

Rise and Fall of Nations 2

We began last Sunday with this new series of messages entitled the “Rise and Fall of Nations.” We are focusing initially on the times in Israel’s history when she experienced, under godly leadership, God’s richest blessings, power, and miraculous protection. We will also focus on those times when Israel’s kings forsook God’s commands and thus brought on the appropriate and reasonable judgment of God upon themselves and the nation. Our ultimate purpose in all this is to consider relevant application to our nation and election choices today.

Two very important questions: Does it really matter if America’s leaders honor and obey God in their political views, policies, platforms and function? Does it really matter if those in position of authority in American government honor and obey God in their private lives?

Last week we made a brief survey of the reign of Israel’s first king, Saul. Saul had everything going for him. He was experiencing astounding, miraculous victories against Israel’s enemies, gaining the respect and honor of Israel’s people and neighbors, and was obviously blessed by God. Until, one day he chose to disobey God in what most people would probably consider a fairly insignificant thing. But because of this one act of disobedience, Saul’s life began to unravel, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It eventually led to Israel being miserably defeated and invaded by the Philistines and the untimely death of Saul and his three sons. That pretty well answered the first question. It does matter that a nation’s leaders obey God.

Today, we will try to answer the second question. Does it really matter if government leaders honor and obey God in their private lives? We're going to look at the rise and fall of Israel in the hands of Saul's successor, David. I believe we'll find a clear answer.

David was anointed king of Israel by Samuel while Saul was still in power. Saul was still functioning as king, and did so for several years after Samuel said "because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has rejected you as king." 1 Sam 15:23 (HCSB)

But God's hand of blessing and protection were far from him.

God had sent Samuel to Bethlehem to the family of Jesse where he considered each of his sons. After God rejected all the older brothers, David was called in from keeping the sheep.

Then the LORD said, "Anoint him, for he is the one." 1 Sam 16:12 (HCSB)

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or his stature, because I have rejected him. Man does not see what the LORD sees, for man sees what is visible, but the LORD sees the heart." 1 Sam 16:7 (HCSB)

David seemed to have the "Midas" touch. Even as a youngster his musicianship got him into the court of king Saul and his marksmanship led to an amazing defeat of the Philistine army. By the time of Saul's death, David had already won the hearts of the people of Israel. Remember after David killed Goliath....

⁵ David marched out [with the army], and was successful in everything Saul sent him to do. Saul put him in command of the soldiers, which pleased all the people and Saul's servants as well. ⁶ As David was returning from killing the Philistine, the women came out from all the cities of Israel to meet King Saul, singing and dancing with tambourines, with shouts of joy, and with three-stringed instruments. ⁷ As they celebrated, the women sang: Saul has killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands. **1** Sam 18:5-7 (HCSB)

1 All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Here we are, your own flesh and blood. ² Even while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led us out [to battle] and brought us back. The LORD also said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel and be ruler over Israel.' " ³ So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron. King David made a covenant with them at Hebron in the LORD's presence, and they anointed David king over Israel. ⁴ David was 30 years old when he began his reign; he reigned 40 years. ⁵ In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned 33 years over all Israel and Judah. **2** Sam 5:1-5 (HCSB)

8 "Now this is what you are to say to My servant David: "This is what the LORD of Hosts says: I took you from the pasture and from following the sheep to be ruler over My people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. I will make a name for you like that of the greatest in the land. ¹⁰ I will establish a place for My people Israel and plant them, so that they may live there and not be disturbed again. Evildoers will not afflict them as they have done ¹¹ ever since the day I ordered judges to be over

My people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies.

2Sam 7:8-11 (HCSB)

¹ After this, David defeated the Philistines, subdued them, and took Metheg-ammah from Philistine control. ² He also defeated the Moabites. ³ David also defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah, who went to restore his control at the Euphrates River. ⁴ David captured 1,700 horsemen and 20,000 foot soldiers from him, and he hamstringed all the horses, and he kept 100 chariots. ⁵ When the Arameans of Damascus came to assist King Hadadezer of Zobah, David struck down 22,000 Aramean men. ⁶ Then he placed garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Arameans became David's subjects and brought tribute. The LORD made David victorious wherever he went. ⁷ David took the gold shields of Hadadezer's officers and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸ King David also took huge quantities of bronze from Betah and Berothai, Hadadezer's cities. 2 Sam 8:1-8 (HCSB)

This was just a snapshot of David's success as king of Israel. He united the people, experienced victory after victory against their enemies, and expanded the wealth and power of the nation.

But.....

Of course you know the story... At a time when David should have been on the battle field with his men, he was home at the palace. At a time at the palace when he should have been enjoying the company of one of at least one of his wives, he was on the rooftop looking and lusting after someone else's wife. At the time when he should have looked away, he looked longer and more intently. At a time when he should have fled, he lingered. At a time when he should have gone to the Lord in

prayer seeking strength, he instead pursued the woman he lusted after. And, at a time when he should have considered obedience to God's commands a necessity, he forsook them to fulfill his selfish, ungodly passions. He committed adultery. She became pregnant. He abused his authority to murder her husband. He brought the woman into the palace as his wife, another wife. Nathan the prophet, God's messenger, confronted David regarding his sins with an illustrative "story." David became furious....

7 Nathan replied to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD God of Israel says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I gave your master's house to you and your master's wives into your arms, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah, and if that was not enough, I would have given you even more. ⁹ Why then have you despised the command of the LORD by doing what I consider evil? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife as your own wife—you murdered him with the Ammonite's sword. ¹⁰ Now therefore, the sword will never leave your house because you despised Me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own wife.' ¹¹ "This is what the LORD says, 'I am going to bring disaster on you from your own family: I will take your wives and give them to another before your very eyes, and he will sleep with them publicly. ¹² You acted in secret, but I will do this before all Israel and in broad daylight.' "

2 Sam 12:7-12 (HCSB)

After rape, shame, hatred, jealousy and murder in his own house among his own children, Absalom, David's own son, a son he loved dearly, instigated a rebellion and succeeded in

overthrowing his own father as king which led to David and his entourage leaving Jerusalem in shame and disgrace.....

5 When King David got to Bahurim, a man belonging to the family of the house of Saul was just coming out. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he was yelling curses as he approached. **6** He threw stones at David and at all the royal servants, the people and the warriors on David's right and left. **7** Shimei said as he cursed: "Get out, get out, you worthless murderer! **8** The LORD has paid you back for all the blood of the house of Saul in whose place you rule, and the LORD has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. Look, you are in trouble because you're a murderer!" **2** Sam 16:5-8 (HCSB)

Point: David's Psalms are some of the most beautiful and powerful words penned by a human being. They are some of the most loved and often quoted verses in all God's Word. This gentle, creativity mixed with artful musicianship and combined with extraordinary courage, fierce strength and leadership made David a man loved, admired, and respected by all of Israel. He led the people of Israel to become the great and mighty nation of Israel, a world power.

But, one moral indiscretion by its leader king David severely weakened Israel in almost every respect. And though David quickly repented of his sin before God and the prophet Nathan, the natural and unnatural consequences of that sin followed him, his family, and the entire nation for the rest of his life. You can honestly and accurately say that David's sin, though it technically took place in the privacy of his home, negatively impacted every other home in the nation of Israel.

So how does this apply to us today? It answers the question: Does it really matter if those in position of authority in American government honor and obey God in their private lives? Is God still God? Have His commands changed? Does He hold our leaders any less accountable today? Yes it really does matter that everyone, especially those in position of authority, believe, honor and obey God. You and I should expect, because God does, all people in all position of authority to honor and obey all His commands.

1 Not many should become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment; **J**ames 3:1 (HCSB)

If God holds each of us accountable in our personal and public lives for how we live, how much more will He hold leaders accountable implementing stricter judgment? Why? Because leaders lead. They lead others to follow them into their righteousness or into their sin.

When we makes choices in regard to voting for public officials whether the city council or president of the United States, we have the right and responsibility before God to demand righteousness from them as defined by biblical principles.

When a recent former president was caught in sexual infidelity, he should have resigned, but instead he lied about it and went on as if nothing happened. We, all Americans, especially Christian Americans, should demand more from our elected officials.

How can we know what the true private morality is of political candidates? For some, it's easy. They flaunt it. But how do we

discern those we don't know very well? How do we filter through all the claims and accusations pro and con?

14 But the natural man does not welcome what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to know it since it is evaluated spiritually. ¹⁵ The spiritual person, however, can evaluate (*or discern*) everything, yet he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone. ¹⁶ For: **who has known the Lord's mind, that he may instruct Him?** But we have the mind of Christ. **1** Cor 2:14-16 (HCSB)

13 Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature—for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil. **H**eb 5:13-14 (HCSB)