



2 SAMUEL  
CHAPTERS 1-7

Study #1 - 2 Samuel 5

## 2 SAMUEL 5 | ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM

2 Samuel 5 is a chapter concerning the crowning of King David, and the establishing of the kingdom over which he would rule as God's anointed. The chapter itself is not in chronological order, but we can approach it in three steps:

1. **Crowning (vv 1-5)**
2. **Claiming (vv 6-16)**
3. **Conquering (vv 17-25)**

### **Crowning (vv 1-5)**

Vv 1-3 are about recognition. After all the internal squabbling of chapters 3 & 4 between the northern and southern kingdoms, the narrator presents the united front of God's people as they come to David at Hebron, the place where Abraham had earlier received the covenantal promises of God. The most effective leadership is always unified leadership. The sense of kinship is palpable, with the reference to 'flesh and blood' (v 1) and the honouring of David's past military leadership during the time of Saul (v 2). The statement that follows is thematic for the chapter:

*'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'*

The fulfilment of this promise takes place despite the failure of Saul (1 Samuel 13:14); the perplexing battlefield experiences of David where he finds himself residing amongst the Philistines (1 Samuel 27); and even the rebellion of the northern kingdom (2 Samuel 2:8-32). Nothing stands in the way of the Lord fulfilling his promises.

God himself is referred to as a shepherd in the words of the patriarch Joseph (Genesis 48:15), so it is not surprising that those who would rule on his behalf would be of the same character. Joshua is appointed in Numbers 27:16-18 so that God's people '*will not be like sheep without a shepherd.*' That David himself was a shepherd (1 Samuel 17:20) only deepens the wisdom behind his selection as the Lord's anointed king. The power of the statement above from v 2 is anchored in the words 'The Lord said to you', emphasising that his promises being fulfilled enables the Kingdom of God to be established and progressed. Ultimately we will see those promises fulfilled in the ministry of the true shepherd of the flock (John 10:11).

David makes a covenant (v 3) setting out the rights and duties of the parties with the elders of Israel. In many ways this formalises his kingship, which of course has been acknowledged previously in 1 & 2 Samuel (1 Samuel 2:10). We're not told the content of the agreement, but we do note that David made it before the Lord, and it was accepted by the elders who now represented *all* of Israel. This was the united kingship God had intended for his appointed shepherd. God's people under one King would become a firmly established gospel principle, even though David's successive rule would meet with eventual demise and splitting into the northern and southern divisions once again. The people of God would find themselves yearning for a greater king.

### **Claiming (vv 6-16)**

We cannot be sure of the order of events as we read about Israel's king claiming Jerusalem as the City of David. The Jebusites, who presently occupy the city, mock David with disparaging remarks of self-assurance (which might also be understood as self-deception), only to be swiftly removed, indicated by the narrator's dismissive commentary in v 7 ('Nevertheless...').

The explanation in v 8 describing how David might have achieved the victory is perplexing, because there is no evidence to suggest this was a military strategy to enter the city. Rather, the narrator focuses on the false assumptions the Jebusites had about their own position, as occupants of fortress Zion (the first time this reference is made in the Scriptures, but not the last!). The Jebusites had a history with God's people that dated back to Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21). David was now fulfilling the covenant commitment of inheriting the Promised Land.

David's kingship became more and more powerful because the Lord was with him (v 10). While we may be impressed with palaces and strongholds, these count for nought if we are not conscious of the Lord's enabling in our lives, whether king or kingdom dweller. David's rise to be leader over all Israel

only has meaning when it is set in the framework of God's purposes. At another level he is a small cog in a large wheel that reaches from eternity to eternity (as we will discover in 2 Samuel 7).

Any leader of God's people must first recognise that the authority and responsibility they have been given is always a gift, entrusted to them to act on behalf of the one true and eternal king. When they lose sight of the reality that all authority is delegated, their downfall will eventually come about. The risks of living life outside the rule of the Lord's king is the theme of Psalm 2. In this light, there is another 'claiming' recorded in this section of 2 Samuel 5. David's humanity is exposed in this momentous chapter as he takes more wives and concubines (v 13), bringing to mind the warning of Deuteronomy 17:17. While his ever expanding family might ordinarily be seen as a reward from the Lord, the narrator is signalling to us that David will fail to be everything expected of God's king, and God's people will once again be left looking for another anointed. It's a salutary reminder about the trappings of leadership that can so easily bring us undone.

## **Conquering (vv 17-25)**

The conquering of the Philistines is also the fulfilment of the Lord's covenant to Abraham to deliver the Promised Land to his people. Israel has a chequered relationship with this foreign power, which can be traced through the time of the Judges and then into the pages of 1 Samuel, where David himself has a vexed relationship himself with this neighbouring power. The two battles with the Philistines put the military opposition to rest now David has the Lord Almighty on his side (v 19). The first victory is described metaphorically by David in v 20, the Philistine idols being taken away by the Israelites in victory at the Valley of Rephaim (v 21).

Whether the Philistines returned in search of their idols we are not told, but they regather in the same valley, to once again take on David and his army (v 22). David enquires of the Lord once more (cf. 2 Sam 2:1), but the instructions are a little more specific than the previous response in v 19. The sound of the poplar trees signifies the Lord going out as the true leader of his people, the one whose might and power achieves victory (v 24). This ultimately is the conclusion that chapter 5 is meant to leave us with.

## **Some conclusions**

1. **God chooses human rulers to achieve his purposes.** David has a prominent place in the history of God's people, and the New Testament honours his leadership (Matt 22:42-45; Mark 11:10; Luke 1:32; Acts 13:22). For good reason. He is the fundamental link in the fulfilment of God's eternal promises, between Abraham and Jesus (note Jesus' title as the Son of David). Even though any human rule (within and beyond the church) is just that, the Lord empowers and equips his servants to achieve his purposes in his gracious and patient way. In the church human leadership is to be respected and esteemed, not for the kudos of the leader, but for the blessing of the Body of Christ. Christian leadership is not a question of meeting the expectations of those being lead, which ironically erodes the effectiveness of the shepherd, but by modelling and nurturing the people of God through confidence in the gospel (Hebrews 13:7; 17).
2. **God chooses a divine yet human ruler to ultimately achieve his purposes.** The book of Hebrews is about comparison. God's Son Jesus is greater than the angels. He is greater than Moses. He is greater than the high priest of Israel, who had such a prominent role of leadership amongst the people of God. The word 'better' is constant refrain throughout Hebrews. No matter what we may make of competent and capable leadership in the church, it must always point the flock to the Lord's anointed, the true shepherd of the sheep, who made the better sacrifice than any who went before him.

1 Peter 5:4 calls Jesus the Chief Shepherd for obvious reasons. He is the one who wore the crown of thorns, only to inherit the crown of glory, which he promises to share with all those who follow his eternal rule. Jesus took on our humanity and perfected it. His pioneering work (Hebrews 2:10) assures all who follow him of an eternal home, which will make our earthly dwellings pale into the shadows compared with the reality that is to come (Hebrews 11:40).

## **GETTING STARTED**

1. If you could narrow down the essential characteristics of a Christian leader to three, what would they be?

## **INTO THE TEXT**

Read 2 Samuel 5:1-5

2. What are the reasons given by the elders of Israel in vv 1-2 for crowning David as ruler?
3. Explain the significance of the role of shepherd for the leader of God's people (see Genesis 48:15; Numbers 27:16-18; John 10:11-13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

Read 2 Samuel 5:6-25

4. How was David's kingship established in vv 6-14?
5. What was the purpose of the Lord exalting David's kingdom v 12?
6. In what sense was the defeat of the Jebusites and the Philistines more than just victories in battle (Genesis 15:19; Judges 10:11)?
7. Who is the ultimate power in 2 Samuel 5? What is the evidence to support this in the narrative?
8. What is significant about the kingship of David in the life of Jesus (Matt 22:42-45; Mark 11:10; Luke 1:32; Acts 13:22)?

## **TAKE AWAY**

9. Is monarchy a valid form of leadership for the church? Discuss?
10. How important is unity in the church? On what foundation should it exist?
11. How does belonging to the Kingdom of God make a difference to your belonging to church?