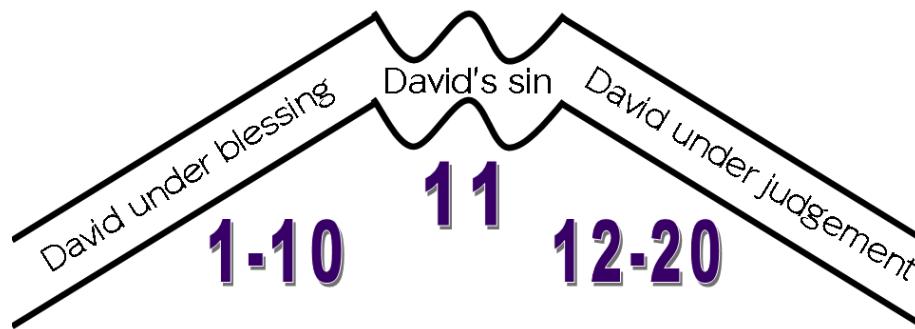


UNIT SIX

2 SAMUEL

THE SHAPE OF 2 SAMUEL AS A WHOLE

- Like the books of Joshua and Judges, 2 Samuel begins with the words “After the death of.....” – a new period in Israel’s history is beginning.
- The account of Saul’s death is repeated, emphasising its significance – the transition from judgeship to kingship is over, this is the beginning of the monarchy proper.
- Up to now the story of David has been part of the account of Saul’s decline – now for the first time the focus is exclusively on David.
- There are two distinct phases to the book:



- David’s sin with Bathsheba is the turning point in his fortunes.
- Chapters 21-24 are separate from the chronological account.

SURVEY OF CHAPTERS 1-10

- David’s kingship was inaugurated at Hebron, in Judah.
- There are two reasons why the leaders of Judah would have been quick to recognise David – he was a Judahite himself, and Judah had benefitted from his raids against the Amalekites.
- David had sent gifts to Judah, preparing the way for his acceptance there, and did the same for the northern tribes having been accepted in Hebron.
- There is divine involvement in David’s rise, but also skilful diplomacy and manipulation of circumstances.
- In the north, diplomacy alone is not enough - Abner (Saul’s military commander) installs Saul’s son Ishbosheth as king.
- Civil war ensues, and after two years the north finally collapses – representatives of all twelve tribes meet at Hebron and accept David as king.
- David still rules from Judahite territory – the northern tribes have suffered considerable loss of face.
- The capture of Jerusalem gives David the chance to reduce north-south tensions by moving his capital to neutral territory.
- The Philistines try to prevent Israel from being unified but are defeated by David – they are not incorporated into Israel, but Israel comes to dominate.

- David makes Jerusalem the political centre by moving his personal residence there, and also the religious centre by bringing the Ark of the Covenant there.
- The period of transition is over, and the full return of the Ark is accompanied by the full return of divine blessing, preparing the way for the Davidic covenant.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT (Chapter 7)

- **EXPOSITION**

- Kingship has arrived in Israel, and with David it has been established wholly by divine initiative.
- The LORD has given David rest from all his enemies – rest in the land has been Israel’s goal since leaving Egypt.
- Abrahamic promises have been fulfilled, Israel is in the land and has become a great nation, but the Lord says to David “Now I *will* make your name great” – there is still more to come.
- In verse 2 a counter figure enters the scene – a prophet, Nathan, whose relationship with the king will be crucial to the future of Israel.
- David sees this and seeks Nathan’s help in resolving a problem.
- The king in his house represents the new order, and the Ark in the tent represents the old – the problem is how the old and new will fit together, is a more definitive settlement called for?
- David is proposing to build a temple in Jerusalem – this is fraught with danger.
- The plan may have been motivated by genuine piety but still represented a move towards the general Ancient Near Eastern pattern where religion was subordinate to politics.
- Nathan responds like a typical Ancient Near Eastern prophet, rubber stamping his decisions in a way common to state religion.
- There is now a clear danger of the old Mosaic religion being replaced by a temple based, centralised state religion.
- Yahweh intervenes and Nathan is sent back to David with a different message – it is Yahweh’s prerogative, not David’s, to decide if and when a temple will be built.
- Yahweh has a different ‘house’ in mind – he will build a dynasty for David that will last for ever, and the house David had in mind can wait.
- He can exist alongside the tent containing the Ark, to remind him of the theology to which new things must conform.

- **THE PROMISES MADE TO DAVID**

- God makes promises to David in 2 Samuel 7 that will have a profound impact on Israel’s history and religion:
 - God promises to establish David’s dynasty for ever – kingship has a guaranteed place.
 - Yahweh will be a father to David’s descendants and they will be his sons – he will discipline them if necessary but never utterly reject them.
 - The promises to David have implications for Israel as a whole – God’s choice of David is a re-affirmation of his choice of Israel, and his blessings will flow to the nation through the king.

- **CONNECTIONS WITH EARLIER COVENANTS**

- As noted, there is a clear connection with the Abrahamic covenant in verse 9.

- This recalls a key element of the promise in Genesis 12:2 – it was always understood that God’s promises would involve kingship at some point (Genesis 17:6).
- The Davidic covenant spells out more clearly how these promises will be fulfilled.
- **THE DAVIDIC COVENANT AND MESSIANIC EXPECTATIONS**
 - Both Saul and David were anointed as a sign that God had chosen them – this practice was continued through the whole period of the monarchy.
 - The expression ‘the LORD’s anointed’ or ‘the LORD’s messiah’ came to be used to refer to the Davidic king as God’s chosen ruler.
 - In practice, the Davidic dynasty turned out to be something of a disappointment – kings failed to live up to expectations and Israel slid towards the exile.
 - The hope was that one day Israel would have a perfect king, the Messiah – the messianic hope arose from the Davidic covenant, and was fulfilled by Jesus.

SURVEY OF CHAPTERS 11-20

- David’s sin with Bathsheba is the seed from which the troubles of the later part of his reign spring.
- There is conflict with Nathan, but Nathan does not reject David as Samuel rejected Saul, nor does David seek to justify his actions as Saul had.
- David’s sins deserve death – he should be subject to discipline, forgiveness does not remove the need for discipline.
- David is told clearly that Yahweh will raise up evil against him from within his own house – the subsequent chapters show the outworking of this judgement.
- David’s sins are followed by Amnon’s rape of Tamar and Absalom’s murder of Amnon – the situation deteriorates so much because of David’s slowness to act.
- David is also slow to repair his relationship with Absalom after the murder – Absalom revolted against him, and David went into temporary exile.
- The war that results leads to Absalom’s death – David’s strong attachments to his family leads him into many misjudgements.
- At this time the role of wise men and women advising kings becomes more important.
- During this period, potential heirs to the throne are gradually eliminated and eventually Solomon emerges as David’s successor.
- This process is not completed until 1 Kings 2, but begins much earlier.
- David brings Mephibosheth, the sole survivor of the house of Saul, to the court – this may well have been a genuine act of kindness but removes any claim there may have been to the throne.
- From 2 Samuel 9 to 1 Kings 2 the issue of succession becomes a key element of the narrative.

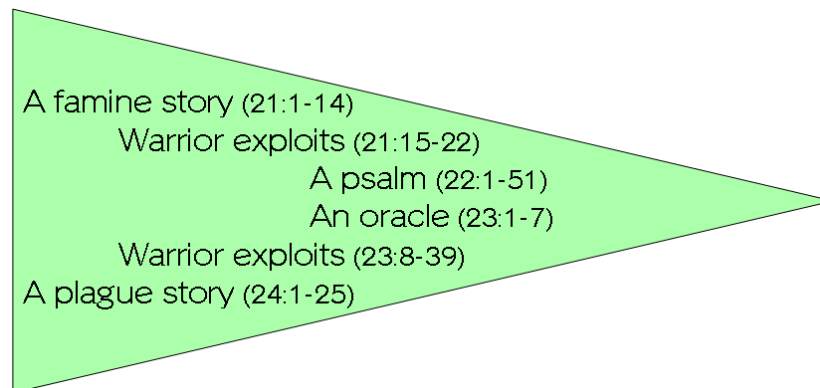
FEATURES OF THE SUCCESSION NARRATIVE (2 SAMUEL 9 - 1 KINGS 2)

- **THE SUCCESSION NARRATIVE IS ANTI-HEROIC**
 - The narrative does not glorify David and therefore can not be viewed as an apology for Davidic kingship.

- Although David has many good qualities, he also displays weakness at crucial times.
- His lust, adultery and treachery are reflected in the behaviour of his sons, and his attachment to them jeopardises the welfare of the kingdom.
- In this second phase of his reign David shows weak leadership and survives only because of the strong support of subordinates.
- **THE SUCCESSION NARRATIVE IS ANTI-CHARISMATIC**
 - We are told of David's anointing in 1 Samuel 16, which marks him out as Saul's successor – surprisingly, this is the last mention of the Spirit in David's career.
 - The work of the Spirit must be assumed, it is not as overt as it was in earlier times.
 - In the succession narrative the activity of God is seen more in the providential ordering of events than in special manifestations of the Spirit.
 - In matters of supreme importance, David's style of leadership is the opposite of the charismatic style of the judges.
- **THE WAY SUCCESSION IS VIEWED**
 - The narrative accepts the principle of hereditary rule but also shows that this does not exclude divine intervention in determining who succeeds.
 - Nathan plays a crucial role in this process:
 - he endorses dynastic rule.
 - he nominates Solomon as the one chosen by the LORD.
 - he intervenes to thwart Adonijah and bring Solomon to the throne.
 - Prophetic control of kingship is tied to the principle of dynastic rule – it is ultimately God who determines the succession.

THE ENDING OF 2 SAMUEL (CHAPTERS 21-24)

- As noted earlier, this material forms something of an appendix rather than fitting the chronological narrative, and seems to form an inverted pattern:



- This appendix focuses our attention again on the reign of David itself, and recapitulates the themes of David under blessing and David under judgement.
- It concludes with the purchase and dedication of the site for the temple, and anticipates the central role the building of the temple will play in Solomon's reign.