

## **DAVID: A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART?**

Few, if any, people in the Bible have their lives spelled out in as much detail on the sacred pages as did David. We can follow his activities—both good and bad—for more than five decades. So what is the conclusion that one comes to after reviewing David's life? Fortunately it is not our job to do the judging, but perhaps we could look over God's shoulder as he works with David and finally discusses David's story with his children and even grandchildren. God inspired this record to be recorded about one of His most famous human ancestors. Would you have?

David was called a man after God's own heart when he was still very young: 1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22; compare 1 Samuel 16:6,7. These were the days when David was a quiet shepherd on the hills of Bethlehem. (See Ellen White #a below)

While still a boy, he used his sling to throw a stone at the unprotected forehead of Goliath and when the giant dropped, David ran up and cut his head off with Goliath's own sword. He carried that head around with him for the rest of the day! (1 Samuel 17:54,57)

When asked to bring a hundred Philistine foreskins as the dowry price for the king's daughter, David brought two hundred! (1 Samuel 18:25-27)

David escaped from Saul by taking an "image" that was in his house and putting it in his bed to make it appear like he was sick in bed. (1 Samuel 19:13)

David lied to the High Priest to try to prevent Saul's helpers from catching him and this led to the death of about 85 priests. (1 Samuel 21 & 22)

After fleeing for years before Saul, David, with a group of people including evil men and ruffians (1 Samuel 30:22) fled to live in a small town in Philistia where they repeatedly raided local villages killing everyone and then lied to their Philistine associates about what they had been doing. (1 Samuel 27)

David married many different women. (1 Samuel 25:43,44; 2 Samuel 2:1,2; 3:2-4; 5:13; **12:8**; 15:16; 1 Chronicles 3:1-9; 14:3-7; Compare 1 Kings 3:1 and 1 Kings 11:1-3)

David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then arranged for the murder of her husband so he could marry her! (2 Samuel 11 & 12)

When fighting against the Moabites who had protected his own parents and his own life earlier when he was fleeing Saul, he lined them up in three rows and killed two of the rows of soldiers. (2 Samuel 8:2)

David condemned seven descendants of Saul to death apparently under God's direction to try to end a famine. (2 Samuel 21).

David went to war so often that it came to be thought of as an annual "event". (2 Samuel 11 and 1 Chronicles 20)

To assess his military capability David decided, against advice even from his general, to count up the number of fighting men in the country and 70,000 people died as a result. (2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21)

David did so much killing that even God felt that He must protest about it. He forbade David to build the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 28:3)

David and his family treated women like pieces of property. Consider the ten concubines who were left behind at the palace to care for it when David fled before Absalom. (See 2 Samuel 16:15-23; 20:3) Amnon, David's firstborn son, was consumed with passion for his step sister, tricked her into coming to his bedroom, raped her and then despised her and threw her out. She was then

treated like a widow. (2 Samuel 13:1-22) Abishag, one of the most beautiful women in the land, was asked to sleep with David when he was an old man, just to keep him warm! (1 Kings 1:1-4) Later she was not allowed to marry as any other woman might be allowed. (2 Kings 2:13-25)

David did a terrible job of disciplining his children. Look at the stories and comments about Amnon and Adonijah, his firstborn sons! (2 Samuel 13:1-22; 1 Kings 1:5,6)

When David wanted to have the blessings of God in Jerusalem, he decided to bring the ark of God there. He invited all the people and with great military fanfare loaded the ark on a cart to transport it. He didn't bother to follow God's instructions on how it was to be carried and when Uzzah reached out and touched the ark and was struck dead, David was afraid and angry at God. (See 2 Samuel 6:1-23; 1 Chronicles 13:1-14; 15:25-16:6, 43)

David wrote many Psalms suggesting that he was a great thinker, poet and writer. While many of his psalms are beautiful and inspirational, some of his poetry is very vengeful. (See 2 Samuel 22:1-23:7 especially verses 2-4, 21-28, and 26-43; Psalms 18)

At the very end of his life when he should have learned the truth about God and understood it best he told his son Solomon to execute retribution on two of his "enemies", Shimei and Joab. (1 Kings 2:5-9)

Despite all of this God said some amazing things about David after his death:

### ***To/about Solomon:***

1 Kings 3:14: "And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days." (RSV)

1 Kings 11:4: "For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father." (RSV)

1 Kings 11:6: "So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done." (RSV)

### ***To/about Jeroboam:***

1 Kings 11:34: "Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand; but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of David my servant whom I chose, who kept my commandments and my statutes;" (RSV)

1 Kings 11:38: "And if you will hearken to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you, and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you." (RSV)

1 Kings 14:8: "and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you; and yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments, and followed me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in my eyes," (RSV)

### ***To/about Abijah:***

1 Kings 15:3: "And he walked in all the sins which his father did before him; and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father." (RSV)

1 Kings 15:5: "because David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uri'ah the Hittite." (RSV)

### **To/about Josiah:**

2 Kings 22:2 "And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left." (RSV)

### **Solomon's prayer:**

2 Chronicles 6:16 "Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father what thou hast promised him, saying, `There shall never fail you a man before me to sit upon the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk in my law as you have walked before me.'" (RSV)

### **To Solomon:**

2 Chronicles 7:17: "And as for you, if you walk before me, as David your father walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my ordinances," (RSV)

### **About Josiah:**

2 Chronicles 34:2 "He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left." (RSV)

### **Questions:**

Why would the Bible make such statements about David? What was there about David that God seemed to like? Is David really outstanding among the kings of Israel and Judah? Was he so good that God should promise him an eternal dynasty despite what his children did?

### **Discussion:**

David never really abandoned his worship of the true God as many of his contemporaries and his children did. Despite his terrible sins, as soon as the truth of a given sin seemed to hit him he turned immediately to Yahweh. His repentance was deep and sincere. (See Psalms 51) He seemed to understand to a much greater and deeper dimension than many in the Old Testament the truth about God and His character. Many of the things that David did that we think are terrible were expected of kings in his day! David was very respectful toward Saul whom he regarded as the anointed of God.

***It should be clear that it was not because he never sinned, or made a mistake, or was some kind of a "saint" that He was thought of as "a man after God's own heart"!*** With all his faults David still was the kind of humble, teachable person who was always ready to listen to God's instruction. Such "willingness to listen" referred to in the Bible as "obedience" is God's primary requirement for entering the Kingdom of Heaven. (See 1 Samuel 15:22,23)

David spoke candidly about his feelings. His "prayers" and "songs" in the Psalms show almost the entire range of human feelings. He said many great things about God and became the most quoted Biblical writer even in New Testament times.

As soon as David realized that he had made a mistake he set about to correct it. (See 1 Chronicles 13:1-14; 15:25-16:6, 43; and Psalms 51)

David made all the preparations for building the temple. He led the people in worship of God on many occasions. He was in close, almost face-to-face, communication with God. (See 2 Samuel 2:1,2)

Ellen White:

*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 379; *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 4a, p. 87

**“I was shown that it was when David was pure, and walking in the counsel of God, that God called him a man after his own heart. When David departed from God, and stained his virtuous character by his crimes, he was no longer a man after God’s own heart.** God did not in the least degree justify him in his sins, but sent Nathan, his prophet, with dreadful denunciations to David because he had transgressed the commandment of the Lord. God shows his displeasure at David’s having a plurality of wives, by visiting him with judgments, and permitting evils to rise up against him from his own house. The terrible calamity that God permitted to come upon David, who, for his integrity, was once called a man after God’s own heart, is evidence to after generations that God would not justify any one in transgressing his commandments; but that he would surely punish the guilty, however righteous and favored of God they might once have been while they followed the Lord in purity of heart. When the righteous turn from their righteousness and do evil, their past righteousness will not save them from the wrath of a just and holy God.”

*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 378,379

“His crime in the case of Uriah and Bath-sheba, was heinous in the sight of God. A just and impartial God did not sanction or excuse these sins in David, but sent a reproof and heavy denunciation by Nathan, his prophet, which portrayed in living colors his grievous offense. David had been blinded to his wonderful departure from God. He had excused his own sinful course to himself, until his ways seemed passable in his own eyes. One wrong step had prepared the way for another, until his sins called for the rebuke from Jehovah through Nathan. David awakens as from a dream. He feels the sense of his sin. He does not seek to excuse his course, or palliate his sin, as did Saul; but with remorse and sincere grief, he bows his head before the prophet of God, and acknowledges his guilt. Nathan tells David that, because of his repentance and humble confession, God will forgive his sin, and avert a part of the threatened calamity, and spare his life; yet he should be punished, because he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. This occasion has been improved by the enemies of God, from David’s day until the present time. Skeptics have assailed Christianity, and ridiculed the Bible, because David gave them occasion. They bring up to Christians the case of David, his sin in the case of Uriah and Bath-sheba, his polygamy, and then assert that David is called a man after God’s own heart, and that if the Bible record is correct, God justified David in his crimes.”

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