

## **From Eden to the New Heavens and Earth: The Unfolding of Redemption in the Bible**

### **1 and 2 Samuel**

By [The Reverend Mr. Nathan D. Shurden](#)

*Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting  
February 3, 2010*

If you have your Bibles, would you turn with me to 2 Samuel? 2 Samuel — we're going to read a section from this beloved book tonight and I'm probably more surprised than most of you that we're turning to 1 and 2 Samuel tonight. It seems as if, and I had mistakenly put on my calendar that we would be studying 1 and 2 Kings tonight. This dawned on me this afternoon as I went down to proof the prayer reminder that you've been using tonight and Marie Phillips graciously says, "Nate, are you ready for tonight?" I said, "Oh, we're getting there. We will be by six-thirty for sure." And I looked it over and I said, "1 and 2 Samuel." She said, "Yes." I said, "So all this preparation I've given the last hour or two to 1 and 2 Kings is not going to come in very handy tonight, is it?" She said, "I'm afraid not." And as I thought back, I thought, "Yes, it was right — Joshua, Judges, Ruth — that's where we were last week — 1 and 2 Samuel." So some how or another I missed it. So this of course is my explanation on the front end for why we'll have such little material tonight to work with, but I am confident that God will continue to teach us from His Word, regardless of the preparation of this man, that God will speak by His Word and will come sovereignly and teach us what we need to know from these precious books, these precious books, 1 and 2 Samuel.

Now we're going to focus on a section that is probably one of the highest points in the book of 1 and 2 Samuel — 2 Samuel chapter 7. This is God's covenant with David. We're going to look at just a few of these verses tonight. Now the goal of this section, as we survey these two magnificent books, the goal is as we read this section to look at the promises and the blessings that are to be extended to David and through David to the people of Israel by this covenant. That's what I want you to listen for, that's what I want you to look for, as we read this passage tonight. Our goal will not be to deeply dig into this passage as using it as a launching pad from which to survey these two books so that we can have a better grasp of why 1 and 2 Samuel are in the canon of Scripture and their role in the unfolding of God's plan of redemption.

So before we read 2 Samuel chapter 7 - we'll begin reading in verse 8 and read down to verse 17 - but before we do let's pray once again and ask for God's

blessing.

*Our Father in heaven, we have before us Your Word. It is more important and more necessary than the food that we have just consumed. You tell us that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, that these are Your words. Our souls hunger for them. Indeed our souls starve without them. And so we ask that by Your grace You would send to us the Spirit to illumine our hearts and our minds that we might receive the exact word that You have planned for us this night, and that it would go forth in power and accomplish all that You have determined. For the glory of Christ do this we pray. Amen.*

2 Samuel chapter 7 verse 8 — this is God's Word:

Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, (this is God speaking to prophet, Nathan, who is going to speak these words to David) 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over My people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for My people Israel and I will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed the judges over My people Israel. And I will give you rest from all of your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come 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 to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but My steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.'" In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

Amen, and thus far the reading of God's holy Word.

In what or in whom do you place your trust? It's an important question, isn't it? In a time where we have just seen across the headlines of the news, we have just prayed for the people of Haiti, that I tend to have a lot of hope in, moved, and it shook a people to a core, and made them ask I'm sure, "What can we hope in if the very ground beneath our feet is something we can't be sure is not going to be shaken, in what or in whom can we have hope?" Now I'd like to suggest to you that question is the driving point in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Where is the

hope of God's people? We've just come from books, Ruth and Judges, that have in many ways cast a bit of a vision of a hope for a future. You'll remember the refrain in the book of Judges — right at the end of the book of Judges we're reminded this in verse 25 of chapter 21 of the book of Judges, a foreboding note as that book closes — “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Now you might take from the end of the book of Judges that if there was a king in Israel people would quite do what was right in their own eyes. We could draw that interpretive conclusion from the end of the book of Judges — that if the people of God just had a king, a whom to hope in, that all would be well.

We get to the end of the book of Ruth and as Billy explained to us so clearly and eloquently last time as we gathered together in this room to study God's Word, the end of the book of Ruth reads like this — “Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.” Jesse fathered David — David. If there was just a king of Israel the people would quit doing what was right in their own eyes. And at the end of the book of Ruth we hear the son of Jesse, David, and we know the story. This is the man after God's own heart, the man of God's own choosing, the man in whom the people of God can hope — right? And thus we enter 1 and 2 Samuel; thus we enter these two books.

Now what's fascinating about these two books is maybe what is beginning to be longed for in such deep fashion in Judges and what is being introduced to us at the end of the book of Ruth, now will come to fulfillment in 1 and 2 Samuel. The people's desire will be had. A king will enter the land. The hope and the expectation of what the people believe that they need to have a strong front against the Philistines, Assyria, and Babylon and other nations which are surrounding them, this strong sure front to be like all the other nations. “If we could just have a king we know we would be okay.” Here we have it, 1 and 2 Samuel, the hope. Now what's fascinating is that the tragedy that we saw in Judges is just as prevalent in 1 and 2 Samuel as it was in Judges, as we enter into the season of the kings. And so we see this good and bad, this hopeful expectation, and this fleeing from the tragedy of a season of poor leaders in the Judges, the people of God believe they will find in the person of the king. And 1 and 2 Samuel gives us a very mixed report about how much hope that we can put into a king. And what do you hope or in whom?

Now as the book of 1 and 2 Samuel begin — and these books, we treat them often separately in our reading of them now. They once were collectively one book and read as one central and significant message, one voice in the Old Testament canon. As we enter the book of 1 and 2 Samuel we find Samuel. We find that son of Hannah who is the last of the judges of Israel, the one who is a transitional figure to move us from beyond this one age of redemptive history into

the new one, the passing of the judges into the kings. He paves the way for us as an establishment of the monarchy. What has been this longing and expected hope of the people of Israel.

And as we look at 1 and 2 Samuel, we see that this Old Testament book is different and it is similar to some of the books that have come before. It's different at least in this way that 1 and 2 Samuel does not cover long stretches of material of time in the way that say, Judges did, or in the way that 1 and 2 Kings does where we see hundreds of years of history actually unfold. It's actually a fairly short period of time that focuses on three particular people — Samuel, Saul, and David. We could call 1 Samuel, the first half of this two part book, we could call it a tale of three men — Samuel and Saul and David. Now some of the books of the Bible are deeply plot driven and some of the books of the Bible are deeply character driven. Now of course there's a plot in all of the books of the Bible stemming from Genesis chapter 3. As Derek has preached and as Jeremy has reminded us regularly, when the seed of the serpent goes to war against the seed of the woman and when the seed of the woman is at enmity with the seed of the serpent we have a plot line that lays before us, a crisis that will need a kind of resolution. Well that plot line, that seed of the woman and that seed of the serpent, plays itself out for sure in 1 and 2 Samuel, the unfolding of redemption. But it plays itself out in the lives and the characters of Samuel and Saul and David. It's within these men and within this narrative that we begin to see a new phase in redemptive history.

Now there are three other prominent figures besides these three men — Samuel and Saul and David. You can actually chart the unfolding of 1 Samuel with those three characters. But we also see Hannah, who plays a very significant role right at the beginning, Eli, who's also at the beginning of 1 Samuel, and then as we've been actually hearing preached to us on Sunday night very recently, the character of Jonathan. Now these three, we might call them supportive cast. These three play an important role in transitioning us — Eli to Samuel and Hannah to Samuel and from Saul, Jonathan his son, to David. These three supporting cast members are part of God's means of highlighting and developing His plan of redemption through the lives of these three significant, significant men of redemptive history.

Now that teaches us a quick lesson about the way God works in life and time and history, is that there are always prominent men that God uses to advance the church from one age to the next, to become voices, to become a loud clarion cause of the Gospel of which God anoints and blesses the work of their hands. But behind them and between them are all sorts of supportive casts, all sorts of fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters and uncles and aunts and cousins and church members who have played a significant role and will play a significant role in the unfolding of how God will use them to advance His kingdom.

Sometimes we find ourselves in the background of redemptive history playing a behind the scenes role and sometimes we find ourselves thrust to the forefront of

redemptive history. David, a shepherd boy with seemingly no future from which the course of human events of history would be changed — a shepherd boy who wasn't even invited to the table when Samuel comes to anoint — is the one who God pushes to the forefront. But the one in whom Jonathan, one would expect to be in the forefront of God's plan of redemption, the son of the king, the rightful heir to the throne, blends into the background and becomes the supportive cast for another twist in the plot of redemptive history. It teaches us something very important about how God uses all people within His kingdom to accomplish His ends.

Now as we look at the rise of this kingdom and the kingship of the people of Israel, it's important that we see throughout 1 Samuel that there are two significant contrasts that are being set up for us. There's always a rise to a point, usually in one of the lives of the characters, and then there's always a character who's declining to a point. So we open up the book of 1 Samuel and we see that Eli is right there in the first chapter. Eli's been a faithful servant of the Lord but Eli has wicked sons, sons whom God is not going to use to carry on the legacy of Samuel into the next phase of redemptive history. But God has chosen Hannah's son to be the one who will succeed Samuel and his work in the temple. As Eli and his sons begin to decline, we see the rise of Samuel as he lays in his bed at night hearing the voice of the Lord call him, though he was at first unaware — that this young boy who, from all recognition at the beginning of 1 Samuel, would probably not exist. A son that Hannah had prayed for for years, that seemingly God was not going to give this obscure one, this long awaited one who Hannah had finally given up hope would ever show up, came and he would be the one whom God rises to the occasion to be used for this next phase of redemptive history.

Now as that plays out with Eli and Samuel at the beginning of 1 Samuel we see the same thing happening between Saul and David, do we not? Saul was the one in the forefront of the picture in most of 1 Samuel. He's the one who is shoulders and a head taller than everyone, the one who is obviously God's choice to lead the people of Israel. As Saul is elected to this role, he immediately becomes a miserable failure. His days are numbered right from the beginning because he decides that not God's "plan A" but his own ingenious "plan B" would be the way that he would accomplish the rise of the people of Israel and he would be disobedient to the covenant, to the obligations to the responsibilities, which God had laid before him as the king. As Saul begins his steady decline, as we see the Spirit of God removed from him and then we have seen him tortured in soul as has been preached on Sunday night, we can see that the kingdom is being taken from him and it's being given to this little shepherd boy who pastures a few sheep. This is who the Lord has decreed will be the next leader of the people of Israel. These two contrasts as it were, were playing out throughout the entire narrative of 1 Samuel. There is someone on the decline; there is someone on the incline. And who do we know which is which and for what reason?

And the clue to that is actually a book we haven't studied quite yet. We started in the book of Joshua — we didn't start in the book of Deuteronomy — but Deuteronomy as it were overshadows this whole section of redemptive history. You'll remember quite well the covenant renewal ceremony in the book of Deuteronomy, in Deuteronomy 29 at Moab, where the people of God committed once again, renewed their covenant that they had made with the Lord at Horeb in Exodus chapter 20, that they would be God's people and that He would be their God and that if they were obedient to the obligations of the covenant, to all of the laws which Moses has given to them, then surely blessing will follow them. This was the promise of God. But if they were disobedient to the covenant obligations and neglected the law of God, cursing, cursing would be their end. Do we not see in the life of Eli and Eli's sons a resistance to the covenant obligations and the obedience which God has called His people and a decline? And do we not see in the life of Saul a neglect of what God had called him to do and thus a decline and a wrenching from him of the kingdom and the call which he was originally given? Disobedience gives birth to cursing. Obedience gives rise to blessing.

The book of Deuteronomy is overshadowing this theological interpretation that is being given to us here. Do you see that it's not men and nations, it's not chariots and armaments that makes a country strong, that makes the people of God sure and founded, it's their commitment to keep covenant with their God, to lay hold by faith in the promises and to submit to God's direction? You see the writer of 1 and 2 Samuel knows that and as he writes this he is interested in highlighting righteousness and sin, covenant faithfulness and covenant disobedience, for upon this is the health and the livelihood of the nation.

Now as we move into 2 Samuel we narrow our focus a bit. Three characters of Samuel and Saul and David give way to that one final character and all of the book of 2 Samuel is really devoted to David. We could call it David's biography. It's in this particular book of 2 Samuel where all of the hopes and the dreams and the fulfillments of what God has already promised to the people back through Moses and again at the covenant renewal service in Deuteronomy, that all of the anticipations of this king and this kingdom begin to come to fruition. David has more power than he could ever dreamed could be imagined. He has more wealth, he has more wisdom — it seems as if nothing can stop him. The whole first section of 2 Samuel reads like a hero epic. Here is the one that no one could restrain from rising to the top. It seemed as if this was his destiny to do so, and indeed according to God's providence it was. But as we read the court history of David, all his exploits and his achievements, all that he is able to accomplish under His hand, the writer of 2 Samuel pulls back the curtain. What looks to be healthy in the king's court, what looks to be great accomplishment, is a man who in his own personal life and family has one significant crisis after another.

It's in that dramatic turning point in 2 Samuel chapter 11 where David goes out and looks across the balcony and he sees Bathsheba and it becomes the point of his fall — that he lusts and he commits adultery and then to cover up his sin he

commits another sin of murder, of having the life of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, taken. It's right smack dab in the middle of 2 Samuel. Twenty four chapters — chapters 11 and 12 have the unfolding of this tragic choice of a man who has been described as “one after God's own heart.” Here is the hope of Israel. Here is the foundation on which the people of Israel had laid their trust into the king of Israel. Surely he will make them like all other nations. Oh, indeed. He will make them like all other nations.

In reading the book of 2 Samuel you can feel in the sense of the narrative in chapters 11 and 12, a shift, that what was the golden age of the people of Israel has now crested and we have begun our descent. In the way Eli rose and fell, how Samuel rose and gave way to Saul, how Saul rose and fell and gave way to David, as David has risen and there seems to be no other figure greater than David — oh how the mighty have fallen. 2 Samuel 12 reminds us that David, thought God's man, though used to accomplish great things in the kingdom of God, he is still a man. He is a mirror man.

Now the question becomes I think, crying out to us at the end of 1 and 2 Samuel, is — Are we doomed to this kind of cycle forever? Are we doomed to just one great man after another with hopeful expectation who will eventually let us down? One more ruler, one more elected president, one more man in the White House, one more prime minister — “In what or whom do you trust?” seems to be screaming by the end of 2 Samuel. As we see after Ammon and Tamar's wicked sinfulness and Absalom's rebellion against his father David, and as David takes the census in the last chapter of 2 Samuel and he sees his sin before Almighty God and he's building an altar and is desirous of keeping the plague from destroying God's people because of David's own sin — is this the hope of Israel? Now I think the altar at the end of 2 Samuel teaches us more than the rest of 1 and 2 Samuel together because it teaches us that we need something greater than David, something greater than a mere man, someone who will submit to the obligations of the covenant that the people of God submitted to in Deuteronomy, but will not fall into disobedience and thus will not fall into cursing, but will be that long hoped for hero.

The end of 2 Samuel introduces us to the One who will crush that head of the serpent, that there must be an altar and there must be a bloodshed and the spotlessness of that sacrifice must cover all of the sin and the cursings of every previous generation of faithlessness among even the most choicest of God's servants, David himself. Who in here would say, “Well, I am greater than David”? None of us I pray would say such, which means that we of all people need that bloodshed on the threshing floor at the end of 2 Samuel, someone who will fulfill the obligations of a covenant that we cannot fulfill, and for us, will take upon Himself the punishment that we justly deserve. It's why at the beginning of the book of Luke which Ligon preached just a few weeks back — Luke 2 — as we read the narrative of Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem from Nazareth, because He was of the house and the lineage of David and why we read in just

the chapter earlier in Luke 1 as the angel comes, that the One who Mary has in her womb is unlike any other ruler for His ruler-ship will last forever. It will never be compromised by sin or by covenant unfaithfulness, but it will reign in pristine glory. From the moment He lays His head in the manger for all eternity, as we gather as a remnant, a piece of this kingdom which God is building in Christ tonight, 1 and 2 Samuel call us to despair of our own righteousness tonight. As good as God has made us by His grace, to see our need for that blood which covers all of our sins and then in Christ washes us white as snow, it is in that hope I pray you gather tonight, for it is the only hope that we have.

Let's thank the Lord for it.

*Our Father in heaven, it takes our breath away that You, through Your servants the prophets, men carried along by the Holy Spirit, communicate in the Old Testament the crystal clear truths of the Gospel that we have embraced in Christ in the New Testament. Indeed You have one and enduring thing to say to us, Your people, and it is the Gospel. Would You Father tonight lead us to repentance where we have sinned and in our righteousness would You help us to despair and glean only to the righteousness of Christ. For it alone is fitting. And make in our hearts a hunger, a hunger to see You in Your full and abiding holiness, for that is our end. Come quickly Lord Jesus we ask. Amen.*

Please stand for the Lord's blessing.

May the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

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