

Note: Course resources utilized included NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible notes, ESV Bible and ESV Study Bible notes, John Sailhamer's Pentateuch as a Narrative, Stephen Dempster's Dominion and Dynasty, Tom Schreiner's The King in His Beauty, Carson, Moo, and Naselli's Introducing the New Testament, T. Desmond's Alexander's From Paradise to the Promised Land, Carson, Moo, and Morris Introduction to the New Testament, The Gospel According to John by D.A. Carson from the Pillar New Testament Series, The Letters of John by Colin G. Kruse from the Pillar New Testament Series, Bethlehem College and Seminary Old and New Testament Survey and others (TGC and TGC Online Commentaries).

*Our goal today is to cover the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel*

*As we resume our study today let's not lose sight of the big picture thus far.*

*Remember that in Genesis God chose Abraham, and gave him very great and precious promises that will color everything that unfolds throughout the entire Bible.*

*There are two major aspects concerning God's promises to Abraham.*

*First, there is the promise that through an offspring of Abraham "all nations on earth will be blessed" (Gen. 22:18).*

*And as we look at Genesis, we can appreciate that this promise of blessing to the nations is bound up with a future King who will be a descendant of Abraham. The promise of blessing and a King.*

*A second aspect of the divine promises to Abraham consists of the establishment of a great nation and the promise of land for that great nation to live in.*

*Essentially Abraham's descendants will grow into a great nation, and then take possession of the land of Canaan- just as God promised to Abraham in Genesis chapter 15.*

*Last week we saw God keeping His promises, keeping His word to Abraham. Abraham's family, by means of Jacob and his sons, grew and increased in number and the family blossoms into the people of Israel, a nation, while living in Egypt. The promises of God are beginning to materialize.*

*Eventually the people are oppressed and enslaved by Pharaoh, however, God delivers the Israelites through Moses, bringing them out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, where He establishes a covenant with them.*

*Moving forward, the adult Exodus generation proves faithless and they rebel at Kadesh Barnea, and are made to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until the adult generation dies out, effectively passing off the scene.*

*The author of Hebrews tells us that they did not enter the promised land “because of their unbelief” and the “disobedience” that resulted from their unbelief (Heb. 3:18-19).*

*Joshua and Caleb are the exception, and exemplify faith and trust in God. Despite widespread disobedience and faithlessness among fledgling Israel, God’s promise to Abraham will not be derailed, and God will see to it that the next generation will enter into the Promised Land.*

*In the book of Deuteronomy, we see the nation poised to take possession of the land. Moses, nearing death, sets before a new generation of Israelites the covenant obligations that they must fulfill in order to enjoy God’s blessing in their home.*

*Moses calls upon them to obey God’s commandments in response to who God is, in gratitude for what God has done and what God will do. As they obey, they will display to the surrounding nations the glorious character of God.*

*Deut 4.6 “Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’”*

*The book of Deuteronomy ends with the Israelites encamped outside the Promised Land, as Moses dies in Moab. Although Moses eyes were not weak nor his strength gone, He is not able to enter into the Promised Land, and can only welcome it from afar.*

*So as the first 5 books of the Bible draw to a close- it is very much an unfinished story.*

## Joshua

*That brings us to the book of Joshua.*

*The book of Joshua picks up where Deuteronomy leaves off.*

*Central to the book of Joshua is the land promise God made to Abraham. Last week was focused largely on the promise of a nation. This week we will focus on the promise of land and a king.*

*The very structure of the book of Joshua draws our attention to the importance of the land. We can easily divide the book up into four main sections.*

*1.As Joshua opens, we see the nation crossing into the promised land ([Josh. 1-5](#)).*

2. Once they're there, they are met with hostility from the Canaanites, engage in battle, and the people of Israel take the land ([Josh. 6-12](#)).

3. After their victories, Joshua divides up the land among the twelve tribes as their inheritance ([Josh. 13-22](#)).

4. As the book draws to a close, Joshua delivers a final exhortation to the people, calling them to serve the Lord in the land ([Josh. 23-24](#)).

*That is the basic division.*

*Now, as Chapter 1 begins it has been approximately 40 years since the Exodus from Egypt. It is here we see God commission Joshua to take Moses' place as Israel's newly appointed leader. The name Joshua means "The LORD saves". In Greek his name would be Jesus.*

*Early on we see Joshua portrayed as a new Moses. As chapter 2 begins, we see Joshua send spies into the land, just as Moses did in Numbers 13-14.*

*We see those spies encounter a prostitute by the name of Rahab. She risks her life to hide the spies, confesses her faith in God's powerful acts of redemption, and negotiates for her family's preservation. Her kindness toward the spies, and God's kind purposes and grace toward her gives us a glimmer of God's larger purposes to save all the nations.*

*In chapter 3 we see Joshua leading Israel across the Jordan River and into the land. Just as the Red Sea parted for Moses as the nation escaped Pharaoh, so here the Jordan parts, the priests, the people and the ark of the covenant, which is this sacred symbol of God's presence/a earthly representation of God's throne, pass over on dry ground.*

*In chapter 5, in obedience to the explicit command in Exodus 12.25, we see the nation celebrate their first Passover in the new land. The day after the Passover, they finally eat from the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and roasted grain. It was at this time the manna ceased and the produce of the good land that God was giving them became their portion.*

*As the nation prepares to move forward with conquest, a mysterious event took place near Jericho. Joshua encountered "a man" (5:13). The man stands before Joshua with his sword drawn, and Joshua asks "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And the man said, "No." He essentially replied "neither."*

*Some people identify the "man" as a theophany or visible appearance of God. Some have argued that this "man" was the pre-incarnate Christ. Some say that it is an angel representing*

God. What we do know is that He identifies himself as “the commander of the army of the Lord.” Like Moses’s encounter with the Burning Bush, Joshua is instructed to remove his sandals for the place where he was standing was holy.

*This mysterious figure's response to Joshua’s question about “who side this man was on” forces a shift in Joshua's perspective and our perspectives- the question is not “is the Lord on our side?”*

*The question is whether Joshua, and by inference all of God's people, see themselves as aligned with God’s purposes. Are we on His side?*

*God is never domesticated or manipulated to serve our purposes. We are to align ourselves with His purposes.*

*This encounter also shows us ultimately that the things that are about to transpire between the people of the land of Canaan and the people of God are to be seen as God’s battles.*

*This takes us to the next section of the book of Joshua, where we encounter the conflicts that take place between Israel and the Canaanite inhabitants as the people of God take possession of the land.*

*Chapters 6-8 recount for us two battles in considerable detail, followed by chapters 9-12, which condense years of battles into several brief summaries.*

*The first two battles, Jericho and Ai respectively, stand in contrast to each other- here we see God’s faithfulness and Israel’s failures on display.*

*At Jericho, Israel's faith is being conditioned, as the people must look not at the things which are seen, but look at unseen realities. Before they even siege the city, Joshua 6:2 (ESV): the Lord said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor. They are commanded to march around the city once a day for six days, God’s presence in the ark conspicuously with the people. On the seventh day the people march around the city 7 times, the priests blow their trumpets, the people shout, and the walls of the city collapse and Israel emerges victorious. If Israel simply trusts and obey, God will deliver.*

*The battle at Ai shows us what happens if Israel doesn’t trust. An Israelite named Achan kept back some of the items from Jericho that were to be devoted to complete destruction by the command of God, essentially stealing and lying about it. And consequently, as Israel enters the next skirmish at Ai, they are defeated. Through one man's disobedience, the integrity of the*

*whole nation is compromised. Disobedience is a serious thing. After Achan's sin is dealt with, the nation emerges victorious over Ai.*

*As we consider these two battles, we learn many lessons.*

*-We see the ability of the Lord to save the "outsider" Rahab, and the danger of an "insider", namely Achan falling away.*

*-We see that the battle is a God-centered battle, it is not about the enrichment of the people at the expense of the obedience of faith.*

*-We see that the Lord's presence is indispensable if Israel is to know success in their divinely sanctioned mission.*

*In chapter 9 we are told about the Gibeonites, a Canaanite people group, who deceive Israel into thinking that they came from outside the land of Canaan to secure the good graces of this dreadful nation and their God.*

*They wore "patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes"; they carried "dry and crumbly" provisions giving the appearance of having come from a long distance.*

*Previously, Moses had instructed Israel not to establish treaties with the inhabitants of Canaan ([Deut 20:10-20](#)). They were to "devote them to complete destruction" ([Deut 20:17-](#)*

*As Joshua encountered the Gibeonites, he took this situation at face value and it appears that he "did not ask counsel from the Lord" (Josh 9:14) before making a treaty with the Gibeonites.*

*Joshua's presumption led to a serious error and reminds God's people in every age of our need to carefully apply the Word of God with prayer as we seek guidance in the different and difficult situations we inevitably face.*

*Though this is a misstep on Joshua's part- Joshua is still presented as righteous and kind and a man of his word.*

*As the truth about the deception comes out, Joshua honors the agreement and protects the Gibeonites from certain men of Israel who wanted to exact revenge.*

*He upheld the treaty with the qualification that "some the Gibeonites shall never be anything but servants, cutters of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God", activities given to foreigners in Israel (9:23; see Deut 29:11).*

*In chapters 10 through 12 we Joshua kill 5 Amorite kings, Israel do battle with a Southern alliance of Canaanites, and Israel do battle with a Northern alliance of Canaanites. Israel, with God among them, wins these battles handily.*

*Joshua 11:18–20 (ESV): tells us that "Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. 19 There was not a city that made peace with the people of Israel except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. They took them all in battle. 20 For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the Lord commanded Moses"*

*This brings us to a question that has troubled many as they encounter the conquests of Israel in their land of Canaan. Why the "scorched earth" policy? Why no mercy?*

*Joshua's conquests were one of many times the Lord intervened in history dealing severely with corruption, violence and wickedness.*

*We have already seen in Genesis and Exodus, the Lord brought severe judgment to human beings in Noah's flood, at the Tower of Babel, at Sodom and Gomorrah, and in Egypt.*

*It seems to me that Joshua's conquest was another such divine intervention.*

*In Genesis 15.16, The Lord told Abraham that he would keep Israel in Egypt for 400 years, "for the iniquity of the Amorites [was] not yet complete".*

*Archeological evidence from Canaan indicates that the land was full of horrors such as child sacrifice, sexual perversion, violence, and injustice.*

*Therefore, God, in his unsurpassed wisdom, determined to bring severe judgment against the Canaanites by means of Israel's conquests.*

*Moreover, God didn't want these practices to influence Israel, so these groups needed to be expelled from the land. So we see God bring his justice to bear on human evil in order to deliver Israel from annihilation or wholesale assimilation into Canaanite pagan culture. There is more that could be said but we must move on.*

*Joshua 13-24: Dividing the Land*

*After many battles, we finally see Joshua, much older now, dividing up the land for the 12 tribes of Israel in chapters 13-22.*

*Most of this section is made up of lists of boundary lines, and it can be slow going as we read these sections. However, for the ancient Israelites, the demarcation of these boundaries and borders were of keen interest and represents something of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land. God has kept His word.*

*All that is left at this point in the book Joshua is the final section found in chapters 23-24. Joshua delivers two farewell speeches to the people—reminiscent of Moses' final speeches in Deuteronomy.*

*It is here we see Joshua leaving Israel with a choice.*

*Joshua 24:14–15 (ESV): 14 “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**”*

*This choice looms large as the Joshua account draws to a close.*

*In these closing chapters, Joshua reminds them of God's grace and goodness bringing them into the land and driving out the Canaanites from before them. He calls them to turn away from Canaanite gods and to be faithful to the covenant that they made with God. In doing so, it will lead to life and blessing in the land.*

*But if they're unfaithful, Israel will face judgment, and much like the Canaanite inhabitants before them, they too will be removed from the land, forfeit their inheritance, and be forced into exile.*

*Here we encounter a tension- a tension between God's unconditional promises of land to Abraham and the fact that these promises seem to be contingent upon Israel's obedience to the Sinai covenant. Will Israel be obedient enough to secure and retain the promises God made to Abraham?*

*Much like Deuteronomy, the book of Joshua is not optimistic on this front.*

*Joshua goes on to say point blank- in Joshua 24:19 (ESV): “You are **not able to serve the Lord**, for he is a holy God.*

*This teaches us that the people are incapable of meeting God's righteous standard. Israel will not be able to be obedient enough. But this serves to point us to, and prepare us for the true Israel, Jesus Christ, who will obey God perfectly and secure the Abrahamic promises for all the offspring of Abraham. Galatians 3:29 (ESV): And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

*Through the story of Joshua, God is advancing his promise to bless his people with rest in the good land. In the New Covenant, the promise of rest in Christ is realized now through the gospel, and brings with it the hope for a future rest. We too must make every effort to enter that rest that Jesus has absolutely secured, clinging fiercely to him by faith and not letting go.*

*At the end of the day, the book of Joshua is a story of salvation within the Bible's larger story of salvation through Christ, and so many rich themes emerge in this book that press us closer and closer to the realities that we have come to know in Christ. It teaches us ultimately- we need Christ to come as a new Joshua, a new Savior, the Savior that Joshua pointed to, to "save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).*

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*This brings us to the book of Judges.*

*As the book of Judges begins, don't forget where we are, especially as it relates to the promises made to Abraham. We now have a people, and now we have a land. As we move forward, the promise of blessing to all the nations through a royal descendant of Abraham- a king- will slowly come into sharper focus.*

*The book's name is drawn from the types of leaders Israel had during this period. Before there was a monarchy and a king in Israel, the tribes of Israel were ruled by judges. These were political and military leaders- tribal chieftains as it were - that God raises to deliver and save Israel from the predicament brought about by their sin.*

*This usually involves military campaigns against Israel's enemies or oppressors.*

*What we have in the book of Judges represents an honest, forthright, historical account of Israel's spiral into moral corruption. It is a book full of conflict and unrest.*

*We see the nation rush headlong into sin, they continually find themselves at the end of their rope, forced to cry out to the Lord whom they had forgotten about. He then sends a judge to*



*deliver his people. This happens time and time again. In this book, so often the people are faithless, but God is extraordinarily faithful.*

*As the book of Judges opens we are told about the death of Joshua. We also hear about the failure of God's people to complete their divinely ordained mission (Josh. 1:21, 27–36). The Benjamites did not drive out the Jebusites. They pressed the Canaanites into forced labor but did not drive them out completely.*

*They were to completely destroy the Canaanites who were in the land for reasons already discussed. This was in obedience to what God had explicitly commanded in -*

*Deuteronomy 7:2 (ESV): and when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them.*

*Instead of obeying God in this matter, they assimilated- the Canaanites live among the Israelites, and the Israelites live among the Canaanites. And the Israelites began to resemble the nations around them, effectively losing their identity as the people of God. This is sometimes referred to as the "Canaanization" of Israel. This represents the beginning of the spiritual and moral decline outlined in the book of Judges.*

*Chapter 1 gives a long list of Canaanite groups that Israel failed to drive out from the land, and chapter 2 describes how Israel simply moved in alongside them, adopting their religious and cultural practices.*

*In chapter 2, we also see that narrative pause, as we get an overview of what is about to transpire in the remainder of the book. This synopsis shows us a cycle of sin and crying out to God that becomes a pattern.*

*Judges 2:18 (ESV): 18 Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them.*

*It is difficult to describe their cries for deliverance as genuine repentance, however. This cycle continues throughout most of the book, and it wasn't merely a rinse and repeat, but a downward spiral as the wickedness of the people becomes more and more compounded with each successive turning from God.*

*Judges 2:19 (ESV): 19 But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them.*

*Chapters 3-16 feature the accounts of various prominent judges.*

*It is worth mentioning that the judges that God raises up are probably not what we describe as obvious choices. Very few of the judges we read about in the book are exemplary in their character. Apart from Caleb, Othniel, and Ehud, most of them are not blameless, not above reproach, and they did not lead the nation well.*

*Let's take a moment and look more closely at three particular judges.*

*The story of Gideon and his 300-man army is a familiar one. Despite Gideon's initial reluctance to take God at his word (remember the wool fleece, the dew, and the threshing floor account in chapter 6), God nevertheless uses Gideon and his unimpressive army to deliver God's people from the hand of the Midianites.*

*Because of his recent triumphs, the people of Israel want Gideon to rule over them, revealing their lack of understanding as to what makes a good king.*

*All they desire in a king is the power and ability to rule over and conquer their enemies. But power was not one of the prerequisites that Moses had laid out for the Israelite kings (Deut. 17:14–20). It was to be a man of God's own choosing, a man of the word, not a man who puts his trust in horses or silver and gold or political maneuvering.*

*Fortunately, Gideon appears to have the right perspective and answers them accordingly.*

*Judges 8:22–23 (ESV): 2 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian." 23 Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you."*

*Though Gideon rejects being made king, he immediately begins to act like one as he obtains a harem (8:30) and makes an ephod from the captured gold of the Ishmaelites (8:27). An ephod was a garment to be worn only by priests, but this one was somehow different, as it provokes idol worship, and becomes a snare to him, to his family, and to all Israel*

*Then Gideon does something telling—he names his son "Abimelech" (8:31) which means "My father is a king." It seems that Gideon had come to believe in his own legend.*

*The next judge of interest is Jephthah (Judg. 10-12), a man of questionable pedigree. He may have been courageous, but he was the son of a prostitute. Because of this, Jephthah's half-brothers drove him away from the family, they disinherited him.*

*He fled to Tob, a land on the fringes of the desert east of Gilead, settling down near Ammonite country. There, on the outskirts of society, he began running with a rough and worthless crowd.*

*When things got really bad for Israel, the elders of Gilead came to him asking him to be their military commander. And Jephthah was quite effective, repeatedly victorious against the Ammonites.*

*But his story is tainted and tragic. He made a foolish, hasty, and manipulative vow. If the Lord gave him victory in battle, then he would offer as a burnt offering the first thing that came from his house after the victory. Perhaps he had in mind an animal.*

*But when Jephthah finally arrived home fresh from the fight, his daughter, an only child, came out of the house dancing, as she welcomed him home. Jephthah reacted with deep remorse and tore his clothes. But he did not retract his vow.*

*It may be that Jephthah had diluted the worship of Yahweh with the cult practices of Molech, the god of child sacrifice.*

*Clearly Jephthah knew something of Yahweh and his power, but he intermingled the notion of pagan human sacrifice- something not uncommon in the pagan Ammonite culture that he was immersed in for so long.*

*This tragic story shows just how far Israel has fallen. They no longer know the character of their own God, which leads to unjustified killing and false worship.*

*The last judge, Samson (Judg. 13-16), is no better than the others. A man of flawed character. He nurtured close associations with the Philistines, he was a philanderer, and he even attempted to marry a Philistine because she was right in his eyes- a clear example of the theme of the entire book of Judges: "everyone did what was right in his own eyes". In disobedience to his Nazarite vow to abstain from strong drink, he hosted a week-long drinking party, and he touched numerous dead bodies. He is a man motivated by personal revenge.*

*Undoubtedly, God empowers each of these judges to accomplish great acts of deliverance. The judges saved God's people from their enemies. But they could not save them from their sinful*

*hearts. The judges stopped the bleeding for a time, but the cancer affecting Israel's heart continued to grow all the while.*

*It goes without saying, but the fact that God uses these people does not mean he endorses all of their choices. But God is committed to saving his people. And it is a testimony to his power and great grace, as He works through very sinful and spiritually immature individuals like those presented in this book.*

*While Judges clearly emphasizes the shortcomings of the judges, consider what the author of Hebrews has to say about them.*

*Hebrews 11:32–34 (ESV): And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.*

*Now considering this passage, it would be a mistake to downplay their character flaws, or to read the book while wearing rose colored glasses so to speak.*

*But the author of Hebrews is commending something in the lives of these sinful judges. What is he commending?*

*And how does this provide encouragement for us?*

*Although sinful, the judges expressed faith in God, and therefore God used them to accomplish his purposes. This is encouraging for us, since we too are sinful. But it is, in the first place, our faith in Christ that God commends. And righteous deeds of faith will inevitably follow. Among many other things, that is what judges teaches us. And we have so much more than any person living in the time of judges.*

*Judges teaches us that God's grace is greater than our character flaws, God uses sinners like us to accomplish his will.*

*This doesn't mean we sin so that grace may abound or that usefulness isn't intrinsically bound up with our walk with God. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.*

*But God's grace is indeed greater than all our sin.*

*As Judges draws to a close, in chapters 17-21 we see Israel descend into self-destruction. In these chapters we see this domino effect- theft, the fashioning of idols, the hiring of Levites to facilitate this idol worship, this same Levite presumptuously announcing blessing in God's name, one who makes decisions based solely on expediency. The land becomes a place where might makes right, where certain men of Israel unrighteously destroy a city and come against a people otherwise at peace and secure. We see utter disregard for life, the brutal rape of a concubine, a situation reminiscent of Lot in Sodom. The woman who was brutalized, rather than receive a proper burial or medical attention (it hard to tell what the need of the hour was), was instead dismembered into 12 pieces. Eventually we see civil war breakout, the tribe of Benjamin is decimated, and in order to repopulate the tribe, the remaining Benjamites are permitted to abduct the women of Shiloh without fear of reprisal.*

*And all the while we hear the repeated refrain- "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Judg. 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, and 21:25).*

*In the first place, this refrain is not saying that things would be different if only Israel had a king. These verses are telling us that Israel has rejected their king, the Lord himself, having thrown off His rule. Later on, Israel's desire for a king is likened to rebellion as God tells Samuel- "It is not you they have rejected- but they have rejected me as their king". In a very real sense, the book of Judges becomes a prophetic call to acknowledge the kingship of the Lord, the true King and Judge of Israel.*

*But this rebuke also begins redirecting our mind to the promise to Abraham concerning a royal descendant- a King.*

*A special kind of King, who can deliver us from ourselves.*

*And so Judges sets the stage for the following books to tell the origins of the family of King David (the book of Ruth) as well as the origins of kingship itself in Israel (Samuel).*

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*That brings us to the book of Ruth.*

*A book I dare say most of you are familiar with so we will not deal with the particulars. If you are not familiar, take a few minutes and read it. It is 4 short chapters.*

*The events surrounding the book of Ruth take place during the ruling of the Judges, sometime after the Israelites enter the promised land but before David's takes the throne.*

*It is a breath of fresh air amid the turbulence of what has transpired in the book of Judges. Here we see God quietly at work, providentially orchestrating events in the lives of relative nobodies, and through acts of personal loyalty, compassion, and mercy, shaping the course of the nation of Israel and entire human history. Though you may not fully appreciate it, Ruth teaches us that God is at work, behind the scenes, through acts of covenant love and faithfulness, causing those small, seemingly inconsequential acts to profoundly advance his larger divine purposes in the world.*

*The book of Ruth tells of a young Moabite widow who, out of love, loyalty, and commitment to her widowed Israelite mother-in-law, abandoned her own culture, declaring, “Your people shall be my people, and your God my God” (1:16).*

*Ruth was destitute, and she needed to rely on the kindness of others. Nevertheless, her gentle and quiet and trusting demeanor captured the attention of Boaz, a close relative of her deceased husband. Boaz, working through the proper channels of God's law, eventually fulfills the role of kinsman-redeemer and took Ruth as his wife. Ruth is another glimmer of God's greater purpose to bring his salvation to all the nations, given that she was a Gentile, a Moabitess. And we know that Ruth was an ancestor of Christ.*

*For our purposes, I want to direct your attention to the very ending of the book- which is a genealogy that shows a line running from Perez, of the tribe of Judah, to Boaz, from Boaz to Obed, from Obed to Jesse, and from Jesse to David, who would be king, and from who will emerge Christ the King.*

*In the short-view, Ruth prepares the way for David's rise to prominence, and his kingship represents, shall we say, something of the fulfillment of the promise of a royal descendant given to Abraham.*

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*That brings us finally to 1 and 2 Samuel. These two books in our English Bibles, actually represent one long book in their original form.*

*These books focus on three main characters: Samuel, Saul, and David. These three were integral leaders in Israel, especially as the nation transitions from a group of tribes ruled by judges, into a unified kingdom ruled by King David in Jerusalem.*

*Early in 1 Samuel we are introduced to the story of Hannah who is grieved because she has never been able to have children. God sees her and hears her, and has compassion on her, and she finally bears a son, Samuel. In chapter 2 we are treated to her worshipful prayer, which concludes with these prophetic words- The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give*

*strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.” This shows us that God will one day raise up an anointed king for his people. And her prayer prepares us for what will transpire throughout these two books.*

*Hannah’s son- Samuel- grows up to become a great prophet and leader for the people of Israel. All the while we see the Philistines rise to power as the nation's largest threat (1 Sam. 4-7). In chapter 4, we are told of a pivotal battle, as the Israelites presumptuously treat the ark as some sort of guarantee that they will prevail over the Philistines. However, God ordains Israel defeat and the ark is captured by the enemies of God.*

*After about 7 months, the Philistines willingly returned the ark following several acts of divine judgment on that foreign nation.*

*To begin with, the Lord’s hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod as they took possession of the ark, God bringing devastation on them- afflicting them with tumors. The Ark was then taken to Gath, but there the people experienced more of the same. It was then transported to Ekron, but God's hand was heavy on that place as well. At this point it seemed that the only viable option was to send the Ark away from the region of the Philistines. So it was transported via cattle and cart to Beth Shemesh- where 70 people died after looking into the Ark. It was then sent on to Kiriath Jearim. There it finally found residence in Abinadab’s house where Eleazar, his son, would guard the ark of the Lord. And there the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim for nearly twenty years. The ark, once again, symbolizes the Lord's fearful and holy presence, the Lord's presence in the midst of his people, a mobile sanctuary, his earthly throne as it were. And in these texts we see the object that signifies the Lord's holy presence being passed around by foreigners who do not honor or revere his presence, and the serious consequences of that.*

*With the passage of time, the people of Israel, begin to demand some form of a stable government. In fact, they demand a king. And their motives were not noble.*

*1 Samuel 8: 5-7: Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.” But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.*

*The people's intentions were evil. Nevertheless, the Lord sovereignly purposes to bring this request to pass in order to accomplish His good plan. In doing so, God formally establishes the category of king in Israel.*

*But the idea of King is not an entirely novel idea. God was to be their King in the first place.*

*Elsewhere, the book of Genesis explains that the offspring of Abraham would be a king, for Abraham was promised that “kings shall come from you” (Gen. 17:6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.) This promise is confirmed to Jacob—“kings shall come from your own body” (Gen. 35:11). We also learn in Genesis 49:8–10 that the ruler among Israel will come from Judah. “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples” (Gen. 49:10). So a kingly figure is part of God's ultimate purpose for Israel despite the people's bad motives.*

*Saul is appointed as the first king of Israel. And most of us are familiar with how Saul turned out. His life was characterized by faithlessness and disobedience. And he was eventually rejected as king over Israel.*

*A couple of his failures are worth mentioning-*

*In 1 Samuel 15- King Saul was instructed by God through Samuel to wipe out the Amalekites and their livestock. But Saul and the army spared King Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that he deemed good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely.*

*Second, the night before his confrontation with the Philistine army, King Saul consulted with the medium of Endor- a woman who makes it her business to speak to the dead- (1 Samuel 28). Saul did so because he feared the Philistines more than he feared God.*

*And as we see King Saul spiral downward in this path of disobedience, David emerges on the scene.*

*Unlike Saul, David's life is characterized by faith, and the obedience that flows from faith. David, after being anointed by Samuel as king (1 Samuel 16)- exhibits faith and trust in God as he confronts Goliath and the Philistines, while engaging in other great exploits of battle. He also exhibits faith and obedience in how he relates to King Saul, refusing to lift his hand against the Lord's anointed- even though Saul had purposed to do away with David.*

*And despite Saul's best efforts to deter David's ascension to the throne- David becomes king at the age of 30, initially reigning in the region of Hebron. After ruling in Hebron for a time, David eventually takes control of Jerusalem, and the two tribes, Judah and Israel, are united under his reign.*

*Eventually, King David purposes to bring the Ark into the holy city.*

*2 Samuel 6.2*



*And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim.*

*This enthronement language signifies God's holy presence bound up with the Ark. And the reality of his presence it is driven home by an event that leaves a lasting impression-*

### *2 Samuel 6.5-9*

*And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the LORD, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God. And David was angry because the LORD had broken out against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"*

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*After this event David sets aside his plans to bring the ark into Jerusalem, as the fearful reality of God's presence settles in on him in a deeper way. Instead, David takes the Ark aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. And the ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household.*

*After David realizes the presence of God, though a fearful thing, would be among him and the people in order to bless and not to curse, he finally brings the Ark into the Holy City of Jerusalem.*

*This is a significant moment. In all that is about to transpire in David's life- the promise- the blessing- the favor- the crown... one thing must remain unmistakably clear- the Lord and His presence must take center stage. The Lord must be seen as the one who is revered, as holy- to use the language of 2 Samuel 6.2- as the one enthroned between the Cherubim.*

*It is the Lord who rules in the midst of His people. This is a place no man can ever occupy. The Lord is King. David's kingship is merely God appointed representation that is subservient.*

*In fact, later, as God addresses David through the prophet Nathan, he doesn't say to Nathan- tell the king this is what the Lord says- God says "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD'" (2 Samuel 7:5). The Lord is King. Men are servants at best. And the events surrounding the ark make this unmistakable.*

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*Eventually David establishes residence in magnificent palace of cedar, living in the lap of luxury in comparison with the aging, unimpressive tabernacle. Bear in mind that the tabernacle is*

*essentially a tent, subject to wear and tear, undoubtedly needing repair from time to time, and at this point has quite a bit of mileage on it. By my estimates, it is probably around 400 years old. And David recognizes the incongruity. This arrangement is not fitting.*

*Moreover, the surrounding pagan nations undoubtedly have their palaces of splendor dedicated to their idols. And in the meantime- we see the Ark of the Covenant finding residence in a structure that is patently impermanent. So David desires to build a permanent dwelling for the Ark of the Covenant- a temple- the text tells us a "house" in which to place the ark of the covenant.*

*Through Nathan the prophet, however, God speaks, and brings David's aspirations to a grinding halt.*

## *2 Samuel 7.8-9*

*Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant 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.*

*This is the divine economy through and through. God will make David's name great-not the other way around.*

*We see this arrangement in the call of Abraham- it is God's initiative on display in that situation. Abram was a pagan. No thought of the true and living God, no aspirations to be used of God in addressing humanity's plight. Abraham didn't take the initiative; God took the initiative.*

*Consider Moses and his early ambitions- At first Moses took matters in his own hands. Moses struck down an Egyptian who was beating a fellow Hebrew- and we see where his early zeal got him. He flees to the desert of Midian, where he finds himself working for his father-in-law. Later, when God takes the initiative, Moses is fearful, reluctant, and filled with excuses and arguments- read Exodus chapters 3 and 4-God essentially drags him along with constant reassurances, promises, and demonstrations of power.*

*And so it must be at this moment in redemptive history- when God covenants with David. At all the great turning points, God simply doesn't share his glory with another, not even the man after his own heart. It is as simple as that. It is God who makes his king great, not the other way around.*

*And this is where we find ourselves when God covenants with David.*

*This is the big picture. This brings us to what is perhaps the most important formative text in the work that is 1 and 2 Samuel-*

*2 Samuel chapter 7- otherwise known as the covenant God makes with David.*

*It is here that David wants to build a "house" for God, but God declares that he himself will build a "house" for David. Here it is important to understand that there is a subtle play on words going on in the text. The word house can refer to a building, and in this case a temple, but it can also refer to household and even to a dynasty. Therefore, David proposes to build a temple "house" for God- and God tells David no. God then counters David's proposal by telling David that he will build a "house" for David, that is a dynasty.*

*v. 5 "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in?'"*

*v. 11 "Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house"*

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*2 Samuel 7 is absolutely crucial for understanding the storyline of the entire Bible. God makes a promise to David that, from his royal line, there will come a future king who will build God's temple on earth, and at the same time God will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. It's this messianic promise to David that gets developed more in the book of Psalms (Ps. 2, 72, 132, and 145) and in the Prophets (Isa. 11; Ezek. 34; and Zechariah). It's this king that is connected to God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 12)- This is the future Messianic King through which God brings blessing to all nations.*

*This is a high point for David. In 2 Samuel chapter 8- full of faith, David goes on to experience unprecedented military success.*

*Amid tremendous blessing we see David in all his sinful humanity. We know it as his adulterous affair with Bathsheba.*

*But David's offense was more than adultery. David's offense was more than leading astray close confidantes in order to take hold of the object of his desire. David's offense was more than leveraging a position of power to entice and exploit a daughter of Jerusalem. It was more than pretense and the manipulation of a Hittite man, who showed himself to be a soldier in the Lord's army and a true son of Israel. It was more than a pathetic sovereignty, as David, like a puppeteer or chess player, David tried to cover up his tracks. It was more than endangering the army of the Lord, subsequently endangering the nation. It was more than the murder of an image bearer.*

*Through Nathan, the true nature of his sin, all sin, is exposed. There was a malignancy that had taken root in the innermost chamber of David's heart. David was finally acting like he was truly King. All by himself. He had dethroned God in his heart.*

*However- confronted by the prophet Nathan, he immediately owns up to what he's done. He is broken and repents, he pleads for forgiveness. Psalm 51, Psalm 32. And God forgives. But there will be consequences.*

*Amnon rapes his sister Tamar, and when their brother Absalom finds out, he has Amnon assassinated (2 Sam. 13). Absalom then hatches a plot to oust his own father and take the throne, and he launches a full-scale rebellion (2 Sam. 15).*

*David, much older now, finds himself on the run from his own home, and hiding in the wilderness, dark moments that find their origins in his sin. Eventually Absalom's life ends tragically- as Joab, David's general, took three javelins in his hand and thrust them into the heart of Absalom while he was still alive, hanging in a oak. And Joab's armor-bearers surrounded Absalom and struck him and killed him.*

*David's last days find him back on his throne- but let's be clear- we are still looking for a coming King.*