The United Kingdom

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Saul, David, Solomon: three kings, one throne, one promise that outlasted them

For about 120 years, from roughly 1050 to 931 BC, Israel was ruled by one king at a time. The first wanted the role and was rejected. The second fell to grievous sin and was kept. The third was given wisdom unmatched in his generation and ended worshipping foreign gods. Each tells a different story about the same throne. The promise spoken to the middle one outlasted all three and never expired.

> They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day — in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods — so they are doing to you also. *Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them.*
>
> 1 Samuel 8:7-9 · the LORD's answer to Samuel when Israel demanded a king · NASB

Before the First King

Why Israel asked for a king, and what God said about the asking

The book of Judges ended with the refrain *in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes* (Judg 21:25). The elders of Israel came to Samuel in his old age (his sons did not walk in his ways) and asked: *appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations* (1 Sam 8:5).

Samuel was displeased. The LORD's answer named what the request really was: not the rejection of a prophet, but the rejection of a King already on the throne:

> *They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.*
>
> 1 Samuel 8:7

God gave Israel what they asked for. He told Samuel to warn them about what kings would do: conscript their sons, take their daughters, claim their fields, tax their flocks (1 Sam 8:11–18). Israel still wanted a king. And the LORD said: *listen to their voice and appoint them a king* (1 Sam 8:22).

The three kings that follow are the consequence of that request. The first will be a king like the nations had: tall, impressive, eager for the role. The other two will be God's own choice. All three will demonstrate, in different ways, what happens when men sit on the throne of God's people.

I

Saul

c. 1050–1010 BC · ~40 years on the throne · tribe of Benjamin

The king Israel asked for: tall, impressive, eager, whose disobedience cost him the throne and whose family lost it.

THE RISE

1 Samuel 9–11

Sent by his father to look for lost donkeys, Saul finds Samuel. Privately anointed (10:1). Publicly chosen by lot at Mizpah (10:20–24). Found hiding among the baggage. Confirmed when he rallies Israel against Nahash the Ammonite (1 Sam 11). *From his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people* (10:23). He began humble: *am I not a Benjaminite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel?* (9:21).

THE REIGN

1 Samuel 13–14

Established his army at Geba; jonathan won the early Philistine victory. But the cracks appeared early. At Gilgal Saul did not wait for Samuel and offered the burnt offering himself; Samuel told him plainly: *your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart* (1 Sam 13:14).

THE FALL

1 Samuel 15 · 28 · 31

Commanded to utterly destroy Amalek; spared Agag and the best of the livestock. Samuel: *has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD?* (15:22). Later consulted the medium at Endor (28). Mortally wounded by Philistine archers on Mount Gilboa, fell on his own sword (31:4).

SCRIPTURE'S VERDICT

Saul was rejected from being king the day he disobeyed at Amalek. The Chronicler gives the final summary:

> *Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the LORD, because of the word of the LORD which he did not keep; and also because he asked counsel of a medium, making inquiry of it, and did not inquire of the LORD. Therefore He killed him and turned the kingdom to David the son of Jesse.*
>
> 1 Chronicles 10:13–14

II

David

c. 1010–970 BC · 40 years on the throne (7 in Hebron, 33 in Jerusalem) · tribe of Judah

A man after God's own heart who committed a grievous sin and was not removed from the throne, because of what God had promised, not because of what David had earned.

THE RISE

1 Samuel 16 · 17 · 18–30

Anointed by Samuel in his father's house at Bethlehem, the youngest of eight, the one who kept the sheep (1 Sam 16). Killed Goliath in the valley of Elah (1 Sam 17). Best friend of Jonathan; son-in-law of Saul; hunted by Saul through wilderness and cave for years (1 Sam 19–26). Twice spared Saul's life when he could have killed him. Made king at Hebron over Judah (2 Sam 2); seven years later made king

THE REIGN

2 Samuel 5–7 · 8

Captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites and made it the capital. Brought the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6). Wanted to build the LORD a house; was told instead the LORD would build him a house: *and your throne shall be established forever* (2 Sam 7:16). Subdued the Philistines, Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, Arameans. The kingdom reached its widest extent. The Psalms born of his life are scattered across

THE SIN, AND THE MERCY

2 Samuel 11–12 · Psalm 51

In the year kings go out to battle, David stayed at Jerusalem. Took Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite; arranged Uriah's death in battle to cover the pregnancy. Nathan came with the parable of the rich man and the poor man's lamb: *you are the man.* David said simply: *I have sinned against the LORD* (2 Sam 12:13). Nathan: *the LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However…* The child died.

SCRIPTURE'S VERDICT

The verdict on David is given twice, once in summary form and once with the one exception named. Both stand.

> *David did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.*
>
> 1 Kings 15:5

> *I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.*
>
> Acts 13:22, Paul quoting 1 Samuel 13:14 and Psalm 89:20

The Promise in the Middle

2 Samuel 7: the covenant given to David that outlasted all three kings

The pivot of the United Kingdom story is not a battle and not a building project. It is a single chapter where the LORD answers David's desire to build Him a house by promising instead to build David a house (meaning a dynasty) that would not end.

> *When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom... I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me... your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.*
>
> 2 Samuel 7:12, 14, 16

The promise was conditional in one direction: David's sons could be disciplined for their iniquity. It was unconditional in another: *but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul* (2 Sam 7:15). The dynasty would not be torn away the way Saul's was.

That promise is what kept David's line on the throne of Judah for the next 345 years even when its kings were the worst Judah produced. It is what runs underneath every Judah king on the Divided Kingdom chart. It is the promise Peter cited at Pentecost when he named the resurrection of Christ as the seating of David's descendant on David's throne:

> *Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ... This Jesus God raised up again... God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified.*
>
> Acts 2:30–36

III

Solomon

c. 970–931 BC · 40 years on the throne · son of David and Bathsheba · tribe of Judah

Began with wisdom asked from God; built the temple; ended an idolater. The kingdom did not split until he was dead, but it was torn from his son because of what he himself had done.

THE RISE

1 Kings 1–4 · 2 Chronicles 1

Anointed king at Gihon while his older half-brother Adonijah was conspiring (1 Ki 1). Granted by the LORD anything he would ask; asked for *an understanding heart to judge Your people, to discern between good and evil*; received that, plus riches and honor (1 Ki 3:5–13). The wisdom test of the two mothers (1 Ki 3:16–28). His proverbs, his songs, his rule over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the border of

THE REIGN

1 Kings 5–10 · 2 Chronicles 2–9

Built the temple in seven years (1 Ki 6), the temple David had wanted to build, on the threshing floor of Araunah on Mount Moriah (1 Chr 21; 2 Chr 3:1). Dedicated it with the prayer of 1 Ki 8. The glory of the LORD filled the house. Built his own palace in thirteen years (1 Ki 7). The queen of Sheba came; saw; and *there was no more spirit in her* (1 Ki 10:5).

THE FALL

1 Kings 11

Loved many foreign women besides the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, Hittites, from the very nations the LORD had told Israel not to intermarry with, *for surely they will turn your heart away after their gods* (1 Ki 11:2). Had seven hundred wives, three hundred concubines; *his wives turned his heart away after other gods* (11:4). Built high places for Chemosh, for

SCRIPTURE'S VERDICT

The verdict on Solomon is given in the same language used of his successors who would also do evil, with the contrast to his father David named directly:

> *Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done... The LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.*
>
> 1 Kings 11:6, 9

Why the Kingdom Split When It Did

Scripture connects the split directly to Solomon's sin. The judgment is named in 1 Kings 11, before Solomon's death:

> *So the LORD said to Solomon, Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.*
>
> 1 Kings 11:11–13

The throne would split. But it would not be torn down entirely: *for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem.* The Davidic covenant held. Judah remained on David's line; the north passed to Jeroboam; Rehoboam ascended to a fractured kingdom; and the Divided Kingdom began.

Notes on the comparison: how three lives were measured

Why these three men's verdicts are not the same

Saul committed acts the text records and was rejected; David committed worse acts and was kept; Solomon was given wisdom and worship beyond either of them and turned away in his old age. The difference between Saul and David is not the gravity of their sin (David's adultery and murder is worse, by any measure, than Saul's sparing of Agag). The difference is the response: *I have sinned against the LORD* from David (2 Sam 12:13); a series of justifications from Saul (1 Sam 13:11–12; 15:13–15, 20–21). And underneath both is the LORD's sovereign choice and the promise made to David that was not made to Saul.

What this spoke deliberately did not do

This spoke does not psychologize the three men, does not assign motives Scripture does not name, and does not import a contemporary moral framework onto the text. It walks what Scripture says: each rise, each reign, each fall, each verdict. The Bible's own categories are sharper than ours.

Dates

Saul's reign length is given as forty years in Acts 13:21 (no precise number in 1 Samuel itself; 1 Sam 13:1 in many manuscripts is textually difficult). David reigned forty years: seven at Hebron, thirty-three in Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:4–5). Solomon reigned forty years (1 Ki 11:42). The transitions and overlaps are otherwise straightforward.

The Davidic covenant runs forward through everything that follows

The covenant given to David in 2 Samuel 7 carries through:

- Every king of Judah on the Divided Kingdom chart sits on David's throne because of it.
- Even after the throne falls in 586 BC, the line is preserved through the exile (Jehoiachin's release, 2 Ki 25:27–30; the Davidic genealogy in 1 Chr 3).
- Both NT genealogies (Matt 1, Luke 3) trace Christ to David.
- Peter at Pentecost names the resurrection as the seating of David's descendant on the throne (Acts 2:30–36).

This is why the Davidic covenant is the pivot of the United Kingdom spoke and why every Judah king of the Divided Kingdom spoke is, in a sense, sitting under it.

Companion spokes

The **Covenants of God** spoke shows the five major covenants side by side. **The Divided Kingdom** shows the 345 years that followed Solomon. **Promise Threads** picks up the Davidic throne as one of eight OT promises taken up by name in the NT.

Primary Sources: 1 Samuel 8–31; 2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1–11; 1 Chronicles 10–29; 2 Chronicles 1–9; selected Psalms; Acts 2 · 13

A deep-dive companion to the Noble Mind Study Old Testament Timeline · The Divided Kingdom · The Covenants · Promise Threads · Return to the timeline