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The Reign of David

I Chronicles 1—10 in Brief

The first nine chapters of I Chronicles are comprised of genealogies, beginning with Adam and ending with the family of Saul. These long lists of descendants established the royal line and made clear who was qualified to serve in the temple.

First Chronicles 10 briefly describes the suicide of Saul and emphasizes his lack of faithfulness. Because of Saul's disobedience, God handed the leadership of the kingdom of Israel over to David.

a David's Appointment as King (I Chronicles 11:1-3)

When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, he made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel, as the LORD had promised through Samuel. —I Chronicles 11:3

After the death of Saul, Saul's son Ish-Bosheth [ish—BOH-sheth]

I Chronicles 1:1—22:1

became king over Israel, but reigned for only two years. During this time, Judah recognized David as king. After Ish-Bosheth was murdered, leaders from every tribe of Israel met with David at Hebron (vs. 1).

The representatives mentioned three reasons why they wanted to make David their king. First, they acknowledged that he was an Israelite, just as they were (see II Sam. 5:1). According to the law of Moses, Israel's king had to be an Israelite (see Deut. 17:14, 15).

Second, the leaders noted that during the reign of Saul, David led the nation in battle against its enemies (I Chron. 11:2a; see I Sam. 18:5, 13; II Sam. 5:2a). David had a proven track record as a military leader, and thus would make an excellent commander-in-chief.

Third, the leaders acknowledged that the Lord had chosen David to shepherd His people (I Chron. 11:2b; see I Sam. 13:13, 14). There was no point any longer in trying to oppose God's will.

After all the elders from every tribe of Israel had arrived at Hebron, David made a compact, or covenant, with them. This was a binding agreement in which each party

The modern-day city of Hebron. Today Hebron is known for its handmade glass and pottery.



HEBRON

The First City of David

Hebron was the city where all of Israel acknowledged that David was king. After the death of Saul, David made Hebron his headquarters while he ruled over Judah. Hebron is located about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem and 15 miles west of the Dead Sea. It is one of the oldest cities in the world and has one of the longest records of continuous occupation. During David's time, Hebron was at the juncture of several trade routes and was easily defensible.

pledged before the Lord to fulfill its obligations to the other. Both the king and the people acknowledged the sovereign hand of God in the matter. The leaders then anointed David to show that he was now the king of Israel (I Chron. 11:3; see II Sam. 5:3).

Just as the people of Israel acknowledged David's leadership, it is very important that Christians acknowledge the spiritual authority of those God has placed in leadership above them.

Ask Yourself . . . *What could I do to encourage my pastor (or some other leader) this week?*

b David Conquers Jerusalem (I Chronicles 11:4-9)

David captured the fortress of Zion, which is the City of David.

—I Chronicles 11:5

Not long after being anointed king over Israel and Judah, David led his army in an attack of Jerusalem, which was occupied by the Jebusites (vs. 4). These were people of Canaan who were so tenacious that God's people had not been able to remove them from Jerusalem up to this point (see Josh. 15:63; Judg. 1:8, 21).

The Jebusites were confident that

David's warriors would fail to seize their city. Their excellent fortifications and their history of successful defense made them apparently invincible. Despite the assertions of the Jebusites, David's men succeeded in capturing the fortress of Zion (II Chron. 11:5).

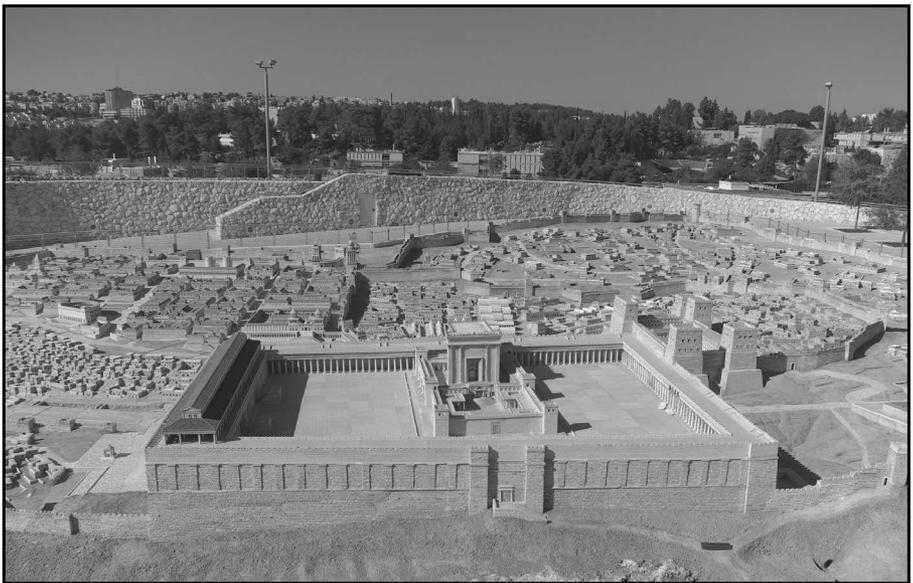
Sometimes we, too, face apparently immovable obstacles that only God can remove for us. After we've prayed to Him first and asked for direction, we may have to wait upon the Lord to act.

Ask Yourself . . . *What does God need to accomplish for me this week that I simply cannot accomplish in my own strength?*

David said that whoever spearheaded the attack against the

Jebusites would become his military commander (vs. 6). The king made Joab his commander-in-chief because he was the first to attack. During the campaign, David declared that his men would have to go up through the water shaft to enter Jerusalem and defeat the Jebusites (see II Sam. 5:7, 8a). Some think this was a secretly constructed tunnel that started at the Gihon [GUY-hon] spring east of Jerusalem, went under the city wall, and led into the citadel (see II Chron. 32:30).

David's decision to make Jerusalem his royal residence was wise for several reasons (I Chron. 11:7). The city was located on the border between Judah and Benjamin, making it a politically neutral site for the capital of Israel. The inhabitants of



Model of the City of David (Jerusalem)

Jerusalem could easily defend the city because it was relatively small in size (not quite 11 acres). The capital was well protected because it rested on a high tableland surrounded by deep valleys. Finally, Jerusalem was roughly situated in the center of Canaan, making it equally accessible to the northern and southern tribes. For these reasons, Jerusalem was the ideal location for Israel's capital.

Immediately after capturing Jerusalem, David took measures to strengthen the fortifications of the city. He filled in the supporting terraces (or the Millo) north of the capital with loads of earth and rocks. He did this to raise the level of the area and to create more room for construction. The king then worked inward as he rebuilt Jerusalem (see II Sam. 5:9). Joab meanwhile supervised the repairs to the rest of the city (I Chron. 11:8).

David enjoyed success and prosperity in the early years of his reign. The Lord enabled Israel's king to become a strong ruler (vs. 9).

David did not rest on his laurels once he captured this strategic city. He strengthened and fortified what he had gained so that it would serve him well in the future. In the same way, we should take the truths we learn from God and strengthen and fortify them by personal application so that when they are needed they will serve us well.

Ask Yourself . . . *What godly truth could I personally apply and strengthen in my life this week?*

I Chronicles 11:10—16:43 in Brief

The rest of I Chronicles 11 and 12 lists the mighty men and warriors who aligned themselves with David after he was appointed king. These men served David faithfully throughout his entire reign.

David brought the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem to unite the religious and political life of the nation. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, set the ark on a new cart and guided it. When the oxen pulling the cart stumbled, Uzzah used his hand to steady the ark.

God struck him dead at the site because he showed disrespect for a holy object of the Lord. David placed the ark in the house of Obed-Edom for three months (chap. 13).

The king then brought the ark to Jerusalem. David showed special homage by sacrificing a burnt offering. David celebrated by dancing passionately before the Lord. David's wife Michal privately criticized him for his unrestrained expression of joy. In spite of his wife's contempt, David continued to celebrate and offered up a prayer of thanks (chaps. 15—16).

David's encounter with the Philistines most likely occurred after he was anointed king over Israel but before he conquered Jerusalem. David's rout of the Philistines was far more decisive than Jonathan's and increased David's reputation as a powerful king and warrior throughout the land (chap. 14).

Nathan

the Prophet

Nathan, whose name means “[God] has given,” proved to be a necessary and helpful gift from God to David. Nathan served as prophet to two of Israel’s kings, David and Solomon. Throughout his career Nathan displayed wisdom in his counsel and bravery in his confrontation of injustice.

God used Nathan on a number of occasions to reveal His will to David. When the king proposed to build a temple, Nathan declared that David’s successor would have the honor of constructing the house of worship (II Sam. 7:7-17; I Chron. 17:1-15). The Lord later sent Nathan to rebuke David for his multiple sins of coveting, theft, adultery, and murder in his affair with Bathsheba (II Sam. 12:1-15; Ps. 51). When Solomon was born, God sent word through Nathan to name the child Jedidiah (II Sam. 12:25).

Nathan was involved in advising David on how to arrange the musical service for the sanctuary (II Chron. 29:25). When Adonijah tried to claim the throne of David, Nathan undermined his efforts (I Kings 1:11-27). The prophet was part of the delegation that proclaimed Solomon king (vss. 28-45). Nathan later wrote a history in which he described the reigns of David and Solomon (I Chron. 29:29, 30; II Chron. 9:29).

C David’s Desire to Build the Temple (I Chronicles 17:1-15)

“Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD says: You are not the one to build me a house to dwell in.’ ” —I Chronicles 17:4

David told Nathan, a prophet and adviser in his royal court, that a stark contrast existed between the king’s magnificent palace and the simple tent that housed the ark (vs. 1). David evidently viewed his palace as a symbol of his established rule. He thus proposed that the rule of God over His kingdom be likewise symbolized by a permanent building. David’s priorities were evident in every aspect of his life.

David consulted with Nathan about his plans because he wanted to know God’s will in the matter. The king’s desire seemed reasonable to Nathan, and so he declared that God was with David in his plan to build a house of worship (vs. 2). The prophet’s immediate approval, however, did not represent the will of God.

That night God revealed His will to Nathan (vs. 3). God commended David for his desire to build a temple (see I Kings 8:18). Nevertheless, it was not the Lord’s will for David to fulfill that desire. Instead, the Lord wanted him to spend his time expanding and consolidating the kingdom.

Nathan did the difficult thing and backed off from his initial assessment of David's request. We all need friends like this who will give us advice that might be difficult for us to swallow—advice that might disappoint us at first but better represents the will of God than the direction we are going.

Ask Yourself . . . *Who could I trust to give me difficult advice when I need it?*

God stated that ever since the time He brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He did not have an earthly temple to display His manifest presence. His people had moved the ark, which symbolized His presence, from one location to another. The Lord had never complained about the lack of a cedar temple to dwell in (I Chron. 17:4-6; see II Sam. 7:6, 7). God had been satisfied with the tabernacle arrangement, and was still satisfied with it.

The all-powerful Lord reminded His servant David of His earlier blessings to him. David had been a humble shepherd who tended sheep when God chose him to be the ruler of His people. Wherever David went, God was present to lead him and enable him to defeat his enemies such as Saul, Ish-Bosheth, and the Philistines (I Chron. 17:7, 8).

God promised to do three things for David during his lifetime. First, the Lord pledged to make his name as great as the names of the most famous people in the world. Second, God promised to give the Israelites a land of their own where they could live in peace. Third, the Lord

pledged to give David rest from all his enemies (vss. 9, 10a). This means God would enable David to triumph over antagonistic nations that threatened Israel. By the end of David's reign, Israel enjoyed peace from all its foes (see 22:18).

God promised to do four things for David after his death (17:10b-14). First, the Lord pledged to establish his house. Although God would not let David build a physical house, or temple, for Him, He would build a lasting house, or royal dynasty, for David.

Second, God promised to establish the throne and kingdom of David forever. The Lord would choose one of David's sons to be king when David reached the end of his life and was buried.

Third, God would allow David's son to build a temple where the Israelites could worship. David did not have to worry about whether his kingdom would endure after his death; the sovereign Lord would make the royal throne of his son secure for all time.

Fourth, God pledged to establish an intimate Father-son relationship with David's descendants. When a Davidic king did wrong, the Lord would punish him just as parents discipline their rebellious children. God's punishment of David's successors would culminate in the loss of land and temple (see I Kings 9:6-9). Yet the Lord would never withdraw His love.

Nathan faithfully told David all that the Lord had revealed to him in his vision (I Chron. 17:15).

d David's Prayer of Thanks (I Chronicles 17:16-27)

For the sake of your servant and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made known all these great promises.

—I Chronicles 17:19b

David responded to Nathan's message with a prayer of thanksgiving. The statement in verse 16a that David "went in and sat before the LORD" perhaps means he entered the tabernacle and sat back on his heels in a kneeling position in front of the ark, the symbol of God's presence. Even in the face of initial disappointment, David's first reaction was to worship and to acknowledge God's sovereignty.

David acknowledged that neither he nor his family deserved the blessings the Lord had already bestowed on them. Yet God had promised to do even more for them in the future (vss. 16b, 17).

Why had God made a special covenant with David and his descendants? The Lord honored His servant beyond measure to fulfill promises He had made earlier to the Israelites. God also blessed David in accordance with His eternal plan and purpose for Israel and all humankind. God bestowed His favor on David for his benefit. As God's will was fulfilled in the life of David, His purpose for the nation would be achieved (vss. 18, 19).

God was working for the greater good, even though David's initial plans were set aside by God. In the same way, God also works through our disappointments for the greater good of His kingdom.

Ask Yourself . . . When was the last time that one of my unfulfilled dreams worked out for the greater good?

David acknowledged the supreme greatness of the Lord. No one else was like Him, and He alone was God. Out of all the nations of the earth, the all-powerful Lord had chosen to rescue Israel from slavery in Egypt so they could be His own treasured possession (see Deut. 7:6). No other nation could claim to be God's special possession. God did not do this because Israel was greater than other nations. The Lord chose the Israelites because He loved them and wanted to remain faithful to the promises He had made to their ancestors (I Chron. 17:20-22).

David asked the Lord to remain faithful to the promise He had made concerning the king, a promise that also affected the entire nation (vss. 23, 24). David remained humble as he prayed to the Lord, referring to himself as God's servant. This language of humility should not be mistaken for doubt. David did not question that his house would be blessed forever.

The king's humility is further seen in his desire that God be glorified. As the Lord fulfilled His promises, He would exalt His name, or reputation, forever. People would exclaim

that the all-powerful God ruled Israel. The Lord would be further honored as He firmly established the Davidic dynasty in His sight.

David displayed unusual courage as he laid claim to God's promise. The Lord had pledged to establish David's descendants as rulers over Israel, and this gave the king the confidence to pray boldly. As before, David referred to himself as God's servant (vss. 25, 26).

David acknowledged that the Lord was the great King and the only true God. Unlike the powerless and lifeless idols worshiped by the Canaanites, Israel's God was honest and true to His word. All the blessings He promised to David, his descendants, and Israel He would surely bestow at the appropriate time.

In light of God's covenant, David asked the Lord to continually bless his descendants by permitting them to always remain in power over Israel. God's trustworthy, unchanging promise remained the basis for the king's request. David was certain that just as the Lord had pledged, He would bestow His favor on the Davidic dynasty forever (vs. 27).

I Chronicles 18:1—22:1 in Brief

The promises God made to David were first realized through the military and administrative successes of his rule. David's bureaucracy included military personnel, priests, and civil advisers (chaps. 18—20).

David attempted to take a sinful census of all those who were able to bear arms in Israel. Because of God's anger toward Israel, He allowed Satan to incite David to take an action that would bring punishment upon the nation.

David admitted his sin, but still had to suffer the consequences. The king had three difficult options. He could opt for three years of famine to ravage the land, three months of fleeing from his enemies, or three days of plague.

After careful thought, David chose the plague, for he reasoned that God would show more mercy than his enemies would. Seventy thousand people died. David bought the threshing floor where the plague stopped, which eventually became the spot where the temple was built by Solomon (21:1—22:1).