
Day 100 – April 10

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

Period of Wars

Readings: 2 Samuel 21:15-22; 1 Chronicles 18:1; 19:1-19; Psalm 60; 2 Samuel 11:1-12:17; Psalm 51. Also see: 1 Chronicles 20:1a; 4-8; 2 Samuel 8:1; 10:1-19

Reflections:

- The first stories of the heroes who are killed by David's men sound almost mythical. These enemies are described as having huge weapons and in one case, six fingers on each hand. Goliath's name is mentioned here. It may be another Goliath or some variant texts say "Lahmi the brother of Goliath." When dealing with oral tradition as a source, the writer may have had some confusion on this point. In any case, the point is that God is enabling David's men to conquer the most horrifying enemies. For Christ-followers, it is no longer human enemies we must confront but now our fears. A transferrable lesson is that God wants to help us overcome our greatest fears even when all the evidence points the other way. Also, drawing up guys with six fingers is cool for kids' stories.
- David shows his heart for peace when he tries to reach out to the Ammonite king, son of the king who helped him and sends a peace delegation. Out of fear and paranoia, the king shames the delegation by making them return shaved and basically naked. This incites war with both the Ammonites and Arameans. Joab's strategy of dividing the army and then partnering together works and David is successful. This story gives us a basic leadership strategy. When facing challenges on two fronts, divide your resources to handle each challenge but ensure that both sides still own the collective vision or mission so that you can still help each other as needed. This is a good reminder for teamwork.
- David's psalm from this time shows that at one point in the battle he was feeling like God was abandoning him. It shows his struggle with faith. Leaders don't always feel on top of things but often struggle to maintain their faith in God. This is good encouragement to know that David, a great leader struggled to trust God and God still gave him victory.
- David's fall into sin begins with him deciding to take it easy and to rest in the comfort of his own success. Kings are at war and his army is engaged in defending the country and

David decides to relax in the security of his palace in Jerusalem. David's roof top allows him to look in other people's windows and he spies out Bathsheba taking a bath. Sound like a Hollywood flick yet? Well, he gets his men to bring her to him, even though she is married to Uriah. It is an interesting note about her having purified herself from having her period. I don't know if this is to help us note that she is in a window of time when she is likely to get pregnant or if it is to indicate that she has a true heart for God or both. Anyways, she does get pregnant and David then becomes afraid of being found out. He tries to cover his tracks by getting Uriah to come home to be with Bathsheba but Uriah shows himself to be more loyal to the Lord than David is being at this time. David finally commands Joab to put Uriah in a place where he will likely die. Uriah does die and David apparently without conscience dismisses Uriah's death as no big deal and then takes Bathsheba as his wife and she has David's son. This displeases God and we see with complete clarity that no king, even the most humble, God worshipping, and blessed king, can truly be used by God to change the heart of Israel. In fact, he himself in his weakest moment is an adulterer, murderer and one who rejects God as the Lord of his life.

- God still has compassion and so sends Nathan to rebuke David. Nathan's story and prophetic rebuke "You are that man!" stands as one of the most moving stories in all of Scripture. The judgment against David is severe but his repentance is whole hearted. In David's psalm we see his heart again revealed and his insight into a true relationship with God. This is vital to note: 1) David identifies the core issue for himself and all people - "Create in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence and do not take your Holy Spirit from me." In other words, "God I need you to change me from the inside out and that can only happen by your Holy Spirit working in my heart of hearts." This is a complete contrast to what the reader would expect. David should have said "Lord, I have sinned against your holy law. May I now meditate on your law day and night that I might be mindful to keep you law." He doesn't though because he knows that rules and regulations are not the issue. His heart is the issue. This is what will become painfully obvious to Israel and will set the stage for the prophets of Israel to announce the day when God will pour out his Spirit on all people and will take away their hearts of stone and give them soft hearts that will be able to fulfill the intent of the law by living lives of love. 2) David then goes on to be clear about what opens the way for a right relationship with God even though a person has sinned against God. Is it completing the animal sacrificial system of the Law? No! David writes, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart." Yes that is right. David rejects the need for the sacrificial system as a way to receive forgiveness but declares that it was humility that God was looking for. Any outward expression only takes on the right place in our lives when it flows from a right heart. In David's context, only when my heart is broken and contrite will the sacrifices take on any right place in his life as an expression of his heart. Again, this is crazy over the top irreligion. Again,

this sets the stage for the coming Messiah when all people will receive forgiveness and right relationship with God just by humbly trusting in God through Christ.