

Lessons from Israel 9

The failure of Israel 1

When considering the history of Israel and therefore reviewing the stories of those that played a prominent role in its history, King David would be impossible to overlook.

His significance is reinforced when we read passages like Luke 1:30-33 in the New Testament:

30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

The Messiah, Jesus, the descendant of David in the flesh, would fulfill the promise given to David and then reiterated to Solomon in 1 Kings 9:5:

5. Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.

(Or you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.)

So Jesus, would be the rightful King from the lineage of David - the One who's kingdom would have no end.

References to David in regard to the coming and life and position of the Messiah don't end there, because we see in the next chapter, Luke 2:11:

11. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Jesus is born in the same city where David and his father Jesse are born, Bethlehem.

Both also die in Jerusalem, which is also often called the city of David.

Their lives have more parallels than we will be able to discuss today. It is probably sufficient to say, this king, both in the Old and New Testaments plays a major role.

Acts 13:22 reminds us what God said about David:

22. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

Which is why it seems unfortunate to bring you to the most shameful period of David's life as part of our Lessons from Israel series.

But there would be fewer more vivid illustrations of failure - and today we are talking about The failure of Israel. So we must make our way to 2 Samuel 11.

We know this story even before we begin its reading. It is a shocking story, in many ways, but one that we simultaneously understand.

It is a story of sin that spirals out of control. It takes David farther than he wants to go and costs him more than he wants to pay. It is a lesson for Israel, it is a lesson for all of us.

It is not meant to be gawked at, but to be observed carefully - as a lesson.

Let's begin reading in 2 Samuel 11:1:

1. And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

We are already perplexed - and suspicious - that there is something amiss, in that David tarries behind when there is fighting to be done. We get the sense instinctively that something is wrong.

2. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

More questions arise in our minds after examining this passage. We wonder if David might have known that this was the time of day where this bathing was likely to have occurred. Or why he was simply up and wandering. Or why he stayed to continue looking.

Whatever the answers may be, we know that he did - and that it was wrong.

But stopping here, we realize an end could be brought to this behavior. Meaning, this wrong could either deepen or be abandoned.

3. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

Now, after her name is known (presuming he didn't know before), and the identity of her husband is revealed, there is also room and time for reconsideration.

4. And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

Now David goes beyond temptation, beyond lust, and calls for Bathsheba.

5. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

The reality of it all was no doubt coming into focus for David. And you wonder at this moment whether or not he will realize the seriousness of it and turn around or continue his slide. That question is answered in verse 6.

6. And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

He has not recalled Uriah to break the news. He has other plans in mind.

7. And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.

8. And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king.

9. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.

I wonder how this conversation went? I wonder how much conviction there would have been in the heart of David, if any, at this point?

The plan certainly doesn't go as David would have hoped.

10. And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house?

David is going to find this was the wrong question.

11. And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.

The integrity of the king's servant comes into sharp focus now. This must have been a rebuke to David. The contrast with his own behavior is obvious.

He is honorable, he does his duty, he considers his brothers in arms, he will not take advantage of his situation.

Consider what we have already seen about David: he has neglected his duty, acting in a dishonorable way, not considering his own servants, taking full advantage of his own situation!

12. And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow.

13. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

David goes a step further, seemingly desperate to cover his tracks. But Uriah simply will not cooperate.

14. And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

15. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

The depth of David's sinfulness. The injustice of it continues to alarm us.

It is at this point that we should remind ourselves that sin, hidden, always takes us in this direction. A commitment to covering sin is a downward spiral and we don't know where it will lead.

And David has now entangled Joab in his plot.

16. And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were.

17. And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

As desperately as he tried, perhaps thinking at this moment his bacon was saved, things would not get better for David.

18. Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;

Let's skip down to verse 25:

25. Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him.

26. And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

27. And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

The final statement is obvious. All of this sin displeased the Lord.

In chapter 12, David is confronted with his sin. Nathan the prophet brings the severity of it before him, laying it out with clarity:

9. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

The lessons of David's life and his sin are many for us.

God's mercy and grace was extended to him - just as it is extended to us, but we must take the opportunities David failed to take, to turn from sin.