

Second Samuel Chapters 4-5 - John Karmelich

At times, most of us will contemplate, "How did I get here?" It's when we're thinking, "I recall starting off doing "this" or being "there" and now look at my life!" These chapters are sort of like that as David will be the king of Israel in these chapters. These chapters were written past tense as they state he ruled all of Israel for 40 years. These chapters focus on a 7-year timeframe where he went from being king in a part of Israel to the king over the whole thing. When we first get introduced to David in the middle of 1st Samuel, David was a shepherd boy who got called to sooth the king with his harp playing. David is still doing his sheep gig at that time. God told Samuel (the prophet this book is named after) that David will be the next king, but not yet. Anyway, David did the Goliath thing and then spent years on the run (best guess is over a decade)! The current king Saul saw David as a rival and wanted him dead. Recall that Saul died at the end of 1st Samuel. In 2nd Samuel Chapter 3, Saul's top general was killed. Saul's only surviving son was scared since his top guy defected. In Chapter 4 that son is killed, and David had the men killed who killed that son! In Chapter 5 David is anointed as king over all Israel. In summary Chapter 4 is when part of Israel made him king and in Chapter 5 the whole country did!

Gee John, nice story. I guess if I lived in Israel 3,000 years ago, I'd care about this stuff! What does it have to do with us? I've been thinking about why does the Bible say more about David's life than all of the other characters? It even tells us more than what it says about Jesus growing up. In effect, David is a symbol of how Jesus will rule the world one day! Just as David came from "nowhere" to be the king of Israel, so Jesus will return one day to rule everything whether people like it or not! Still this rise-up to power, should get all of us thinking about the milestones of our lives. We may not have become the "king of the mountain" so to speak, but whether we realize it or not God has called us to use our life as a witness for Him. It's always amazing to think I started off "here" and now I'm "here".

So what are we to learn from this history lesson? David like us was given gifts. He had the gift to lead people, to inspire people (his poetry) and to allow God to guide his life! God gives each of us gifts that He expects us to use for His glory. Stop to think that whoever's the "least" of the New Testament saints (that's you and me) has greater status in heaven than even David. (Matthew 13:17) Just saying God has given each of us gifts that we can use to glorify Him and make a difference in the world for Him. So as we study the big moment of David reaching his point of power (yes he still messes up later, as all of us do) but he is called a man after God's own heart just as all of us who seek Him to guide our lives.

With that said, time for the details: The chapter opens discussing the only living son of Saul. He had a total of four boys and two girls. Three of the four sons died in battle and only one lived. The general of Saul's army didn't want to lose power, so he made Saul's youngest son Ishbosheth (You try to say that!) a king. Eleven of the 12 tribes of Israel didn't feel like changing families so this guy was it. We read in the last chapter the head general was murdered by David's head general "in cold blood". David gave a proper burial and a nice funeral for him. Anyway, Ishbosheth was now nervous because their side lost a lot to David's side in recent wars and now his head general was dead. Next we read while Ishbosheth was taking a midday siesta (it's hot there) two of his soldiers snuck in his home and killed him.

The next thing we read is these two guys brought his head to David thinking they'd be rewarded for it! David lectured them how he killed the man who took the crown of Saul's dying or dead head! Let's just say that was it for these two characters, and they were killed. Remember David knew Ishbosheth from his years growing up in Saul's house. Bottom line is he's dead and that leads us to Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 opens with a big ceremony. In effect represents from all of Israel said in effect, "we're aware that Samuel anointed you to be the next king, we know the old tune, "Saul has killed his thousands, but David has killed his tens of thousands" and despite the fact we messed up and let Saul's son be king for a few years, it is time for us to own up to our mistakes and make you king over all of Israel". The point for you and me is that if we wait on God's timing, good things happen when we do use our lives for the reason He created us, to make a difference for Him. Anyway, the next thing we read is we get stats on how David ruled from a city called Hebron for 7+ years and from Jerusalem for 33 more after that!

Speaking of Jerusalem, it's time to talk a little about that city. I've joked most of my adult life a way to describe the bible is "It's a tale of two cities". That's because from Genesis to Revelation both Babylon and Jerusalem are discussed literally and figuratively. Jerusalem was close (a few miles) from the town David grew up in. When David was made king of all Israel, there were only two spots left in Israel as a land they didn't control. Jerusalem and the territory the Philistines had. Chapter 4 mentions wars over both those places before this chapters ends. Think of this chapter as David telling us of how he united all of Israel (tribes and territory) as God designed to be!

Jerusalem was controlled by a nation God ordered to be wiped out centuries ago. He said in effect that that land belongs to the Israelites and those groups are trespassing so to speak!) Anyway David devised an attack plan by climbing up through a water shaft and low and behold, that city was the headquarters for the Israelites for the next few centuries (not to mention modern time and the place Jesus is going to rule the world from one day! Psalm 122 tells us to pray for Jerusalem so I do so! Bottom line God did lead the Israelites to conquer it and that's that!

We also get a few lines about the spoils of victory so to speak. There was a powerful city (Tyre). It is part of Lebanon today. Anyway, Tyre wanted wheat from Israel, so they sent David supplies to build a great house for himself and a deal was struck. Then there's an "encore discussion" from the last chapter in essence saying David had lots of sex with more women who became his wives and here's the sons of all those marriages. Obviously, this reads into the future. It includes the son of Bathsheba, that we will get to in a few chapters. The point is David is enjoying the blessing God has given him.

Then there was the Philistines. They weren't happy David was king and they went on the war path. To fight them David sought God for guidance and by two different methods David defeated them twice. It is not the end of that group, but they are not a significant problem for a long time due to David. That is the end of this happy story of David's rise to power that covered the opening five chapters of this book.

OK John as you love to say, "so what"? Happy for David and hopefully we'll meet him in heaven. We can ask questions about his life then. How does any of this affect me? Again think about why does the bible say more about David's life than anybody else? Yes he is respected as Israel's greatest leader and he's honored as the ancestor of Jesus in the opening of the New Testament. Again so what? I believe it is to show us in effect how Jesus when he returns comes out of "nowhere" to rule the world. One thing about bible prophecy is it works in "patterns" that are repeated. OK most of us believe Jesus will return to rule the world. Again so what? If nothing else, think about how God has guided your life to where it is you are now and realize God is "pulling the strings" for His glory as we live out our lives. Obviously we can't change our past, but we can learn from it. Hopefully as we see how God guides people for His glory it'll inspire us to say, "why not me?" I don't mean we're to be king, but that He can and does want to use our lives for His glory. So as we study these milestone moments, keep in mind God cares for us as much as He did for David and wants to guide our lives as much as His.

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! If you'd like you can read the rest or stop now. Either way, I'm grateful for you reading this. To see the other one, click on one of the two links on this web page. Thanks again, John