

# 2 Samuel

**WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT?** David consolidates his rule over all of Israel but also suffers major setbacks.

**WHO WROTE IT?** We don't know for sure, but it was probably a court official or someone who had access to official historical records.

**WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?** Between 1100 and 1000 B.C.

**WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT?** Second Samuel begins just after King Saul's death and continues through David's reign.

## THE BREAKDOWN

- Chapter 1: David mourns the deaths of Saul and Jonathan
- Chapters 2-4: David becomes king over the tribe of Judah
- Chapters 5-10: David consolidates his rule over all Israel
- Chapters 11-12: David sins with Bathsheba
- Chapters 13-20: Absalom's rebellion; civil war
- Chapters 21-24: Assorted highlights of David's reign

## KEY CONCEPTS

King  
Covenant

## SCORECARD

**David:** King of Israel  
**Absalom:** One of David's many sons, who led a revolt against him

## READING TIME

IN HOURS: 3:01 1:00:01 4:50:01 2:30:01 2:30:01

## WORTH MEMORIZING

• 22:2-3

"The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior;  
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.

He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety.  
He is my refuge, my savior,  
the one who saves me from violence."

• 22:26-28

"To the faithful you show yourself faithful; to those with integrity you show integrity.

To the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd.

You rescue the humble, but your eyes watch the proud and humiliate them."

• 22:31

"God's way is perfect.  
All the Lord's promises prove true.  
He is a shield for all who look to him for protection."

## THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE

• **TEMPERATION.** David, a man of extraordinary military ability and great leadership skills, still gave in to sexual temptation, which devastated his family. All of us must be on guard, or we might fall also.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF

## 2 Samuel?

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Even a

superstar can

shoot himself

in the foot.

## SPOTLIGHT

## DAVID, HOW COULD YOU?

Though he was a brilliant warrior and eloquent poet who loved God intensely, David made some big-time blunders in the later years of his life. Here's his rap sheet from 2 Samuel:

## BLUNDER

Peeping Tom.....	2 Samuel 11:2-3
One-night stand.....	2 Samuel 11:4
Elaborate cover-up (that didn't work).....	2 Samuel 11:6-15
Not job on the woman's innocent husband.....	2 Samuel 11:16-17
Failure to detect his firstborn son's problem with lust.....	2 Samuel 13:6-7
Marry for an alienated son, but no follow-through.....	2 Samuel 13:39; 14:28
Emotion at the expense of needful action.....	2 Samuel 18:33-19:8
Too much pride in his military force.....	2 Samuel 24:1-25

## REFERENCE

## BASIC SURVEY

### 2 SAMUEL

**AUTHOR:** Unknown, but not Samuel—since the events of the book take place after his death. Some suggest Abiathar, the priest (15:35).

**DATE:** Approximately 1010–970 BC, the reign of King David.

#### IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

David becomes Israel's greatest king—but with major flaws.

#### DETAILS, PLEASE

When King Saul dies, David is made king by the southern tribe of Judah. After the death of Saul's son Ish-bosheth, king of the northern tribes, David becomes ruler of all Israel. God promises David, "Your throne will be established forever" (7:16 NIV). Military victories make Israel strong; but David commits adultery with a beautiful neighbor, Bathsheba, then has her husband, Uriah, murdered. David repents and God forgives his sins, but their consequences will affect David powerfully. David's family begins to splinter apart. David's son, Amnon, rapes his half sister, and a second son, Absalom—full brother to the violated girl—kills Amnon. Absalom later pulls a military coup, causing his father to flee for his life. Ultimately, David returns to Jerusalem to reassert his kingship.

#### QUOTABLE

> "Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?" (7:18 NKJV).

#### UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

David's nephew killed a Philistine, "a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in all" (21:20 NIV). David's top soldier, Adino, once killed eight hundred men single-handedly (23:8).

#### SO WHAT?

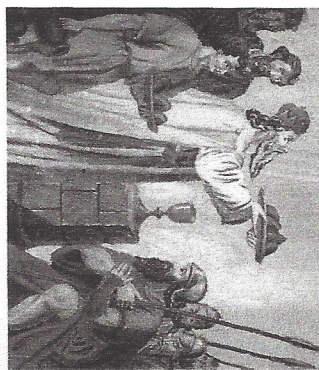
King David's story highlights the vital importance of the choices we make. Who would have guessed that such a great man could fall into such terrible sin?

#### READ 2 SAMUEL 5 AND PSALM 17.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 61. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 55. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 55. →

## HEART OF THE BOOK

### DAVID—A GODLY KING



King David was chosen by God for his righteousness and love for the Lord.

When Saul continually disobeyed God, Samuel informed him that God had chosen "a man after His own heart" as king (1 Samuel 13:14 NKJV) who would do things God's way. The apostle Peter underlined this, saying: "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will" (Acts 13:22 NASB). David not only loved God passionately, but proved it by obeying Him. "David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5 NKJV).

David felt guilty living in a palace of costly stones, cedar, and gold, whereas the ark of the covenant symbolizing the presence of God resided in a mere tent. He wanted to build God a house, but instead God promised to build David's house: "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16 NIV). This prophecy was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, of whom the angel said, "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and . . . his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32–33 NIV).

David was also an anointed musician who wrote many psalms of praise to God. His music even had the power to soothe King Saul's troubled mind (1 Samuel 16:23). David organized the temple singers and even invented new musical instruments (Amos 6:5 NKJV).

#### READ 2 SAMUEL 7 AND PSALM 55.

- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 61. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 56. →

## CLOSER LOOK

## DAVID BUILDS AN EMPIRE



King David followed God and helped build Israel into a powerful empire.

For seven years after the Philistines had defeated Israel and killed King Saul, the Israelites were engaged in a civil war. When David was proclaimed king of all Israel, the Philistines became alarmed and decided to crush Israel once again. But when they massed their armies south of Jerusalem, David attacked and defeated them. When the Philistines advanced again, God gave David specific battle instructions. “So David did as God commanded him, and they drove back the army of the Philistines.” He “attacked the Philistines and subdued them” (1 Chronicles 14:16; 2 Samuel 8:1 NKJV).

After these victories, “the Lord brought the fear of him on all the nations” (1 Chronicles 14:17 NASB). David then defeated Moab. “So the Moabites became subject to David and brought him tribute” (2 Samuel 8:2 NIV). At this time, the Aramean kingdoms to the far north were battling each other, so David chose this strategic moment to launch an attack far beyond his borders—and defeated much greater armies. With this victory, he fulfilled an ancient prophecy that God would give the Israelites not just Canaan, but all lands from the Red Sea to the Euphrates River (Exodus 23:31). Even Joshua hadn’t fulfilled this.

David went from being a persecuted fugitive to king of an empire stretching from Egypt to the Euphrates. He and his son Solomon ruled over this far-reaching empire for nearly seventy years. Even the Persians, some five hundred years later, would hear of its fame (Ezra 4:20).

**READ 2 SAMUEL 8 AND PSALM 20.**

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 57. →

## CLOSER LOOK

## DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

One evening when David was on his palace roof, he glanced down into a neighboring courtyard and saw a beautiful woman named Bathsheba bathing. She was the wife of Uriah, one of David’s soldiers, who was presently out with the army. David immediately had Bathsheba brought to him and committed adultery with her. When she became pregnant, David summoned her husband home from the war, hoping that he’d sleep with her and think that the child was his. When Uriah didn’t do that, David had him placed in the heaviest fighting, then had the army withdraw from him, leaving him to die. David then took Bathsheba as his own wife.

The prophet Nathan confronted David by telling him the story of a rich man who had many flocks, but who mercilessly butchered a poor man’s only ewe lamb. When David heard the account, he was furious and declared, “As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die.” Then Nathan announced, “You are the man!” (2 Samuel 12:5, 7 NASB). David then repented and poured out a confession to God (see Psalm 51).

God forgave him, but there were still consequences: the baby conceived in the tryst died. “Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her; and she gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon. Now the Lord loved him and sent word through Nathan the prophet, and he named him Jedidiah [Beloved of the Lord]” (2 Samuel 12:24–25 NASB).

**READ 2 SAMUEL 11:1–12:15, AND PSALM 51.**

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 58. →

## CLOSER LOOK

## ABSALOM'S REBELLION

Nathan had told David, “You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword . . . Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house. . . . Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household’” (2 Samuel 12:9–11 NASB).

This is how that trouble came about: David’s eldest son, Amnon, who was first in line for the throne, raped his half sister, Tamar. A second son, Absalom—full brother to the violated girl—then killed Amnon in revenge. Absalom fled and lived in exile for three years, but eventually David was persuaded to forgive him and invited him back to Jerusalem.

Absalom was a strikingly handsome man (2 Samuel 14:25–26), and considering that he had exacted “justice” when his father hadn’t, began to think that he’d make a better king. So he conspired to steal the kingdom from his father, and day after day he wooed the Israelites who came to Jerusalem seeking audiences with King David. He would tell them that David hadn’t appointed anyone to hear their case, then say that he wished someone would appoint *him* judge so that he could administer justice. “So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (2 Samuel 15:6 NKJV).

When he had won much of the nation over, Absalom then gathered an army and marched on Jerusalem. David barely heard about it in time, fled Jerusalem, and crossed the Jordan River, where he gathered his armies. After Absalom died in battle with David’s men, David returned to Jerusalem to reassert his kingship.

READ 2 SAMUEL 15 AND 18.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 61. →

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## CIVIL WAR IN ISRAEL

After Saul’s death, his general Abner declared Saul’s son Ish-Bosheth king of Israel, who then reigned in the north. However, it was clearly God’s will that *David* become king. Even Saul’s firstborn, Jonathan, had conceded that (1 Samuel 23:16–18). So the southern tribes followed David. “Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker” (2 Samuel 3:1 NKJV). David could have mounted a full-scale invasion of the north, but that wasn’t God’s will, so he patiently waited on God. After the death of Abner, Ish-Bosheth was greatly weakened, and soon was assassinated by his own servants. Then all Israel accepted David as king (2 Samuel 5:1–5).

READ 2 SAMUEL 2:1–11 AND 3:1–21.



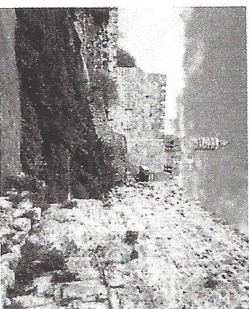
A famous battle between their armies is depicted in *Gambler between Soldiers of Ish-Bosheth and David* by Gustave Doré (1832–1883). After Ish-Bosheth was killed, David became king of all Israel.

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## DAVID CONQUERS JERUSALEM

When David became king of all Israel, he needed a more central capital, so he chose the Canaanite stronghold of Jebus, formerly called Jerusalem. Jebus had high walls, but David had grown up nearby and knew that their water supply was just outside the walls, and a small opening led under the city—and from there a water shaft went up. David sent men through the opening and they scaled the water shaft (2 Samuel 5:6–8; 1 Chronicles 11:4–6). Once inside, they opened the gate for the army. David then renamed it Jerusalem, and it became known as the City of David, “the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there” (2 Chronicles 12:13 NKJV).

READ PSALMS 48 AND 87.



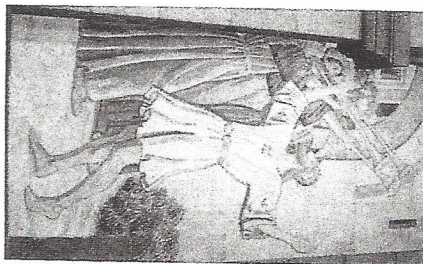
David’s knowledge of the city’s walls allowed him to enter and conquer the city of Jebus. He then renamed it Jerusalem—also called the City of David.

## HIDDEN TREASURES

## BRINGING THE ARK TO JERUSALEM

One day David decided to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem. But he failed to read the scriptures that specified *how* to transport it (Exodus 25:10-14; Numbers 4:5-6, 15). So they placed it on an oxcart and headed down the road. Suddenly the oxen stumbled. A man steadied the ark to keep it from falling and was struck dead, so David was afraid to bring it into Jerusalem. Years passed before he attempted to move it again. By now, however, he had learned that the Levites were to carry it. Once again David gathered priests and Levites, and once again they moved the ark. This time they did it the *right* way and brought it safely into Jerusalem.

READ 2 SAMUEL 6 AND PSALM 80.



David moved the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. The celebratory scene is shown in this image titled *David Bringing down the Ark*.

## HIDDEN TREASURES

## THE PLAGUE AND THE TEMPLE

God can get great good out of people's serious mistakes. One day David decided to number all the fighting men of Israel to know how strong he was. "God was very displeased with the census, and he punished Israel for it" (1 Chronicles 21:7 NLT). He sent an angel to bring a plague, and seventy thousand people died. When the angel arrived at Jerusalem, David prayed for God to spare the people, so God stopped the angel on Mount Moriah and instructed David to build an altar there. Then David realized, "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel" (1 Chronicles 22:1 NKJV). And the temple of God was built there (2 Chronicles 3:1).

READ 2 SAMUEL 24 AND PSALM 22.

## A Deadly Affair

2 Samuel 11-12

TODAY'S MOVIES AND tabloids would have loved this political sex scandal.

King David saw a woman, Bathsheba, taking a bath and got turned on. He had her invited to the palace, where he took advantage of her. When it turned out that a baby was on the way, David had all kinds of problems to solve.

His attempts kept making matters worse. First he called the woman's husband home from the battlefield, thinking that if Uriah slept with his wife, he might think the child was his own. When after several attempts that tactic didn't work, David took another route and simply had Uriah killed. Then he married Bathsheba himself.

David paid for this debacle with family trouble for the rest of his life. As God said, "From this time on, your family will live by the sword because you have despised me by taking Uriah's wife to be your own" (2 Samuel 12:10).

Everyone faces temptation, but David fed his temptation. The New Testament teaches, "When you are tempted, [God] will show you a way out so that you can endure" (1 Corinthians 10:13). So why did David fall to temptation?

It seems that David's temptation began when he was alone. He didn't take the "way out" that God provided. He didn't turn from gazing at Bathsheba. He didn't think through his actions, motivations, or consequences.

Today, Bathsheba is waiting for us on the Internet, on TV, in movies, on the pages of magazines, and, it seems, just about anywhere else we might turn. Many men, in the privacy of their own offices or dens or hotel rooms on business trips, click their way toward disaster, thinking all the while that it will be harmless or that somehow their actions won't have real consequences.

But yielding to temptation is never harmless, and consequences are ultimately severe. If we don't promptly take the "way out" at the onset, the result can be devastating.

# Does Good Always Win in the End?

DO GOOD THINGS always happen to the good guys, and bad things always happen to the bad guys? Even if every event in life doesn't come out "fair," at least everything comes out right in the end, correct?

It all depends on what you mean by "the end." And a good man named Abner illustrates this unsettling fact.

Abner served for many years as the commander of the army under King Saul, his cousin (1 Samuel 14:50). He earned a wide reputation as a loyal and competent military leader, guiding Israel's army to many important victories. Saul trusted Abner and expected him to fulfill whatever tasks he gave him, whether gathering intelligence or developing effective battle tactics (1 Samuel 17:55).

On the day the Philistines killed Saul, Abner somehow escaped with his life (1 Samuel 31:1-6). He continued to show loyalty to his late king by serving his son Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 2:8-10). A sporadic war flared for years between David and the young king, and one day Abner reluctantly had to kill the brother of Joab, David's general. From that day on, Joab nursed a grudge against his rival (2:18-24).

Over time, "Abner became a powerful leader among those loyal to Saul" (3:6), but a personal disagreement with the new king prompted Abner to offer David a united kingdom (3:12). He traveled to meet with David in Joab's absence and the two leaders struck a deal. Yet when Joab returned and learned that Abner had visited

the king and had been allowed to leave in safety, the still-bitter commander set off in hot pursuit of his hated rival. Under the pretext of furthering the meeting of the two sides for unification, Joab murdered Abner in cold blood (3:27, 30).

When David learned about the killing, he passionately repudiated the homicide and distanced himself from both Joab and his accomplice, his brother Abishai. The king demanded that a united Israel honor this assassinated hero and publicly declared at a state funeral, "Don't you realize that a great commander has fallen today in Israel?" (3:38).

Abner's unjust death illustrates that we live in a shattered world in which evil sometimes seems to win, and wrong may

appear to get the last word. His murder followed by just a few years the undeserved death of the devout Jonathan, David's best friend, who died in battle at the side of his corrupt father. So we wonder: Why does God allow such atrocities?

While we can't know the answer for sure, we must remember that God's justice always prevails in the end. Even in the Old Testament, God promises that "those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace" (Daniel 12:2).

And that means that the story of Abner and Joab isn't finished quite yet.

**THE POINT:** Although bad things happen to good people, God's justice will prevail in the end.

someone you should know

Abner

Abner's unjust death illustrates that we live in a shattered world in which evil sometimes seems to win.