

Day 68. Psalm 60; 1 Samuel 11 - 13

King Saul

Psalm 60

A prayer for God's help at a time of national crisis, reminding the congregation in verses 6-8 of a prophecy given at one of the shrines. The prophecy highlights the unity of Israel, encompassing both Ephraim and Judah, the two most powerful tribes, as well as the Israelite settlements east of the Jordan, Gilead and Manasseh. The enemies are those to the east, south and west.

1 Samuel 11

On hearing of the plight of Jabesh Gilead, Saul acted like one of the judges. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him for a particular deed, the people rallied to him and a great victory was won. Saul's victory was what was needed to cement the support of the tribes and their elders for his kingship.

1 Samuel 12

Chapter 12 reflects skilful editing by the Deuteronomic compilers. In 1 Samuel 8, Samuel denounces Israel for having asked God for a king, whereas chapters 9 - 11 show God providing them with a king who begins to save them from their enemies. Samuel's second speech, here in chapter 12, resolves the contradiction between the two points of view. Despite Israel's disobedience in asking for a king, God will continue to bless them if they remain loyal to him and keep the Law.

With the monarchy established, Samuel, the last of the judges, became the first of the prophets. One part of his role as prophet was to intercede for the people and another to teach them the Law (12:23-24; also 10:25).

1 Samuel 13

The victory at Jabesh Gilead was won in the manner of the judges, but with his position as king secure Saul began to move to a new system of defence by setting up a standing army (13:2). Rather than inspired by the Spirit, the next battle came about by the initiative of Jonathan and his detachment. But this time, instead of rallying confidently to Saul's support, the army lost morale and ran to hide. Some even retreated to the other side of the Jordan (13:7).

Saul had beaten the Ammonites, but the Philistines represented a much greater threat. They alone had access to iron weapons and farming tools and used their technological superiority to keep the Israelites in subjugation (13:16-end). 14:21 mentions Hebrews who had gone over to the Philistines. As in Exodus, the word "Hebrews" carries overtones of an oppressed lower class.

From chapter 13, Saul's personal failings begin to surface. He had fought valiantly and after a shaky start had begun to apply himself to the role of king, but although he was at home with an army, he neglected his relationship with God. In his own mind, he was depending on the men who were now scattering rather than the God who had called him and made him king (13:8-9). His heart was not in tune with God's and already the Lord had sought out another to take his place (13:14).

Day 69. Psalm 95; 1 Samuel 14 - 15

Saul's Failure

Psalm 95

Blessings for those who trust in God and a warning for those who do not.

1 Samuel 14

In contrast to Saul, who had ignored Samuel's instructions because of fear of his men slipping away (13:8-9), Jonathan recognised that if the Lord's purpose is to save his people, numbers are not important (14:6). The nature of the ground was an important element in Jonathan's surprise attack. He chose a narrow pass between two cliffs, where two men could hold off a much larger number. Just as in the case of Gideon, who also went into battle with a small number, God gave the attackers a sign to assure them of victory and intervened himself to throw the enemy into a panic (14:15, Judges 7:21-22).

When he heard the people were feasting on the spoil, Saul set up a large boulder as a temporary altar and later built a more permanent structure (14:31-35). Under the Law, every slaughter of an animal was a sacrifice. The Israelites were forbidden to eat blood because the animal's blood represented its life, which belonged to God. The blood had to be poured out before the animal was free to be eaten (Leviticus 17:1-12, Genesis 9:4-5).

The New International Version follows the Hebrew text by omitting the reference to the sacred lots Urim and Thummim in verse 41. Other versions follow the Septuagint, the later Greek translation of the Old Testament. The lots were probably sacred stones worn in the priest's ephod. When the story was originally written in Hebrew, the writer would take for granted a knowledge of how the lots worked. By the time the Septuagint was written, this had been forgotten so a full explanation was added.

Jonathan was critical of Saul's foolish vow (14:29,43). Already he had begun to distance himself from his father. Later he supported his rival David against him.

1 Samuel 15

The Lord's enmity to the Amalekites went back to the time of the exodus when Amalek had been the first nation to oppose the Israelites after they

left Egypt (Exodus 17:8-end). The Lord's instruction was to put the Amalekites under the sacred ban. This meant that everything was to be destroyed, and none of the spoil kept back. The same was true in the case of Jericho, the first city to oppose Israel after they crossed the Jordan (Joshua 6:20-21). Saul sinned against the ban by sparing the life of the Amalekite king, by bringing back the spoil and by erecting a monument to himself on an occasion when he was meant to be simply carrying out the Lord's instruction.

Saul had misunderstood the relation between life and worship. Under Samuel's tuition he had tried to go along with the proper forms, for example in 14:31-35 where he built an altar to the Lord. But his natural instincts had betrayed him (13:12; 14:24; 15:9,24). He had not learned the great lesson, which is the theme of all the prophets, that religion is no substitute for obedience. The Lord is more interested in whether our lives honour him than in the correctness of our worship (15:22-23).

But the main thing that undermined Saul's kingship was his inferiority complex (15:17). He did not see himself as very important (9:21) and as a result he did not see the task to which God called him as sufficiently important (10:22,27). Instead of trusting his own judgement, he was easily swayed by circumstances and the will of others, and this made him irresolute and prevented him from discerning the guidance of God and sticking to it (13:11-12; 14:18-19,36-37,45; 15:24). Later he was unable to cope with David's greater success and became murderously jealous of him (18:6-9). God tells us that we are each precious in his sight. Any task to which he calls us is unique and valuable. An inferiority complex is something for which we need to seek the Lord's healing since it implicitly denies these two important truths and prevents us from entering fully into all he wants for us.

Day 70. Psalm 33; 1 Samuel 16 - 17

David and Goliath

Psalm 33

A psalm for the harp and ten-stringed lyre. God the Creator and Lord of history brings about his purposes for the peoples, in particular for his own people, who are protected by him personally rather than by their own natural strength.

1 Samuel 16:1-13

The Lord had already told Samuel that he had found a man "after his own heart" to become king in place of Saul (13:14). But Samuel still had to learn that the Lord looks on the heart rather than on the outward appearance (16:7). Eliab had all the attributes which had so impressed Samuel in Saul (10:23-24), but this time he was not the one chosen.

From the time of his anointing the Spirit of the Lord came on David in power (16:13). Like the judges such as Gideon, this would give him confidence in God's help and draw people to him in loyalty. Although secretly anointed, the gift of the Spirit placed David on the path which led to kingship.

1 Samuel 16:14-end

As the Spirit of the Lord came on David, it departed from Saul and in its place came an evil spirit. Here the word "spirit" refers specifically to disposition and not to an indwelling occult presence. Saul's disobedience to the Lord had led to depression and later to fear and suspicion.

Although anointed as king, David came to court as a servant. Like Jesus, he began by serving rather than being served and reminds Christians that whatever our vocation may be, we fulfil it only with the heart of a servant.

1 Samuel 17

Saul was tall and impressive (9:2) and moreover he and Jonathan were the only ones in the Israelite army with serviceable weapons (13:22). But Goliath was taller and more heavily armed. Bereft of the Spirit, Saul was afraid to fight and faced instead the prospect of slavery with all his people (17:9). He is a picture of Adam, the man who lost his rule through

disobedience, and thus of us all. Sooner or later some sin proves too strong for us and will enslave us unless we find the help of another.

The man God sent to take Saul's place was young, untried and unrecognised not only by Saul but even by his own brothers (17:28,55). He put aside the armour Saul offered and went alone with only the weapons of a shepherd and trusting in the Lord. David fought on behalf of the whole of God's people and his victory over Goliath led to the victory of Israel over the Philistines. In the same way, Jesus went to the cross in our place to win for us the victory over sin.

The passage from 17:1 to 18:4 presents an acute problem. In the first place, the story is completely unnecessary. 18:5 follows naturally from the section 16:14-end, with its mention of David's valour as well as his musical ability (16:18) and David's friendship with Jonathan is introduced again in 19:1. Moreover, the passage completely contradicts what comes both before and after. David is at home rather than at court, his brothers appear not to know of his anointing, Saul does not know who he is and the offer of one of Saul's daughters to the man who overcomes Goliath conflicts with the account of how David came to marry Michal in chapter 18. The story was obviously greatly loved and as it was told and retold it may have attracted a number of extra details which do not belong to it, in particular becoming associated with an explanation of how David came to court.

Day 71. Psalm 59; 1 Samuel 18 - 20

The Tragedy of Saul and David

Psalm 59

The title given to the psalm links it with the incident in 1 Samuel 19. The writer compares his enemies to packs of dogs roaming the city. The prayer is made by the king and the enemies may in fact be foreign nations.

1 Samuel 18 - 20

After his victory over Goliath, David continued to show the signs that the Spirit of the Lord was with him. He was effective in battle and he won the hearts of those around him. But the more David prospered, the more Saul hated him, and the more he lost the hearts of those closest to him, the women from the towns (18:6-7), all Israel and Judah (18:16), his own daughter (18:20; 19:11-13), Samuel who had anointed Saul king (19:18) and above all Jonathan, his son and heir to the throne (18:1-4; 19:1-5). We may find, when we obey the call of God and see his blessing as a result, that the greatest opposition comes not from the world but from other Christians, those who in some way may be resisting God's will or holding on to positions of power.

Covenant friendship is so rare today as to have been all but lost, even among Christians. Jonathan's response to David appears to be all of a piece with his overall character. He was a brave man who trusted God with his life (14:6). Above all he was loyal. Although critical of his father (14:29-30; 19:2), he was unwilling to disbelieve his promise (19:6; 20:2). When he realised Saul had changed his mind again, he grieved at the injustice (20:34).

But above all Jonathan recognised in David the man whom God had chosen and gave him his unswerving loyalty. After David's battle with Goliath he gave him his sword and other weapons. The covenant friendship was a promise of loyalty for life. By making this covenant with the "house" of David and asking for a promise of loyalty, he was already conceding that David would be the next king (see also 23:16-18). Yet in the end his loyalty to Saul his father cost him his life (31:1-2).

Jonathan is a picture for us of our response to Jesus. We recognise in him the man God has appointed king and give up to him our own right to rule. We yield to him our armour and weapons, our earthly security, give him a promise of life-long allegiance and ask for his protection and loyalty in return. Finally we defend him before others, even our closest friends, while still trying to live faithfully with those who hate him.

Day 72. Psalm 35; 1 Samuel 21 – 23

Saul's Weakness, David's Confidence

Psalm 35

The writer protests his innocence, and prays for God's help and judgement on his enemies. The psalm shows nothing of Christ-like mercy, but it is an expression of genuine feeling. We need not be afraid of "letting off steam" to God, but we can expect him to remind us of Jesus and ask us to pray *for* our enemies rather than against them.

1 Samuel 21 - 23

Bereft of God's spirit, Saul became weaker and weaker while David grew progressively stronger. After David fled the court, Saul became increasingly paranoid. He could no longer bring himself to call David by name. The name "David" means "beloved" and would remind him that David was indeed beloved by all Israel, including his own son and daughter. From 20:27, he calls him, "the son of Jesse."

The massacre of the priests was another major step away from the Lord. He was still king, and in a position to impose his will, but everything he did from this time betrayed his weakness.

Meanwhile David gradually gained in strength. He began as a fugitive with no protection but his wits. He had to lie to Ahimelech for the food he needed. In Gath, he found Achish becoming suspicious and resorted to feigned madness in order to get away safely.

In exile, David became a "friend of sinners". An outcast himself, David began to attract other outcasts and these formed the beginning of his personal army. During his time in the wilderness, David was attracting an increasingly large group of fighting men and their families. He also had the services of the prophet Gad and after Saul's massacre of the priests he was joined by Abiathar.

Abiathar brought the ephod with him (23:6) and David made use of it straight away. By now David was looking like an alternative king. He had loyal followers, a prophet and a priest. In attacking the Philistines he was beginning to act as king even in exile. Unlike Saul, David displayed strong leadership. Although he listened to his men, he was not swayed by them, relying instead on the guidance of God (23:2-4). And God continued to encourage and protect him, with the visit of Jonathan (23:16-18) and with direct intervention when David was in danger (23:26-28).

Day 73. Psalm 54; 1 Samuel 24 - 26

David Spares Saul's Life

Psalm 54

The psalmist trusts in God to deliver him from his enemy.

1 Samuel 24

In these chapters, David learns to avoid taking revenge and leave the issue to God instead. Psalms such as 31, 35 and 54, especially if written by David himself, illustrate well the struggle in his heart, the fear of the enemy and desire for revenge and vindication. With Saul at his mercy he nearly followed the advice of his men, but on this first occasion something stopped him just in time. Instead he called out to Saul in terms of the greatest respect, calling him "lord," "master," and "father," (24:8,10,11). In the face of David's respect, Saul, easily swayed as usual, answered David by name and called him "my son" (24:16).

Saul also acknowledged David as "more righteous," (24:17). The meaning of "righteousness" in the Old Testament is not simply goodness or adherence to the law, but faithfulness to promises and loyalty to relationships. David was more righteous because he treated Saul with respect as the King. Saul's pursuit of David was unrighteous because it was not deserved. The meaning "right standing" lies behind Paul's use of the word "righteousness", for example in Romans 3:21-26 and Philippians 3:9.

1 Samuel 25

David's encounter with Nabal and his wife Abigail, in which Abigail prevented him from taking revenge on her husband, taught him the meaning of what he had done at En Gedi. David's impulsiveness and hot temper come through clearly at 25:13,21-22 but Abigail stood in his way and in her gracious and eloquent speech assured him of God's protection and looked forward to his coming reign. The little touches in the speech, using a play on Nabal's name (25:25) and contrasting David's enemies to one of his sling-stones (25:29) make it all the more remarkable and effective.

1 Samuel 26

In the next episode with Saul, David deliberately put into practice what he had learned. Nabal's death had taught him that he need only wait till the

Lord's time to bring about the death of his enemy (26:9-11,22-24). His purpose was not to take revenge but only to induce Saul to give up the pursuit and in that he succeeded.

David's words in 26:19 offer an interesting insight into the world view of the time. By his reference to sacrifice, David suggests that Saul may be doing God's work by punishing David for some wrong. An offering will placate him and allow Saul to call off the pursuit. Alternatively, Saul may have been swayed by his counsellors who want David out of the way. Israel's territory, from which David is barred by Saul's hostility, is called "the Lord's heritage". Outside this heritage, he is condemned to "serve other gods", since in popular belief if he lived on foreign territory he would need to seek the protection of the gods of that country.

Day 74. Psalm 31; 1 Samuel 27 - 30

The Battle of Gilboa I

Psalm 31

The prayer of someone in distress, suffering from the hatred of enemies and the distrust of friends and neighbours. Although the present is full of pain, the writer looks back to God's faithfulness in the past and forward to the deliverance he expects in the future.

1 Samuel 27:1 - 28:2

Despite Saul's admission of his foolishness (26:21), David knew how easily swayed he was likely to be and decided he could not trust him. Instead, he took the bold decision to seek refuge with Israel's enemies. Established at Ziklag, David maintained his 600 fighting men and their families by raiding his neighbours. The ruthlessness in battle he later showed as king was already becoming apparent.

However, when war broke out again between Saul and the Philistines, David was in a difficult position. He met the danger by carrying his deception through to the end.

1 Samuel 28:3-end

As David had foreseen, the time of Saul's death approached (26:10). He met his end abandoned by God and in great fear. His victories had turned to defeat (14:47), he had no answer from priest or prophet, while David had both (28:6, see 22:5, 23:6), and he was in great fear. In his extremity Saul turned to the mediums, whom in better days he had expelled from Israel.

Contact with the dead is forbidden to God's people not because it does not work, but because God has provided better ways of access, through dreams, prophecy and in ancient times through the sacred lots, all of which required trust and obedience. Contact with the dead simply provides knowledge, some of which may be harmful to the person receiving it. Samuel's message was not like a prophecy, warning of consequences to be avoided by repentance and obedience. He simply told Saul of his unavoidable fate.

1 Samuel 29 - 30

David avoided battle through the mistrust of enemies, but on returning to Ziklag another crisis faced him. With his men on the point of deserting, David went to God for the strength he needed (30:6). Often, we receive the grace we need from God through other people, but equally we all need a habit of direct personal communication with God, a relationship with him in the secret place (Matthew 6:6) through which to find both strength and guidance.

As Saul went to his fate David was rescued by God's intervention. The captured Egyptian led him to the Amalekite camp where he found his wives and those of his men still safe. David's powers of leadership were constantly stretched and developed by the task of leading a band of riff-raff and malcontents (30:21-25). After his return he chose the time well to begin cementing support in Judah (30:26-end).

Day 75. Psalm 62; 1 Samuel 31 - 2 Samuel 2

The Battle of Gilboa II

Psalm 62

Trust in the Lord in the face of human weakness.

1 Samuel 31

Saul's pursuit of David had diverted his attention from the Philistines and allowed them to grow stronger once more. The defeat at Mount Gilboa was a disastrous set-back. It allowed the Philistines to become completely dominant once again and take over a large area of territory in the north. Even after such a disastrous defeat the people of Jabesh Gilead expressed loyalty to Saul by removing his body from Beth Shan. To come to the aid of Jabesh had been Saul's first successful action as king (1 Samuel 11).

2 Samuel 1

In the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Samuel form one book with no break between them.

Saul had forfeited the kingdom when he failed to wipe out the Amalekites. Now an Amalekite claims to have killed him. It would be a tragic irony if this were true but in view of the discrepancy with the account of Saul's death in the previous chapter, it is possible that the man was lying in order to gain David's favour.

Of all the songs recorded in the Bible of which David is the possible author, this is the most likely to be his. It is a moving lament for the deaths of Israel's king and his son. Although composing it and teaching it to the men of Judah may have been part of David's plan for national reconciliation, it is more likely that his emotion was genuine. He had not only learned not to take revenge, but had genuinely forgiven his enemy and was now grieved at his death.

The love for Jonathan expressed in 1:26 has sometimes been remarked on as evidence of bi-sexuality. This misunderstanding is more of a comment on our culture than on the story. Rather than sexual, the relationship of David and Jonathan was one of covenant friendship, something scarcely understood today because of the heavy emphasis on sex in our society.

2 Samuel 2

David began to build up support in Judah and then in Israel. Just as he had had to wait patiently for Saul's death, he now had to be patient again until recognised by all Israel. But during this time not only did Joab rise to prominence but seeds of bitterness were sown which were to have tragic effects during David's reign.

Day 76. Psalm 108; 2 Samuel 3 - 5

David, King of Israel

Psalm 108

The second half of the psalm contains the same petition as in Psalm 60 with the same prophecy in reply, but instead of a prayer in time of defeat the opening is a triumphant hymn of praise.

2 Samuel 3 - 4

Having waited patiently for the death of Saul, David was prepared to wait for the death of Ishbaal or the defection of Israel. (Ishbosheth is a derogatory corruption of the king's name, substituting "bosheth" or "shameful thing" for "baal"). To have fought for the crown of Israel would have risked either defeat or alienating those like Abner who remained loyal to Saul. Instead David waited until he had enough support while consolidating his power in Judah. However, in asking for his wife to be restored, David was exercising the privilege of a neighbouring ruler.

The murder of Abner was a setback, brought about by Joab's bitterness. David's response, to honour Abner and dissociate himself from the murder was the best he could do in the situation. But his failure to confront Joab stored up further problems for the future. Had he opposed Joab and his brother his own army might have been divided and perhaps in his weak position he decided he could not afford to make another enemy. He did not risk having him killed as he killed Recab and Baanah nor gambling on the loyalty of the army by fighting him. But one of David's weaknesses was his failure to confront certain people close to him, in particular his own sons and his cousin Joab, and as a consequence allowed them to become too powerful for him.

2 Samuel 5

This chapter gives only a brief account of the decisive steps by which David established himself as undisputed ruler of all Israel. First, he waited some five years or more (the gap of time between 4:12 and 5:1; see 2:10-11) between the death of Ishbaal and the approach of the elders of Israel.

Although he did not impose himself on the tribes of Israel, one of his earliest actions on becoming king was to consolidate his power over his new kingdom by the capture of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was neither an

Israelite city nor a Judean one, situated close to the tribal boundary between the two and virtually impregnable. By making it his royal city, David gained a base from which he was dependent on neither Judah nor Israel but could rule both. The taking of further wives and concubines and the birth of more sons was another demonstration of power.

The chapter gives only the sketchiest details of the decisive battles in which David defeated the Philistines to make himself the most powerful king in the region. Clearly, these battles took place early in his reign, perhaps before the capture of Jerusalem. The Philistine lords had squandered the advantage they gained after the defeat of Saul by allowing David to consolidate his power unopposed.

Day 77. Psalm 2; 2 Samuel 6 - 7; Psalms 132; 110

The Lord's Anointed King

Psalm 2

Israel celebrates in worship the greatness of God's chosen king. He is God's son (2:7) ruling in Zion over all the nations of the earth and overcoming all God's enemies (2:9). His heritage is the Gentiles (2:8; compare 1 Samuel 26:19, where Israel alone is God's heritage). God defends him against the plots of the nations and puts them all in submission to him.

2 Samuel 6

Having made Jerusalem his capital, David's next step was to consolidate its importance by making it the principle place of worship for all Israel. By bringing the ark of God into the city, he established a link between the new monarchy and the old wilderness tradition and made Jerusalem, its court and its worship a focus of unity for all twelve tribes.

The reason for Uzzah's death was probably the way the ark was being carried. It was meant to be carried on poles, emphasising the sovereignty of God (Exodus 25:12-14). Instead, David had it carried on a new cart (6:3-4). 6:8-9 illustrate one of the rapid changes of mood characteristic of David. Angry at first because his will was thwarted, he very quickly turned in repentance.

At the second attempt, the ark was carried (6:13) and David played the role of priestly king, wearing an ephod (see further on psalm 110). Once in Jerusalem, the ark lodged in a tent specially pitched (6:17). The original tent at Shiloh had been destroyed by the Philistines.

2 Samuel 7

This chapter is of vital importance in Israel's history and the development of her future hope. It records the covenant made by God with David and his descendants. The occasion was David's desire to build a "house" for the ark of God. But David was not to build a house for the Lord. Instead, God would build "a house" for David (7:11; the play on words in the passage is quite deliberate). A member of David's family would always rule over God's people, and in each generation the king would be adopted as God's son. This promise is celebrated in Psalm 89:19-37.

To sit before the Lord, as David did in 7:18, was a remarkable thing to do and emphasised his special position. Normally, all God's servants stand in his presence.

Psalm 132

A celebration of Jerusalem as the royal city and centre of worship for all Israel. Verses 6-8 recall the journey of the ark from "the fields" of Kiriath Jearim to its resting place in the sanctuary at Jerusalem. Verses 11-12 recall the tradition of God's promise to David and his dynasty and verses 13-16 a similar promise to Jerusalem itself.

Psalm 110

God's king rules in Zion over all the Lord's enemies. The ancient kings of Jerusalem had also been priests (see Genesis 14:17-20) and verse 4 refers to this priestly role, inherited from the Canaanite kings. This was reflected in the role of the king in worship at Jerusalem (see 1 Kings 8:12-14,54-55 and 2 Samuel 6:13-14,18 and 8:18, where the Hebrew says that David's sons were priests).

The covenant with David was the root of the Messianic expectation. David's dynasty ruled in Jerusalem until the exile in Babylon. After the return from exile, many Jews expected the restoration of the Davidic kingship under Zerubbabel (see Haggai 2:20-end; Zechariah 4:6-10) but this hope was never fulfilled. Instead the hope grew for a new ruler, the "Son of David", who would restore the fortunes of Israel.

Jesus is that ruler, the heir to David's throne and our high priest (see Hebrews 5 - 7), whose heritage is the nations (see Acts 4:25-28 and Revelation 1:5; 11:17-18; 12:5 and 19:11-16, which all draw on psalm 2 for their portrait of Jesus).

Day 78. 2 Samuel 8 - 10, 22 (Psalm 18)

David's Empire

2 Samuel 8

"The Lord gave victory to David wherever he went." (8:6,14) As in chapter 5, few details of the battles are given. The interest of the narrator is simply in the position David established as overlord of the surrounding nations. This eventually became the basis for the Messianic hope, in which David's successor was to rule the nations "with an iron rod" (Psalm 2:7). There is a hint of how David and Joab achieved their remarkable string of successes in the letter between them recorded in 11:20-21. Both were students of warfare and their mutual interest would have inspired each other and provided motivation for even greater success.

Each of the surrounding nations became a vassal state, paying tribute to Jerusalem and in some cases accepting Israelite garrisons. The Philistines and Canaanite inhabitants of Israel were subdued and incorporated into the Israelite state. We have already seen David making use of the tradition of royal priesthood in Jerusalem. The men of Gath, where David had taken refuge before the death of Saul, became a personal bodyguard (2 Samuel 15:18-22).

2 Samuel 9

David had made a covenant of friendship with Jonathan and promised loyalty to the whole of his house. In 1 Samuel 20:14-15, Jonathan had made David promise never to forget him even when all his enemies were defeated. Now that his enemies were indeed defeated, David could spare the time to remember his promise. The account of how Mephibosheth had become lame is in 2 Samuel 4:4.

2 Samuel 10

As overlord of the surrounding nations, David faced the problem of revolt. Nahash, the father of Hanun, was the king who attacked Jabesh Gilead and was defeated by Saul, which may explain his "kindness" or "loyalty" to David, although 8:12 mentions the defeat of the Ammonites and the dedication of their treasures.

2 Samuel 22 (Psalm 18)

A victory psalm, attributed to David and reflecting his position as overlord (22:44-46). David gives God the credit for his victories and thanks him, as he had dedicated the plunder from the battles to the Lord (8:11-12). He pictures God as a rock and a fortress, a place of refuge in a battle (Psalms 62:1-2,6-7; 144:1-2). He sees God as the one who gives him both strength and skill for war and protects him in battle (22:33-37).

22:8-16 describe the approach of the Lord in conventional terms known as "theophany" or "God's appearance" (compare Exodus 19:16-19; Psalm 77:16-18; Isaiah 64:1-3). In verse 11, he uses the cherubim, the winged creatures surrounding his throne, as mounts. Verse 20 gives a picture of God's deliverance as a spacious place, an image of rest and relaxation (the same image is used in Psalm 66:12 where N.I.V. translates "a place of abundance").

2 Samuel 22 is repeated in Psalm 18, where the verse numbering is one verse different.

The Succession Narrative

2 Samuel 11 - 20, 1 Kings 1 - 2

This is the name given to the account, in the chapters which follow, of the disputed succession to David's throne. It is a major source for the Deuteronomic history, but unlike most of the other sources it is not a compilation but a unity. It may have been written at the court of Solomon to explain why Solomon, one of David's youngest sons, succeeded him as king and to justify the killings with which his reign began.

The story shows us how the various potential successors to David, his three eldest sons and the representatives of the house of Saul fell one by one to give way to Solomon, the one whom the Lord loved (12:24-25; 1 Kings 2:15). With Solomon came a palace revolution, in which both the army leadership and priestly dynasty changed hands.

One of the most striking features of the story is the secular viewpoint of its author or authors. Religious objects like the ark of the covenant play little part and there is no miraculous intervention from God at any stage. There are only three passages which tell us directly what God was doing: 2 Samuel 11:27, 12:24 and 17:14. 17:14 is the answer to David's prayer at 15:31 followed by his meeting with Hushai at the place where "people used to worship God" (15:32). Nevertheless, God is clearly at work, bringing about his purposes through human affairs and human decisions. In particular, Nathan's prophesy (12:9-12) shows that the turmoil in David's family is to be explained as the penalty and consequence of his sin with Bathsheba.

Another feature of the narrative is the depth of character study. David, his sons, Joab and others are shown as rounded characters with strengths and weaknesses. Minor characters like Ahitophel and the wise woman of Tekoa are convincingly portrayed. It is the motives, passions and clashes of interest between the main characters that supply the dynamic of the story.

Day 79. Psalm 32; 2 Samuel 11 - 12; Psalm 51

David and Bathsheba

Psalm 32

The difference between a repentant spirit and a bitter spirit. If we fail to acknowledge our sins, we deceive ourselves, but when we do confess God forgives us and cleanses us (1 John 1:8-9). To refuse to acknowledge our sin is to be like being a wayward donkey, which cannot be ruled (32:8-9) and to store up bitterness and sorrow (32:3-4).

2 Samuel 11 - 12

Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Gideon, Samuel and now David: the Bible never idealises any of its characters. All are shown with their faults and failings. Here, David, the man whom God had honoured more greatly than any of his people so far, sins the most grievously. Because of his position as leader David was *more* rather than less vulnerable to temptation. On this occasion he was open to temptation because he was in the wrong place; he had stayed behind while the army was at war (compare 11:1 with 11:11).

What began with sex, quickly led on to the abuse of power. Although he knew that he was a murderer, David had kept Joab as his commander. This gave him the means to try to cover up what he had done and to arrange the murder not only of Uriah but of the others killed needlessly with him. However, since Joab knew what David had done, it also put David into Joab's power, and he was not slow to remind him of it (12:28).

Nathan's story is an example of a parable from the Old Testament, a story which points the finger at the listener as Jesus' stories did. David was able to respond because he was fundamentally just. 12:10-14 point up the difference between the guilt of sin and its consequences. Although David was forgiven, the consequences of his wrong-doing would endure and entangle not only his own family but the whole nation.

David's response to the death of his child demonstrated his penitent attitude. He looked for mercy but recognised his own responsibility for the tragedy.

Psalm 51

Traditionally assigned to David at this moment in his life, the psalm portrays the agony of knowing oneself guilty and the joy of knowing oneself forgiven. The penitent asks for purity of heart and steadfastness of spirit. The Holy Spirit in Old Testament terms is that which keeps the penitent in the way of holiness and supplies the inner willingness to keep God's law (51:10-12). A "broken spirit" means not a character destroyed but a spirit of brokenness before God. This is more acceptable in his sight than outward religious performance (51:17). David's sin had put the whole nation in jeopardy, so a personal prayer ends with a prayer for a rebuilding of the nation (51:18-19).

Day 80. Psalms 9, 10; 2 Samuel 13 - 14

Amnon and Tamar

Psalms 9, 10

In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, these psalms are treated as a single psalm. Together, they form one of several acrostic psalms, whose verses begin with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

The psalms celebrate the Lord the righteous Judge. In Psalm 9, he judges the surrounding nations and brings destruction on those who unjustly attack or persecute Israel's king. In Psalm 10 he defends the weak and those with no one to stand up for them against the callous wicked, out for unjust gain and with no fear of God to hold them back.

This picture of God as just and defender of the weak forms the background against which the drama within David's household was played out.

2 Samuel 13 - 14

Some time passes, enough time for Solomon to grow to manhood, but eventually the consequences of David's sin begin to work themselves out in his own family, as Nathan predicted (12:10-12). As David had fallen victim to lust and taken the willing Bathsheba, Amnon now also falls victim to lust and rapes the unwilling Tamar. The change of infatuation to hatred (13:15) often follows a rape of this kind. Having exerted his power over Tamar, Amnon now despised her.

David had tried trickery to make Uriah think himself the father of David's child (11:6-13) and Absalom now gets his revenge on Amnon through trickery and murders him, as David had murdered Uriah. Amnon was David's first-born and heir to the throne; Absalom escaped to the protection of his maternal grandfather (13:37; 2 Samuel 3:2-3).

In the face of the worsening situation, David was weak and irresolute. He was furious at Tamar's rape but took no action (13:21) then forgot Absalom's hatred of his brother (13:25-27). Instead of reacting firmly to the crisis at Absalom's revenge, he went to pieces (13:30-31).

The wise woman's fictitious law-suit was a parallel to Nathan's parable, but this time it expresses Joab's cunning rather than God's judgement and mercy. Instead of being moved to repentance, David was shamed into giving way. Although he allowed Absalom to return, the two were never fully reconciled and Absalom's sense of grievance went on festering (14:25-end). David's inability to control the situation was the result of his previous failure and also his poor discipline and weakness towards his sons (13:21; 18:33; 1 Kings 1:5-6).

Day 81. Psalm 4; 2 Samuel 15:1 - 17:23

Absalom's Rebellion

Psalm 4

An evening prayer for help in time of distress.

2 Samuel 15:1 - 17:23

The account of Absalom's rebellion shows how one man's sin, especially that of a leader of God's people, will affect and can engulf those close to him.

Absalom had waited for two years for the opportunity to take revenge on Amnon; now he waited patiently for four years, building up support and planning his rebellion against his father. Meanwhile David, in keeping with his neglect of his sons, continued to allow Absalom's sense of grievance to fester without apparently noticing what was going on. When the rebellion came, Nathan's prophecy came true as Absalom took his father's concubines (12:11-12; 16:20-22).

The departure of the king from Jerusalem forced many of the leading citizens to make a choice. The first to offer his loyalty was Ittai the Gittite, a Philistine and a soldier. When the son of David died on the cross it was a Roman soldier who first recognised who he really was (Mark 15:39).

Against Saul, David had had to learn to commit his cause to God. When driven from his throne, he did the same thing. He was ready to oppose Absalom, but not the Lord, so he sent the ark back into the city and allowed Shimei his chance to curse (15:25-26; 16:11-12), trusting in the grace of God to vindicate him if he chose. Nevertheless, David's trust in God did not prevent him doing what he could to frustrate the rebellion. Having sent the priests back into the city, the meeting with Hushai made him think of them again as potential messengers.

Ahithophel had been David's trusted counsellor, but he was also the grandfather of Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:3; 23:34). No explanation is given for his defection, so we can only conjecture that his trust in David must have been shaken by the murder of Uriah and that he had not forgiven or put things right with the king. However, in deciding to throw in his lot with Absalom, Ahithophel found himself opposed by God. At this key moment, the veil is lifted to show whose side the Lord is on. David's prayer was answered by his meeting with Hushai "at the place where God was worshipped" and Hushai went on successfully to frustrate Ahithophel's counsel (16:23, 17:14). Ahithophel had made his choice but his disloyalty had failed to bring its expected reward and as a result he lost everything he most valued. His is another of the personal tragedies to result from David's unthinking sin.

Day 82. Psalm 3; 2 Samuel 17:24 - 19:end

The Defeat of the Rebellion

Psalm 3

A morning prayer of trust in God for help against enemies.

2 Samuel 17:24 - 19:end

The second of the possible successors to David is removed. Amnon was the first-born and Absalom the son whom David loved. His death was a further step towards the eventual accession of Solomon, the one whom the Lord loved (12:25).

The self-interest of Joab presents a contrast with the generosity of the others, such as Barzillai, surrounding the king. It reminds us that it is quite possible to serve Christ out of self-interest, or to occupy a position of influence in the Church and to be more concerned to retain that influence and power than to serve God. Joab's influence thwarted David's desire for reconciliation and divided his supporters and that is just what happens today: the person more concerned with their own position than with serving God has to exclude those who are more genuine in their desire to serve Christ, setting up cliques and causing bitterness and division in the Church.

Again David gave way to his men instead of following his own inclination. The priests with the ephod, which he normally consulted when he was unsure of something, had been left behind in Jerusalem. On a previous occasion when he had stayed behind instead of going out to fight, he had succumbed to temptation (11:1-4). This time he was unable to prevent Absalom's death.

David's meeting with Shimei, Ziba and Mephibosheth was important for the future of the tribe of Benjamin and helps to explain the diminution of the influence of the family of Saul which led to the eventual inclusion of Benjamin in the kingdom of Judah. Mephibosheth was ready to concede his land, which was Saul's inheritance, to Ziba, and professed his loyalty to David. The sequel shows that David did not really intend to forgive Shimei, but was merely making a stand against Abishai, to prevent him being the one to kill Shimei (see 16:9-10; 1 Kings 2:8-9).

Day 83. Psalm 6; 2 Samuel 20 - 21, 23:8 - 24:end

David's Later Years

Psalm 6

Brought low by the hostility of others, the writer recognises the discipline of God in his trial, prays for deliverance and puts his trust in the Lord.

2 Samuel 20

David again fails to displace Joab as commander and this time Amasa is the victim.

At the beginning of his reign David was able to wait patiently for the Israelite tribes to accept him as king. This time he had to quell a rebellion by force. One of the results of Absalom's rebellion was to rekindle the tension between Judah and the other tribes, which eventually resulted in the division of the kingdom.

2 Samuel 21:1-14

According to Israel's Law, the shedding of innocent blood polluted the land and demanded atonement (Numbers 35:33-34). In addition, the Gibeonites were a special case, being protected by Joshua's oath (Joshua 9:15-20). Apparently, this was another case where Saul's idea of God's will had been misguided (21:2). Although he had to give up some of Saul's descendants, David had to save the descendants of Jonathan because of his own covenant with Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:14-17).

Did God really demand the death of seven of Saul's family? At that time, Israel had a certain understanding of God's pattern for social life under which blood revenge was commonly accepted as a way of securing justice. Undoubtedly, this understanding was based on genuine insights into God's character. So either God did directly order their deaths to maintain the consistency of what he had taught Israel up to that time; or else this was the way the priests and prophets understood the guidance they received. However, Israel's current understanding was also a stage in a learning process which eventually gave them a much clearer picture of God's mercy as well as his justice.

2 Samuel 21:15-end, 23:8-end

A reminder that the battles against the Philistines continued well into David's reign.

Was it Elhanan who killed Goliath (21:19) or was it David? Some scholars think the exploit was really Elhanan's and that the story was later attached to David. There is no simple answer.

2 Samuel 24

This story is extremely important because it explains the site of the Temple in Jerusalem. The threshing floor of Araunah became a holy place because there God accepted sacrifice, answered prayer and spared the land (24:25). Verses 18 to 20 show that the site was "up": the present Temple Mount.

David's action was sinful because it was a change from the old holy war to a warfare based on tactics and royal control. The census also included more than the "twelve tribes of Israel", but also several of the Canaanite settlements incorporated in David's empire. But why was it God who incited David to sin (especially in view of James 1:13 and compare 1 Chronicles 21:1, a later rewriting of this text in which Satan is held responsible)? One possible explanation is that if the incident was the cause of the foundation of the Temple, God must have been behind it. And in a deeper way, Satan is not outside God's control; evil and its results do fall within his providence. Whether 70,000 die or 7 are hanged, the problems of sin, mercy and punishment are the same.

Day 84. 2 Samuel 23:1-7; 1 Kings 1 - 2

The Succession of Solomon

2 Samuel 23:1-7

A prophesy summarising David's reign. Verses 1b-3a introduce the prophecy by describing the position of the man who gives it (compare with Balaam's prophecy, Numbers 24:3-4). Two images describe the blessing of David's rule, sunrise on a cloudless morning and the sparkle of new grass after rain. He himself is right with God because of the covenant (23:5) and the people share in the blessings of this righteousness (23:3). The wicked are like thorns which have to be dug out of the ground with a long-handled iron tool (23:6-7).

1 Kings 1 - 2

The last act of the drama of Solomon's succession. Up to this point, Solomon had been completely in the background while first Amnon and then Absalom had been removed from the succession. We have not even heard of David's oath to Bathsheba (1:13,30). But Nathan the prophet had been watching for the fulfilment of the Lord's word and was ready to act when necessary (1:11-14, see 2 Samuel 12:24-25). Even Adonijah conceded that it was the Lord who secured the kingdom for Solomon, and his words in 2:15 sum up the view of the whole "Succession Narrative" from 2 Samuel 11 onwards.

David's advice to Solomon on taking the throne is very similar to the words of the Lord to Joshua (Joshua 1:6-9): "Be strong; keep the Law; and you will prosper (2:2-3)."

The new reign was an opportunity to complete the unfinished business of the old one. Moreover, Solomon needed to secure his throne by removing the supporters of Adonijah from positions of influence and replacing them with men loyal to himself. He achieved this with both wisdom and ruthlessness. The removal of Abiathar fulfilled the prophecy of 1 Samuel 2:30-end about the fate of Eli's house. Zadok became the first of a new dynasty of the priesthood, with Abiathar's descendants reduced to a subordinate position for the rest of the monarchy. The death of Shimei finally removed the threat from the house of Saul.

Today's reading, and the succession document as a whole, are realistic about power. In fact, the whole document might be taken as a study in the use and abuse of power. It begins with David's power to act justly being compromised when he succumbs to sexual temptation and then tries to evade the consequences. It reaches a conclusion with power placed in the hands of the new king God had chosen and with Solomon taking influence away from those who had been compromised by the faction-fighting of the previous reign and placing power in the hands of those he could trust. Power needs both to be in the right hands and to be rightly used.

Day 85. Psalm 101; 1 Kings 3 - 4; Psalms 72; 45

The Golden Age of Solomon

Psalm 101

A king's promise.

1 Kings 3

At the start of his reign, Solomon was faced with the choice of whether to use his new authority for himself or for the benefit of the people he ruled. Like both Joseph before him (Genesis 39:2-6,20-23) and Jesus after him (Mark 10:42-45), his choice was to become a servant for the benefit of those under his authority. Those who follow Jesus should be revolutionary in their exercise of power, by using it as a means to serve others.

The sequel to Solomon's choice illustrates two other important principles. First, the blessings of God come when we are not looking for them. If we set our hearts on the blessings God can give, they become idols to lead us away from him. Second, that when we serve God with the right attitude, others participate in the blessings we enjoy.

Solomon's wisdom was legendary and is illustrated by the folk-tale of the two prostitutes. This shows him exercising a combination of insight, shrewdness and tact which penetrates to the real motives of the petitioners and by doing so results in a true judgement.

1 Kings 4

Nathan had been one of Solomon's chief supporters in his bid for the throne. It is not surprising to find two of his sons given top jobs (4:5).

The twelve fiscal districts did not completely ignore the tribal boundaries, but neither did they stick rigidly to them. They also incorporate Canaanite towns such as Megiddo and Bethshan. Solomon boldly imposed a centralised administrative system on top of the original tribal confederacy.

Much of Solomon's wealth was due to the way he was able to dominate the trade routes through Palestine and across the Mediterranean (10:14-15,22). This wealth allowed him to maintain a standing army (10:28-29) and to establish a sophisticated centralised administrative system to supply his

elaborate court. Solomon's reign was looked back on as a Golden Age, summed up in the phrase, "each man under his own vine and fig-tree" (4:25), an age of plenty, peace, harmony and justice.

Psalm 72

This psalm celebrates the blessing of peace, "shalom", which springs from the just and righteous rule of the king. It was sung at the moment the king was enthroned and presented with the book of the Law which was to guide his actions. As he receives it, the people pray that God will give him a spirit of justice by which to interpret it and "righteousness", the knowledge and discretion to remain true to every social obligation.

Ruled by such a king, the people enjoy "shalom," that is ecological and social harmony. The mountains themselves bring forth "shalom", translated in verse 3 as "prosperity". Meanwhile the people enjoy social justice in which the king intervenes on behalf of those who cannot defend themselves and prevents the wealthy and strong from becoming oppressive (72:4,12-14).

The prayer goes on to picture the universal dominion of Israel's king, such that the whole world shares in the blessing God gives to his own people through the king's just rule (72:8-11,15,17). Verse 17 looks forward to the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham, that in him all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). This promise is finally to be fulfilled in the reign of Christ the Servant over all nations (Philippians 2:6-11; Revelation 21:1-4).

Verse 20 does not belong originally to the psalm. It marks the end of one of the earlier collections, the "David" collection, in which most, though not all, of the psalms are attributed to David.

Psalm 45

A royal wedding song. Like Psalm 72 it looks for the universal rule of the king in righteousness and justice. The bride is called to leave her father's house, in order to honour the king as lord. Like Psalm 72, this psalm is fulfilled in the reign of Jesus as Lord with the Church as his bride. We are called to break with our earthly ties in order to honour and glorify Jesus.

Day 86. Psalm 122; 1 Kings 5 - 7

Building the Temple

Psalm 122

A prayer for "shalom" in Jerusalem. The pilgrims on their way to the city sing of it as the place of both the royal court and the house of the Lord.

1 Kings 5 - 7

Solomon began building the Temple early in his reign, the fourth year. The date of 480 years after the exodus is almost certainly wrong, inserted at a late date to place the foundation of the Temple at the mid-point between the exodus and the return from exile described in Ezra 1 - 3. The date of the foundation of the Temple was probably 957 B.C.

Solomon made use of his close alliance with Hiram of Tyre, who had already supplied materials and men to David to build his palace (2 Samuel 5:11). Tyre was a trading city, which eventually rose to dominate the Mediterranean trade, but at this date an alliance with Solomon was much to the advantage of both kings. Solomon obtained the materials and skills he needed for his building project, while Hiram obtained the supplies he needed for a growing city, with a small and rather infertile hinterland. From the outset of his reign, Solomon looked outward, not afraid to involve the surrounding nations in building the Temple. This contrasts greatly with the attitude of Nehemiah on the rebuilding of Jerusalem some 500 years later, but Nehemiah was aware of some of the disadvantages of Solomon's policy (Nehemiah 2:19-20).

The Temple was closely connected with the Palace, which is described in much less detail in 7:1-12. In fact the Palace, with its ground plan of 150' x 75' dwarfed the Temple, which was only 90' x 30'. The king entered the Temple court directly from his palace next door. The Temple served as both royal chapel and as the resting place for the Ark, the focus of Israelite unity. By this means Solomon continued David's policy of making the monarchy an integral part of Israel's life and worship while maintaining the authority and independence of the king.

The description of the Temple, although extremely detailed, is also somewhat confusing, concentrating on measurements, materials and

technical details, some of which have been imperfectly understood by later compilers. Solomon brought in the Tyrian craftsman, Hiram or Hiram, to oversee the work. Although Hiram was half-Israelite, the models he was working from were Canaanite. The two free-standing pillars, Jachin and Boaz (7:15-22), the bronze Sea (7:23-26) and the cherubim in the inner sanctuary (6:23-28), as well as the overall size and pattern of the shrine are all Canaanite features. But they were adapted to Israelite worship. The pillars may have recalled the standing stones which reminded Israel of the covenant (Joshua 24:26-27). Although according to 2 Chronicles 4:6 the Sea was for the priests to wash in, this is unlikely since it stood 7 feet off the ground. Most likely, it symbolised the victory of the Lord over the forces of chaos in Creation, containing of the Sea. The cherubim were probably winged animals with human faces. They were guardians of the throne of God.

The use of Canaanite models shows Solomon's confidence. He had conquered the last remaining Canaanite cities and incorporated them in his empire and had friendly relations with the nations around. He expected Jerusalem to be a focus not only for Israel but for all people (8:41-43). But his confidence also had its dangers. First, by incorporating Canaanite features in Israel's worship he made it easy for later generations to blur the distinction between the Lord and the Canaanite gods. Secondly, to achieve his ambition he took over the system of forced labour from the Canaanite cities he had conquered and extended it to Israel. In the reign of his son, Rehoboam, the resentment he stirred up in Israel led to the division of the Kingdom (1 Kings 12:3-4,13-17).

Day 87. Psalm 92; 1 Kings 8; Psalm 84

Solomon's Dedication Prayer

Psalm 92

A song of praise, accompanied by lutes, harps and lyres (92:3). The singer expresses thanks for the past and faith for the future. The righteous are likened to palm trees and cedars (92:12-13); palm trees decorated the walls of the Temple, which were lined with cedar wood (1 Kings 6:15,29,35).

1 Kings 8

The Ark was the focus of unity for the tribes of Israel. Hence all the heads of the tribes and chiefs of families were summoned for the dedication, thereby acknowledging the legitimacy of the Temple as the central focus of worship for all Israel (8:1-2). Lebo Hamath in the north and the Wadi of Egypt in the south were the conventional boundaries of Israel at its fullest extent. Only during Solomon's reign did Israelite rule actually reach this far (8:65).

The presence of the Lord in the Temple, symbolised by the Ark, is demonstrated by the appearance of the cloud of God's glory, known as the "Shekinah" (8:10-11). The word "glory" means literally "weight" or "heaviness" and thus "honour". The glory of God conveys the authentic character of God, in particular his majesty, authority, mystique and dignity as king. The psalms speak often of the glory of the Lord in the Temple (Psalm 29:1-3,9; 63:1-2; 96:6-9; 102:15-16), and express the hope that the whole earth might know God's glory (Psalm 72:18-19; Isaiah 6:3; Habakkuk 2:14).

The presence of the Lord in the Temple is also indicated by the Name of the Lord (5:5; 8:16,29). As with the glory, the Name is a way of saying that God is really present there without confining him. Solomon and all Israel knew that God could not be limited or contained by the houses built for him. His true dwelling place was in the heavens (8:12,27,30). But by placing his Name at a certain place he guarantees accessibility. In Israelite culture a person's name meant much more than it does with us. It was more than a mere designation, but conveyed something of their character and real

being. The presence of God's name at a certain place meant that he was accessible there.

The dedication prayer amplifies the idea of God's accessibility through the Temple. It emphasises the Temple as a place of prayer rather than of sacrifice. Even those not able to be physically present may pray towards the Temple and be heard (8:30,44,48). The prayer lays great emphasis on the state of the person's heart. Only if their heart is right with God, in particular if they are aware of their sin and rightly penitent, will the prayer be answered (Psalm 66:16-20). Even if Israel goes into exile because of their sins, God will answer prayers made towards Jerusalem. When almost 400 years later the nation of Judah was carried into exile, this is in fact what happened (Psalm 137:5-6; Ezra 1:1-3).

Like the distribution of the land to the twelve tribes in the time of Joshua, the foundation of the Temple is seen as an outstanding example of the fulfilment of the Lord's promises to his people (8:56; Joshua 21:43-45).

Psalm 84

A pilgrimage psalm, sung by those approaching Jerusalem for worship. The Valley of Baca means literally the veil of weeping; the prospect of worship gives strength in time of sorrow and worship itself turns weeping into gladness (84:5-7).
