from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat their king. Jeroboam enticed Israel away from following the LORD and caused them to commit a great sin. The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them until the LORD removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there.

The southern kingdom, which had preserved the Temple worship and the Davidic kingship, continued for some time, but it too strayed from faithfulness to the LORD, along with its kings, into idolatry and false worship, along with the break down of true life in the covenant, a consistent co-factor in false worship. Through out the decline of both the north and the south, God sent His prophets to warn His people and to call them to repentance. (We'll see more of the prophetic ministry in the next two studies.) However finally the continued rejection of the word of the LORD meant finally the LORD's rejecting of His people, even given those kings along the way who did act, in varying degrees of faithfulness, according to the covenant (Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah). The Chronicler puts it this way in 2Chron. 36:15-21:

The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling-place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfilment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

But note the slight word of hope at the end here: there was a set period allotted to this judgment, during which the land could rest, a period prophesied by Jeremiah. Whilst it looks like Israel had gone over the brink to utter destruction, from the ashes God's renewing and reviving work would lead the nation on in His determination to bring salvation to the ends of the earth. And all the lines of promise, including that of David's family line, would be gathered into that purpose: not one promise would be cast to the ground.