



Chapter XI

A King After God's Own Heart

UNDERSTANDING

(for your preparation as a leader)

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DISCUSSION

(to use with your group)

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UNDERSTANDING

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PASSAGE?

The Book of 1 Samuel begins with Israel beaten down and exhausted by the sins and failures of its leaders. The people turn to the last of their judges, a man named Samuel, and ask him for a king. This, in itself, is a noble request: All the way back in Genesis, God had promised Abraham that kings would eventually come from his descendants. Unfortunately, the people don't ask for a king who would be a spiritual leader like Moses and Joshua; rather, they want a king "like all the nations" (1 Sm 8:5). God concedes and gives them the kind of king they desire: Saul.

From a worldly perspective, Saul is the ideal king. He is tall, handsome, wealthy, popular, and great on the battlefield—a natural leader. What Saul is not, however, is a man after the Lord's own heart. He is proud and vain, wanting to be liked more than to lead the people to what is best for them. He is the kind of leader who is always worried about public opinion and what others think of him. Despite his significant military achievements, he is incapable of securing the Promised Land for Israel. In the end, he disobeys one of God's commands because he feared that, if he followed it, the people would think less of him (1 Sm 13:8-12, 15:24). God announces that he will take away Saul's kingship, because he put his desire to be accepted by others over obedience to God's law (1 Sm 13:13-14, 15:26-28).

The significance of this statement is often missed due to awkward translations. The Hebrew text of this verse (*wasoth torath ha'adam*) employs words that recall the Hebrew word for *torah*, the covenant law and the Hebrew word for humanity or "adam." Hence, David seems to understand that law for all of humanity is being entrusted to him.

9. Some might wonder why David would say he was given a law *for all humankind*. David is just the king over Israel, not the ruler over the human race. He may possess law for Israel, but why would he say that God has shown him the law for the whole human family?

Answer: The answer has to do with Israel's mission. With the land and kingdom firmly in place, Israel is finally poised to become the great kingdom of priests for the whole world that it was always meant to be (see Ex 19:6). As the shepherd of the dynasty that is meant to bring the truth about God to the nations, David realizes that the law entrusted to him is meant not just for Israel; it is meant to be shared with the rest of the world. Hence, he can make a statement no one else in the Bible had ever said before: He proclaims that God has shown him law for all mankind.

10. How do you see this idea of a "law for humanity" fulfilled today in the Church? How are the teachings of the Church a guide and blessing for all humanity?

Allow the group to discuss.

7. What is God promising to David in this passage?

Answer: David is given much more than a kingdom, like Saul; he is promised an everlasting dynasty, where his descendants will rule forever.

Please read aloud: For centuries, Israel had been longing for the second great promise God made to Abraham—a great name or a dynastic line of kings (Gn 12:2; 17:6,16)—to be fulfilled. When David hears that God is going to make for *him* a great name (2 Sm 7:9) and give *him* a never-ending kingdom, he realizes that this second promise is being fulfilled in *him*! Overwhelmed with emotion, David thus exclaims: “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me thus far?” (2 Sm 7:18). In awe, David realizes that the great dynasty God promised more than one thousand years ago is being given to his own household!

At this moment, David stands at a crucial turning point in the history of the world.

8. Why do you think this moment is a turning point? And how is it connected to what we have already learned in salvation history?

Answer: As king of this new dynasty, David realizes that Israel is positioned to move toward the fulfillment of her ultimate calling: to be a source of blessing for every family on earth—the third and final promise given to Abraham.

Please read aloud: The fact that Israel will be a blessing for the whole world sheds light on an intriguing statement David then makes to God: “Thou hast shown me law for humanity”² (2 Sm 7:19).

² See the translation and explanation in Scott Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant* (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1995), 322, 346-7. See also Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises*, 213.

Passing over Saul, the Lord has Samuel anoint a new king who will be a man after the Lord's own heart (1 Sm 13:14). His name is David, and he is nothing like his predecessor. He is a mere youth, too young to be a soldier. His only experience has been shepherding sheep while his brothers were off at war. Yet this is the man the Lord commands Samuel to anoint, telling him, “The Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Sm 16:7).

In reality, David was much more than a shepherd boy. The Scriptures tell us that, despite his diminutive size, he has a warrior's heart. While he was alone tending sheep, he defended his flock by killing lions and bears that tried to attack them (see 1 Sm 17:36). His faithfulness eventually leads David to the battlefield when he brings food and supplies to his brothers, who are supposed to be fighting for Israel on the front lines against the Philistines. What he finds there, however, surprises him: The Israelites are in a standoff with their enemies, with the champion of the Philistines, Goliath, having challenged any Israelite to engage him in battle.

What most surprises David is that, for forty days, no Israelite stepped forward. Seeing this as a clear battle between God's people and the pagans, David asks, “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (1 Sm 17:26). David confidently trusts that the Lord will defeat the enemy and does what no other man in Israel's camp was willing to do: He goes out to meet Goliath. With a bold faith reminiscent of Joshua, David says, “You come to me with sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” (1 Sm 17:45).

Before he launches his famous sling shot, David says: “This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand...that all the earth may *know* that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may *know* that the Lord saves not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand” (1 Sm 17:47; emphasis added).

Remember that *knowing* the Lord was a key goal of the Exodus story, and that ever since the period of the judges Israel had failed to keep covenant with God. Now, with David, Israel finally has an emerging spiritual leader who challenges the people to *know* the Lord once again.

2 Samuel: Israel Becomes a Great Dynasty

Eventually, King Saul dies in battle, and all the tribes of Israel gather around David to enter covenant with him as their new king (2 Sm 5:1-4). David's first move as king is to capture the city of Jerusalem, an event that sets the stage for a pivotal moment in David's life and in Israel's history. With this last Canaanite stronghold in the Promised Land finally defeated, the Israelites can rest from their enemies about them (2 Sm 7:1). The people can now live secure in the land that was promised to Abraham back in Genesis 12—the land to which Israel was led by Moses and Joshua, and which it now finally possesses in tranquility with David.

This sparks David to do something he had never done before. David had won many military victories in his lifetime, but he had never called for the Ark of the Covenant to be transferred to those places. Yet in 2 Samuel 6, David sends for the Ark to be permanently stationed in Jerusalem, which will soon become the home of a central sanctuary for God's people.

Answer: David is a faithful Israelite, and the narrative of salvation history has never been far from his mind. He recognizes in these dramatic events the fulfillment of God's promises. He knows that, when the Israelites find rest, they are to establish a central sanctuary in the land (Dt 12:9-11). With Israel finally secure, it is time to build a house for the Lord—in other words, a temple for the Ark.

Please read aloud: Let's see how God responds to David's actions:

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-29.

5. How does God respond to David's desire to build him a house?

Answer: The Lord wants to build David a house. The prophet Nathan announces to David: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Would you build me a house to dwell in?... Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house’” (2 Sm 7:5, 11).

Please read aloud: The Hebrew word for house (*bayit*) here has three meanings. It can refer to: (1) a son or an heir; (2) a kingdom or dynasty; (3) or an actual building, a home.¹ God seems to have in mind all three levels of meaning, as He goes on to tell David, “I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (2 Sm 7:12-13).

6. How does the meaning of this word (*bayit*) come into play here?

Answer: Notice how all three meanings of bayit come into play here. God speaks of an actual “offspring,” a son that will come to David, and this son will be given a dynasty—a “kingdom” and a “throne” forever. Finally, this son will build an actual building, a “house” for God's name—in other words, a temple.

¹ Scott Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant* (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1995), 320.

Please read aloud:

3. While the word might be translated differently depending on which translation you are using, the “know” appears in this passage several times. How does this idea of “knowing” fit with Israel’s journey so far? How does this show that David is the kind of leader that Israel needs?

Answer: Remember that knowing the Lord was a key goal of the Exodus story, and that ever since the period of the judges Israel had failed to keep covenant with God. Now, with David, Israel finally has an emerging spiritual leader who challenges the people to know the Lord once again.

Please read aloud: Eventually, King Saul dies in battle, and all the tribes of Israel gather around David to enter covenant with him as their new king (2 Sm 5:1-4). David’s first move as king is to capture the city of Jerusalem, an event that sets the stage for a pivotal moment in David’s life and in Israel’s history. With this last Canaanite stronghold in the Promised Land finally defeated, the Israelites can rest from their enemies about them (2 Sm 7:1). The people can now live secure in the land that was promised to Abraham back in Genesis 12—the land to which Israel was led by Moses and Joshua, and which it now finally possesses in tranquility with David.

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4. Why does he do this? Any ideas? It requires some subtle knowledge of the Bible to understand.

Why does he do this? David is a faithful Israelite, and the narrative of salvation history has never been far from his mind. He recognizes in these dramatic events the fulfillment of God’s promises. He knows that, when the Israelites find rest, they are to establish a central sanctuary in the land (Dt 12:9-11). With Israel finally secure, it is time to build a house for the Lord—in other words, a temple for the Ark.

But God has other plans: The Lord wants to build *David* a house. The prophet Nathan announces to David: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Would you build me a house to dwell in?... Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house’” (2 Sm 7:5, 11).

The Hebrew word for house (*bayit*) here has three meanings. It can refer to: (1) a son or an heir; (2) a kingdom or dynasty; (3) or an actual building, a home.¹ God seems to have in mind all three levels of meaning, as He goes on to tell David, “I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (2 Sm 7:12-13). Notice how all three meanings of *bayit* come into play here. God speaks of an actual “offspring,” a son that will come to David, and this son will be given a dynasty—a “kingdom” and a “throne” forever. Finally, this son will build an actual building, a “house” for God’s name—in other words, a temple.

Here, David is given much more than a kingdom, like Saul; he is promised an everlasting dynasty, where his descendants will rule forever.

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At this moment, David stands at a crucial turning point in the history of the world. As king of this new dynasty, David realizes that Israel is positioned to move toward the fulfillment of her ultimate calling: to be a source of blessing for every family on earth—the third and final promise given to Abraham. This sheds light on an intriguing statement David then makes to God: "Thou hast shown me law for humanity"² (2 Sm 7:19).

The significance of this statement is often missed due to awkward translations. The Hebrew text of this verse (*wasoth torath ha'adam*) employs words that recall the Hebrew word for *torah*, the covenant law and the Hebrew word for humanity or "adam." Hence, David seems to understand that law for humanity is being entrusted to him." Yet some might wonder why David would say he was given law *for all humankind*. David is just the king over Israel, not the ruler over the human race. He may possess law for Israel, but why would he say that God has shown him the law for the whole human family?

The answer has to do with Israel's mission. With the land and kingdom firmly in place, Israel is finally poised to become the great kingdom of priests for the whole world that it was always meant to be (see Ex 19:6). As the shepherd of the dynasty that is meant to bring the truth

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Note to the Leader: You may read all of 1 Samuel 17, or you may read the selections below.

Read 1 Samuel 17:4-11

Read 1 Samuel 17:21-26

Read 1 Samuel 17:41-51

1. First, what is David surprised about? What is different about David than the other men Israel?

Answer: What most surprises David is that, for forty days, no Israelite stepped forward. Seeing this as a clear battle between God's people and the pagans, David asks, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Sm 17:26). David confidently trusts that the Lord will defeat the enemy and does what no other man in Israel's camp was willing to do: He goes out to meet Goliath. With a bold faith reminiscent of Joshua, David says, "You come to me with sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Sm 17:45).

2. What does David say to Goliath before the battle? What does this tell us about David?

Answer: Before he launches his famous sling shot, David says: "This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand" (1 Sm 17:47). David knows and trusts in the Lord.

DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR YOUR BIBLE STUDY

1 Samuel 17:1-51, 2 Samuel 7:1-29,

Please read aloud: This week, we move ahead in salvation history to the book of 1 Samuel, which begins with Israel beaten down and exhausted by the sins and failures of its leaders. The people turn to the last of their judges, a man named Samuel, and ask him for a king. God concedes and gives them the kind of king they desire: Saul.

From a worldly perspective, Saul is the ideal king. He is tall, handsome, wealthy, popular, and great on the battlefield—a natural leader. What Saul is not, however, is a man after the Lord's own heart. He is proud and vain, wanting to be liked more than to lead the people to what is best for them. Saul is unfaithful and God announces that he will take away Saul's kingship, because he put his desire to be accepted by others over obedience to God's law (1 Sm 13:13-14, 15:26-28).

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about God to the nations, David realizes that the law entrusted to him is meant not just for Israel; it is meant to be shared with the rest of the world. Hence, he can make a statement no one else in the Bible had ever said before: He proclaims that God has shown him law for all mankind.

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