

Sunday Message Notes – Better Bible Reading in 2026

II Samuel: These Are The Day-vids Of Our Lives

I. Introduction - In a kingdom where power, passion, and betrayal collide, the court of King David unfolds like an ancient soap opera...In the Second Book of Samuel, the royal court becomes a slow-burning scandal machine: King David abuses power in his liaison with Bathsheba and engineers the death of Uriah the Hittite, only to be confronted by the fearless prophet Nathan, whose judgment sets off a chain reaction inside David's own house; what follows is pure Davidic dy-"nasty" melodrama as Amnon violates his sister Tamar triggering revenge, fratricide, and the unraveling of the royal family, culminating in Absalom's rebellion, public shaming of his father, and tragic death, all while the kingdom teeters under intrigue, betrayal, shifting loyalties, and the relentless sense that private sin has gone spectacularly public.

A. 2nd Samuel by sectional genres

1. Ch. 1-5:5 - David's struggle w/ Saul's legacy as he attempts to consolidate power.
2. Ch. 5:6-10 - David's good years.
3. Ch. 11-20 - David's terrible years.
4. Ch. 21-24 - List of David's exploits and a smoothing out of his failures.

II. 2ND Samuel Fun Facts

- A. The Deuteronomistic History (Dtr/DH) is: Deut., Jos., Jud., 1–2 Sam., 1–2 Kings. So, where is Ruth? Ruth is placed right in the midst of this DH, yet is not considered part of it? The DH (Deuteronomy–Kings) is shaped around *national history*. Ruth, by contrast, is a self-contained narrative.
- B. Composition: 2 Samuel is best read as a compiled narrative in which later editors weave older sources together (such as "royal court history" or "court annals") into a single story.
- C. **Names: function as deliberate literary devices** in support of a broader Davidic apologetic. Consider Ishbosheth (king of north), a son of Saul and rival to David. His name in the Hebrew text means "man of shame," yet earlier traditions preserved in the Greek text and elsewhere render Ishbaal, "man of the Lord." This reflects a theological/political reframing by later writers who are propagating the Davidic kingdom – who are subtly discrediting Saul's line while elevating David's legitimacy (ref. also to Nabal in I Sam. 25, whose name means "fool").
- D. Tension over who killed Goliath.

I Sam. 17:50–51 → David kills Goliath (v. 7 "*the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam*") with a sling and then beheads him.

II Sam. 21:19 → Elhanan kills Goliath

¹⁹ *Then there was another battle with the Philistines at Gath, and Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.* ²⁰ *There was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great size who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; he, too, was descended from the giants.* ^{[e] 21} *When he taunted Israel,*

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Jonathan son of David's brother Shimei killed him.²² These four were descended from the giants^[d] in Gath; they fell by the hands of David and his servants.

I Chron. 20:5 attempts a harmonization → Elhanan killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath:

⁵ *Again there was war with the Philistines, and Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.* ⁶ *Again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great size who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; he also was descended from the giants.*^[d] ⁷ *When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him.* ⁸ *These were descended from the giants^[d] in Gath; they fell by the hand of David and his servants.*

E. **II Sam. 24:1** says “Again the *anger of the Lord* was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them saying, “Go, count the people of Israel and Judah.” David’s sin is being attributed to divine prompting, while the people’s suffering is the result. **I Chron. 21:1** says “*Satan* stood up against Israel and incited David to count the people.” God is blamed. Satan is blamed. Yet, David is not blamed for sinning. This is a troubling attempt to justify David’s legacy while skirting responsibility for unethical behavior.

F. **Ps. 89** is a narrative history of the Davidic kingdom and its demise. God promises an enduring dynasty to King David (vv. 3-4, 28-37, “I will establish your line forever...”). Yet, God “renounced the covenant,” the kingdom ends in ruins (vv. 38–45). The psalm moves from **praise** → **promise** → **protest**, and refuses to resolve the tension.

III. Violence in 2nd Samuel

A. This is an intensely violent book. While it is not necessarily more violent than other texts we have studied, its stories are more individually focused, making them harder to resolve or distance ourselves from: 12 rapes, 1 suicide, 7 murders, and 10 executions.

1. **This raises an important distinction: What is God? What is attributed to God? And what belongs to the work of narrative storytelling?** Interpretation requires more than simple conclusions. We are invited to wrestle with what is divine command, what is human action, and what reflects the perspective of those telling the story. Not every act within the narrative implicates God; discerning that difference is part of the interpretive work these texts demand.

IV. The Justice Lens

A. Justice for Bathsheba (11:1–5) David’s taking of Bathsheba is best understood not as mutual desire, but as an abuse of royal power (i.e., “rape”). The text offers no indication of Bathsheba’s consent; the power imbalance suggests coercion rather than romance.

B. Justice for Uriah (11:6–17) Uriah the Hittite (Bathsheba’s husband) becomes expendable—placed on the front lines and abandoned (perhaps Stevie Wonder puts it best: “they had me standing on the front line”). Uriah’s loyalty contrasts sharply with David’s betrayal.

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- C. Justice for David and Bathsheba's Child (12:13–18)** The child born to David and Bathsheba dies as part of the narrative's judgment. **An ethical tension remains:** why do the innocent suffer for the sins of the powerful? The child functions as a troubling example of displaced consequence.
- D. David and Narrative Framing (I Sam. 17:50–51; II Sam. 21:19)** David is celebrated for killing Goliath, the act that launches his rise. Yet other deaths connected to his power are narratively distanced from him. This raises the question: how does the text assign credit and deflect blame?
- E. Justice for Tamar / the Cost of Silence (II Sam. 13:1–22)** Amnon, David's son and half-brother of Tamar, rapes her. David is angry, yet does not act. Is this silence about preserving the kingdom? His legacy? His own moral exposure (e.g., the rape of Bathsheba and murder of Uriah)? This neglect of justice echoes earlier biblical cycles of violence and retaliation (e.g., the rape of Dinah and Jacob's neglect of justice Gen. 34). What is left unaddressed becomes generationally explosive.
- F. Justice / Redemption for Absalom (II Sam. 13–18)** A more sympathetic reading of Absalom sees his rebellion not as mere ambition, but as a response to moral failure at the top. After David's abuse of power with Bathsheba, the killing of Uriah, and his refusal to bring justice for Tamar, Absalom acts. His actions are violent, yet can be read as an attempt to restore honor, defend the violated and enact the justice in place of the king's neglect.

V. Theological Dangers

- A. The "Austere God" / Priestly Holiness Logic (II Sam. 6:6–7)** The death of Uzzah while steadying the ark reflects a **holiness framework** often associated with priestly theology: sacred presence is dangerous when approached improperly (David then decides that an animal must be sacrificed every 6 paces taking the ark from Obed-Edim to Jerusalem). This raises a **theological tension:** if God "looks at the heart," why does immediate death follow an instinctive act of goodwill or preservation? The narrative invites us to wrestle with whether God favors ritual purity or moral practice.
- B. "Touch Not My Anointed" and Collateral Theology (I Sam. 24:4–7, 26:9–11)** The phrase "touch not the Lord's anointed" emerges in the conflict between Saul and David. David's refusal to kill Saul is framed as reverence for divine election, even when Saul is unjust. However, this logic can produce a **theological danger:** the "anointed" may be protected from critique or accountability, while those harmed by them become invisible collateral damage. The **ethical question remains:** does divine election override moral responsibility? Are the writers leveraging David's refusal to physically harm Saul to enact an untouchability for David? The narrative in Samuel resists this hermeneutic, although presenting David as refusing to physically harm Saul because of divine election, the broader storyline in Samuel shows a steady power grab by David questioning Saul's legitimacy, authority and family line.

- C. David as "A Man After God's Heart" (I Sam. 13:14; 16:7; Acts 13:22)** David's

