

# Dr. David Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 11

## Covenants

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This is Dr. David Howard in his teaching on the books of Joshua through Ruth. This is session 11, Covenants Excursus.

Hello. In this segment, we're going to step back from the book of Joshua and talk about what I would see as a major framework of what we would call biblical theology. I like to see it in terms of the major covenants in the Bible. Actually, these covenants are all in the Old Testament, even the New.

The Old Testament points ahead to the New. I want to talk about each one, or at least the Abrahamic covenant and the things that flow out of it, as a way of setting the framework for all three books that we're lecturing about here. We're in the book of Joshua, and there are important things from the Abrahamic covenant that play out in the book of Joshua.

In the book of Judges, similar, but also some important things that look ahead to the Davidic covenant in the book of Judges, and also the book of Ruth. This segment will be applicable to all three books as setting the framework and setting the stage. To begin with, I'd like to begin with looking at the Abrahamic covenant.

If you have your Bibles, take it and open it to Genesis chapter 12. We'll look at the text there. Just for the larger purposes, the major text for the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis would probably be Genesis 12, 15, and 17.

Plenty of other places where other things are reiterated, but those are the major texts that, if you want to do a more in-depth study, would be the ones. One thing I do in my classes is to give an assignment that the students should read those chapters and make a list of all the things that God is intending to give to Abraham or to do for him. There's a rich abundance of things, 15 or 20 items that we usually come up with.

We'll look at some of them here as we discuss the covenant. We'll begin by looking at Genesis 12. Particularly the first three verses set the stage.

To set the background to that, we will look back at the end of chapter 11 and remind you that Abraham, his original name was Abram, and his father was Terah, chapter 11, verses 27 and following. Abram originally was from Ur, but came up with his father, Terah, in the northern Mesopotamia in a place called Haran. That's where God called him.

His father, Terah, died in Haran, chapter 11, verse 32. Now in chapter 12, verses 1 to 3, we see the first words that God speaks to Abram. We'll go through them and make some comments here.

In chapter 12, verse 1, the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. Again, maybe to remind you of the map. Very off-scale, but Abram has been in Ur in the south and is up here near Haran somewhere.

This should be farther over here. He says, go to the land I will show you, which is the land of Canaan, here. I'm just going to keep reading and then we'll come back and make some comments.

Verse 2 says, and I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and I will make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and the one who dishonors you, I will curse and in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. I don't know if you noticed a little emphasis in the way I read the text, my dramatic reading, but that was not done just for whimsy, but it was done because I was trying to reflect the grammatical construction in Hebrew behind those verbs in verses 2 and 3. There's a series of five verbs, three of them in verse 2, that are in Hebrew called cohortatives.

Cohortatives have a special emphasis and that's why I tried to emphasize it here. The whole point here is that God is saying, I intend to do these things and the subtext is nobody can stop me. We might paraphrase by saying, I definitely intend to make you a great nation, verse 2. I definitely intend to bless you. I definitely intend to make your name great, verse 3. I definitely intend to bless those who bless you and the one who dishonors you, I definitely intend to curse. That's the idea.

In other words, it shows that God is setting in motion this great covenant and it's the means by which he's going to bring blessing on the nations and all over the earth.

It's God's initiative and nobody's going to stop him. In essence, it's an unconditional covenant. God is doing this, nobody can stop him.

Individuals can opt in and out, we'll see that later, but the framework of the covenant is not going to collapse just because of one individual's disobedience. One other thing I'll point out, at the end of verse 2, many versions say something like this, I will bless, make you a great nation, bless you, make your name great, and you will be a blessing. Literally in Hebrew, it says, and be a blessing.

It's a command. The King James Version has it that way. I think the New American Standard has a footnote in the margin that says that.

That kind of construction with the and then what's called an infinitive absolute of the verb to be is used in a way that we might call a purpose or a result clause. It's not just four things, I will make you a great nation, bless you, make your name great, and you'll be a blessing. Rather, it says the first three things are for the purpose of the fourth thing, with the result that the fourth thing comes into play.

Namely, God is going to make Abraham a great nation, bless him, make his name great, not just for his own sake, but for the purpose that, at the end of verse 2, he will be a blessing. Subtext is understood by others. Right away, at the beginning of this whole great section on God's promises to Abraham, it's clear that God wants to use Abraham as a means of blessing on others.

Abraham is going to be the recipient of blessing, but also the means of blessing on others. This has its roots back in the early part of Genesis, in Genesis 3, when God speaks to the serpent and tells him that there will be a conflict between him and the woman, and his seed and her seed, and the seed of the woman will triumph over the seed of the serpent itself, Genesis 3, verse 15. That's sort of the first glimmer of hope in the Old Testament, in the Bible, after sin has entered the world.

It's very broad, very undifferentiated, very vague, but now this text here is the beginning of focusing it more, and making it more explicit, that God is going to accomplish the victory over the serpent through the line of Abraham, and there are going to be blessings on others. Now, if we didn't understand that at the end of verse 2, we see that very clearly in verse 3, because verse 3 says, I will bless those who bless you, and the flip side, one who dishonors you I will curse, and then through you all the families of the earth will be blessed. Now, obviously, from our perspective in the New Testament era, we can look back and see that the blessing on the nations and the blessing on the earth and all peoples has come through Christ, his life and work and death and resurrection, but along the way, through the Old Testament itself, as we go forward, we can see Abraham, Abraham himself, for example, was a blessing a lot in a number of times, and we see the Israelites being a blessing on, for example, Rahab, as one who came to embrace the faith of Israel.

Jonah takes the message and is a means of blessing to the nation of Assyria, Nineveh. And so, sometimes we get this impression that God is limited to an interest in Israel in the Old Testament and the Gentiles in the New, but right from the very beginning, here in Genesis 12, we see that Abraham and his descendants are intended to be a blessing on others and to bring a blessing to the world, not just to their own myopic, nationalistic nation. Jonah, the man, indicated that kind of perspective.

He was, he begrudged the Ninevites receiving a blessing from God, but the book of Jonah tells us a broader story. And that's rooted all the way back here in Genesis 12. So what is it that God is going to do to Abraham? He's going to make him a great nation, bless him, make his name great.

So that's going to be through the descendants. In chapter 12, verse 7, it mentions that he's going to give him the land. The Lord said to him, to your offspring, I will give this land.

Abraham builds an altar there. We go through the next chapter, chapter 15, talks to him about the seed. The descendants is going to be there.

It mentions the land again. And let me just point out chapter 15. That he talks to about, that God talks to Abraham in verse 12 and following about his offspring and they're going to be sojourners.

They're going to be foreigners. They're going to be the Ger themselves in a foreign land. Obviously, later we find out that's going to be Egypt, but they're going to bring him back after 400 years.

God's going to bring judgment on them. And it says in verse 16, chapter 15, that they, his descendants will come back in the fourth generation because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete. The Amorites is another word for the Canaanites.

And so here, we have a preview of what's going to happen in the book of Joshua when God brings them back into that land and he's going to use, essentially use Israel, as his instrument against the Canaanites. It appears that God is going to have patience and wait. But the time is going to come when the sin of the Amorites reaches the tipping point that God says no more.

And that's what we see in the book of Judges, and in the book of Joshua. Now, so that's the first great covenant. That's the first great pillar of Old Testament theology, biblical theology.

The second great pillar is what we call the Mosaic covenant. And this is all the great body of literature that we find in Exodus and Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. That's what was referred to in the book of Joshua over and over again.

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth and they keep a covenant at the end of the book to obey the law and things like that. So, this has huge implications for life in Israel through the generations. And it's referred to over and over again throughout the rest of the scripture, throughout the rest of the Old Testament, for sure.

It's celebrated. We see in Psalm 119, for example, the longest Psalm, the longest chapter in the Bible. Pretty much every verse in that Psalm, 176 verses, mentions the word of God, the law of God, his statutes, his ordinances, commands, etc.

And that's something that the true believer is to embrace as a source of life for them. The Apostle Paul appears to talk about the Mosaic covenant as something to be avoided and something to be overcome and as something that binds us. But even Paul has good things to say about that as well.

And I think we can, without getting into the details, there are places in the Old Testament that talk about Israel to be circumcising their heart. And that would be the idea of an internal heart attitude, not external sacrifices according to the covenant. So even that dichotomy that we sometimes hear about, that the Old Testament salvation was through works or sacrifices, external things, is belied by, is contradicted by other texts in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 10, somewhere around verse 15 or 16, talks about circumcising your heart. Jeremiah chapter 4, verse 4, mentions that and a number of other places. And so, the Old Testament itself is aware of the idea of keeping faith as the core of that.

The keeping of the commandments is the external indicator of that. I think that's the same perspective that we see in the tensions between the Apostle Paul's emphasis on salvation is by faith alone, not by works. And yet James talks about faith without works is dead.

That's the same thing we see in the Old Testament. Now, there's a very critical verse point in Genesis 26 that helps us see the relationship between the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants. So, let's turn to that.

Turn to Genesis 26 in the first few verses. At this point, Abraham has died and Isaac, you know, is his son. And God reiterates to Isaac the core of the many promises he'd made to Abraham earlier.

And that's the core of that is in verses 3 to 5. And so verse 3, God says to Isaac, sojourn in this land. I will be with you. There's the promise of a relationship.

I will bless you. To you and your offspring, I will give all these lands. So, there's the offspring, there's the land.

I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham, your father. So that was continuing on. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven.

Give them all the lands. And in your offspring, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. So that's all the echoes of Genesis 12, 15, 17.

But now what I want to really focus on here is verse 5. And this is all because Abraham obeyed my voice. And then notice the sequence of words that follow here.

In my version, it says he kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

Abraham, God says, Abraham kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. Now, if you look at Psalm 119, all those words are found in referring to the Mosaic law, the Mosaic covenant. And there's a problem of chronology here because Abraham lived hundreds of years before Moses.

So how can it be that Abraham kept the law when there was no law? Give it. The only demand on Abraham was that he follow the Lord, obey, and be circumcised. But the flushing out of that in terms of all the behavioral things to do and to keep and so on is not until centuries later.

And I think that's a really important indicator for us because it shows that Abraham, in his own relationship with God, lived his life in a way that centuries later, it could be said that he kept the law. He didn't have the law, but his faith relationship with God expressed itself in a way that could be judged after the fact as having kept the law. And so, I think this helps us to see this.

That's why I've written the relationship between these covenants in this way, namely that the Mosaic law shows how life was to be lived under the Abrahamic covenant. As massive as the Mosaic covenant was, it's flushing out how life was to be lived in faith, a faith relationship with God. So, in that sense, it's subordinate to the Abrahamic covenant, and it tells more of the nitty gritty.

Now, if we go back to chapter 17, I want to focus on another aspect of the promises to Abraham. In chapter 17, verse 6, it's in the middle of a list of things that God is telling Abraham he's going to give to him or do for him. In verse 6, chapter 17 says, I will make you exceedingly fruitful.

I will make you into nations. In other words, the descendants and kings shall come from you. So, notice that part of the blessing, part and parcel of the 15 or 20 items that we can list about what God is planning to do for Abraham is that kings will come from that line.

And I would argue that that's part and parcel of the blessings. It's not 18 blessings and one thorn, one curse thrown in there. Oh, I'm going to curse you with the kings coming from your line.

No, it's part and parcel of the blessings. He reiterates that when he's speaking to Abraham about Sarah. And so, in verse 16, God says, I will bless her and moreover, I will give you a son by her.

I will bless her. She'll become nations and kings of peoples shall come from her. So again, there's a promise of the kings.

And then in chapter 35, a couple of generations later, we have God speaking to Jacob, Abraham's descendant. And in verse 11, we have something similar. God says to Jacob, I am God almighty.

I am El Shaddai. Be fruitful, multiply a nation and a company of nations shall come from you and kings shall come from your own body. So that's really interesting because we can see from the very beginning, part, and parcel of what God intended to do for Abraham and his descendants was that there should be kings that come from the line.

Now, obviously there are kings of some of the nations, the Edomites and others that sort of came from that line, but also it's referring to kings coming out of the line of Israel itself. Part and parcel of the blessings. Fast forward a little bit to chapter 49 of Genesis, and we have Jacob now at the end of his life when he has his 12 sons and they've all met together in Egypt.

He's gathered his sons around himself and he's pronouncing a blessing on each of the sons. And you look at the chapter, it's written in poetic form. There's a verse or two for most of the sons of here's the blessing on you, starting with the oldest, going down to the youngest.

And a couple of the blessings stand out. The blessing on Joseph in verses 22 to 26 is especially prominent. And that's not surprising because Joseph has been the hero of the last third of the book of Genesis.

But the blessing on Judah in verses 8 to 12 is also very prominent. And that's a little bit more surprising because Judah when we first meet him in chapter 38, he's doing some bad things. He's being enticed by his daughter-in-law who's dressed up as a prostitute.

But at different points when there's back and forth with Egypt and Joseph down there, Judah does step up and say the right things and he's rewarded with a good blessing. So, let's look at that passage. Genesis 49 verse 8. Judah, your brothers shall praise you.

Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's sons shall bow down before you. This is an irony because earlier in chapter 37, Joseph has had these dreams where the sons are bowing down to him.

And of course, they did do that when they came down and Joseph was high in the Pharaoh's court. They did bow down to him. But now the blessing is looking ahead to

a time when authority is going to be transferred or resident more in the line of Judah, not Joseph.

So, let's look at verse 10. It says the scepter will not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet. And so, the scepter is the symbol of the king's authority.

Big rod, fancily decorated in most cultures. And then it says, there's different versions read different ways in this third line of verse 10. King James and NASB say until Shiloh comes.

NIV and others say until he comes to whom it belongs. And ESV says until tribute comes to him. I would go with the reading of the NIV until he comes to whom it belongs.

In other words, there's this scepter awaiting a worthy recipient. And we look down the road and we can see Christ certainly is that. We can see maybe probably earlier David as the legitimate heir of that kingly authority.

But regardless of how we translate that third line, the whole point of verse 10 is that kingly authority is to reside in Judah. So, we see the undifferentiated promises of kings coming from the line of Abraham earlier in the book. Here it's now focused and we learn that it's going to be from the line of Judah that this is going to take place.

So, we look ahead and we have the first king's centuries later, Saul, David, and so on. And there's a strand of teaching that I learned certainly growing up, and it's widespread in the scholarly academy as well as the church, that when Israel asked for a king, it was the wrong thing to do and that God's intention that Israel should never have a king. My view that we'll explain in a few minutes is that no, the institution of kingship was part of God's plan and God's idea from the very beginning.

We see that here in these passages in Genesis. And so, we'll have to interpret the request for the king in Samuel that was a sinful request. We'll have to interpret that in light of what we see here in these earlier passages.

And so, we'll try to do that as we go along. So, following this kingship line, kind of leading up to the Davidic covenant, it has its roots in the Abrahamic covenant, and there's a very important passage in the book of Deuteronomy that we should now turn to. So open your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 17, and we'll look at something there.

And in chapter 17, if you have a Bible that has headings, you probably have a heading between verses 13 and 14 that says something about the law of the king, the king, or something like that. And verses 14 to 20, Deuteronomy 17, are looking ahead to the time when they're going to have a king. So, if you remember, the book of



Deuteronomy is Moses looking back at what God has done for them and looking ahead, speaking to the second generation that had come out of Egypt.

Moses looking ahead to life in the land. He will not be with them, and this is one of those passages where he's looking ahead and warning him about some things. So let's look at what it says.

Verse 14, Deuteronomy 17, when you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it, and then say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around about me. So, Moses, in his own time, around 1400 BC, anticipated a time when the Israelites would say, we need a king just like the nations around us. From our perspective, we look back and we see that that happened in the days of David about 400 years later.

But now I think it's really interesting to see God's response here through Moses because God does not say, no, you should not have a king. Rather, verse 15, says, you may indeed set a king over you like all the nations. I'm sorry, you may indeed set a king over you.

The syntax there in Hebrew is an emphatic statement. NIV says, be sure to set a king over you, and I think that kind of misunderstands things. It's more of an emphasis.

In Hebrew, it's an infinitive absolute plus an imperfect, *som tasim*, and it's basically saying, yeah, go ahead, do it. This is something that I want you to do. So God is granting permission for them to have the king.

It's part of his plan, but there's a condition. There are conditions, and there are about six conditions now in the next verses that circumscribe the kind of king that Israel is to have as opposed to the kind of king that's in the nations. So, number one, middle of verse 16, it has to be someone that the Lord, their God, would choose.

Can't just be anybody. And so if you remember your Bible history in the book of Judges, there's one of the sons of Gideon named Abimelech, who kills his 70 brothers, one escapes, and Abimelech sets himself up as king, and he reigns as king for three years, and then he is assassinated. But the Bible never considered, and so technically, Abimelech could be seen as Israel's first king, but the Bible never treats him that way because God did not choose him.

He set himself up as king in his own authority. The first criterion, God has to choose the king. The second criterion, end of verse 16, has to be someone from among their brothers that they should set him a king over them, not a foreigner.

So, it has to be an Israelite, second criterion. The third criterion, you must not acquire many horses for yourself, or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses. So we'll stop in that first part.

The king is not to acquire many horses, not to multiply horses for himself. And what's behind that? And my whimsical side says, well, God didn't want them betting on the horse races, horse race gambling, but that's not really it. It's basically, horses were the backbone of the military in ancient societies, especially in Egypt, in many places, they drew the chariots, and the chariots were the main, sort of the ancient equivalent of tanks.

And so let me draw a picture here for you that kind of illustrates this. This is my rendition of something found in an Egyptian painting on one of the temples. It shows the pharaoh in his chariot.

So, this is my horrible artistic rendering of the pharaoh in his chariot. The horse is drawing the chariot. It's kind of maybe too pregnant a horse.

We need to do better. But this is part of a larger mural. But the point is, it shows the enemies that he is battling against as well.

And here are the enemies. It shows the pharaoh's horse trampling over the enemies, and they're clearly in a different scale. And the whole point of this is that the pharaoh is a great warrior.

He is the great conqueror of the enemies. He is the number one man in the society. And this is the model that we find throughout the Near East.

You see this in the iconography, the pictures of Assyria and Babylon, and the reliefs that they left on their buildings. You see it in Egypt. You also see it in the texts that the pharaohs and the Assyrian and Babylonian kings left.

They portrayed themselves as the greatest in the society and so on. So, the default mode of what a king was to be like in the ancient Near East was that the king was the great warrior, or flip side, the greatest warrior was the one who ascended to become the king. And that's what God is saying here that the Israelite king should not do.

The Israelite king should not multiply horses. The Israelite king was not to be this model. Why? Well, we know that typically when Israel encountered the enemy, God is the one that gave the victory.

And the leader, whether Moses or Joshua or David or anybody else, should not exalt themselves, but rather give the credit to God. There's a whole theology in the Old Testament where we talk about God is the warrior, the divine warrior theology that

God is the one that brings the victories, and so on. So that's a profoundly countercultural thing that the Israelite king is to be.

It's not to be like the nations. That's what's behind this idea. And so, what Israel was asking for, we find out later, they wanted a king like the nations.

They wanted a king like this. But God wanted a different type of king. So, let's continue.

At the end of verse 16, it says, don't cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses. Since the Lord has said to you, you shall never return that way again. So, the third point is they should not acquire many horses.

The fourth point is don't try to make any foreign alliances that would help you. Don't go back to Egypt, rely on them. Again, the subtext is to rely on me instead, rely on the Lord.

Sadly, and ironically, hundreds of years later, in the days of Jeremiah, Babylon was threatening Israel and Jerusalem and Jeremiah counseled them saying, the time has come when God is going to take you away into Babylon and he's going to use them as the punishment for you. But God is going to bring you back in 70 years. And so don't resist it.

Go to Babylon, build houses there, sink roots, bloom where you're planted, and God will bring you back in due course. There was a faction in Jerusalem, however, that wanted to make an alliance with Egypt. And ironically and sadly, they kidnapped Jeremiah and went down to Egypt.

That's where Jeremiah died. So that's an illustration of the prohibition here. They went against that.

So, the fourth point, is don't make foreign alliances. Fifth point, verse 17, he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away. So the typical idea here is that the king is making foreign alliances and they exchange daughters perhaps.

And if I've married your daughter, you're the foreign king, I'm not going to attack your nation, most likely. And then sixth point, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. Or in some versions they say, nor shall he multiply silver and gold.

And so, the king is not to try to enrich himself. Now whenever I read this passage and I get to this point, there's sort of a holographic image that comes into my mind, and I'm sure that for most of you, you're thinking the same thing I hope, which is namely

Solomon. King Solomon had hundreds of wives, had thousands of horses, hundreds of wives, and great riches.

So, Solomon was the perfect anti-type of the ideal king here in Deuteronomy. Now Solomon was a great man, he did wonderful things, he was very wise, God blessed him, he wrote many proverbs and so on, but fundamentally at the end of his life he failed precisely because of the wives that took his heart away from the Lord. First Kings chapter 11 said he loved many foreign women, including the daughter of Pharaoh and daughters of other nations of whom God said precisely you should not intermarry with them and so on.

So, Solomon is a tragic example of the kind of king that is not prescribed here. So I just want to set the stage that there's a sixth criterion for the Israelite king that is, again, a profoundly counterculture criteria, and Israel is to stand out and away from the practices of the foreigners in many different ways. You'll see in the ways they worshiped, and they worshiped one God instead of many, the sacrifices and all that, but also in the kind of king that they would have, and the kind of king they would have would be very different from the kings and the nations.

Now all that's the preface to what we would see in the book of Judges, and let's go to the book of Judges now and point out a couple of things. If you turn to Judges chapter 8, we will look at a passage here that has some relevance. First, the context here is Judges 6 to 8 are the story of Gideon, one of the judges, and Gideon was a great man.

He tore down altars, pagan altars in chapter 6, and in chapter 7, we have the little story of Gideon with the army, he has 32,000 men, and God says that's too many, so they let whoever wanted to go home go home, ends up with 10,000, but again, God says there's too many, and they have to pass the test by drinking a certain way out of the book, and it ends up with there's only 300, and there's thousands of Midianites that they're going to be fighting against, and so the whole point of this story is with only 300 men versus these thousands, that if and when the victory comes, of course, usually we can predict the victory is going to come for Israel if God's on their side. If and when the victory comes, it's going to be clearly because God has given them the victory, not because of anything on their own. So, in chapter 8, we see the battle and win, of course, and they capture the king and so on, but I want to zero in now on the aftermath of the battle, and especially in Judges 8, verses 22 and 23.

So, verse 22 says, the men of Israel said to Gideon, this is again after the dust has settled, they won the battle, they said, rule over us, you, your son, your grandson also, be our king. They're asking Gideon, if they think Gideon should be king, and why? It says because you have saved the land from the hand of Midian. Huge irony here.

These men are idiots. They have totally upset the lesson of chapter 7 with the 300, and this is the kind of king they want. They see Gideon as the conquering hero, and because of that, he should be their king.

So, the men of Gideon are illustrating precisely the wrong kind of attitude to who the king should be. So, to his credit, Gideon says all the right things. In verse 23, he says, nope, I will not rule over you.

My son will not rule over you because Yahweh, the Lord, will rule over you. So that's the right thing to say. If you want me to be the king because I'm a great warrior, no, I know enough to know that it's God who gave the victory and he should be our king.

So, he said the right things, but I'm not convinced that his heart was totally in it because immediately after this, he sort of begins acting like a king. In verse 24, he tells him to bring them all of their riches. He ends up making an ephod out of that, whatever that was, and it became a snare to him and his family.

In verse 27, all Israel whored after it, played the prostitute after it, became a snare to Gideon and his family. So that was, in a sense, he was acting as their leader, saying, bring me your stuff and acting like a king. And then ironically, he has 72 sons, and one of them, in verse 31, he has a concubine who bore him a son and he called his name Abimelech.

And just to give you a little lesson in Hebrew here, most of you know this word. This is an Aramaic word meaning father and dad. Find that in the New Testament.

The Hebrew word for father is similar. It's just Av. And then if you have an I at the end, that means my father.

And then if you have this word after it, the word Melech is the word king. So, Gideon names his son, my father is king, or my father the king. I think there's a great irony there.

So even though Gideon said the right words, he didn't end up finishing well, let's put it that way. And then, of course, his son Abimelech is the one that sets himself up as king in chapter 9, and we've mentioned that before. So here we have an example played out in a story where the image of the king, of the ideal king Deuteronomy 6-17 is the backdrop for this story.

And we'll do one more thing with judges. And that is, let's look at the end of the book. And there's a series of repeated statements here.

And we start with chapter 17, verse 6. And 17, verse 6 says, in those days, there was no king in Israel. Every man did what was right in his own eyes. No king in Israel, everyone did right in their own eyes.

Chapter 18, verse 1, in those days, there was no king in Israel. Chapter 19, verse 1, in those days, there's no king in Israel, kind of setting the context. But then the book ends on the same note, just as the same as 17, verse 6. Chapter 21, verse 25 says, in those days, there was no king in Israel.

Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Now, we'll be lecturing on the book of judges in this series of tapings. We'll see that there's kind of a downward trajectory in the life of Israel through those years.

There's kind of a repeated cycle. I would think about the repeated cycle this way. I would not think of the repeated cycle like this, but rather like this.

It's a downward cycle morally and ethically through. And so, the stories at the end of the book just get worse and worse. And it finally gets to this final point, and the author of the book is saying, things have gotten to this point because there's no godly king in Israel.

Everybody is doing whatever they want. So, sometimes this phrase, doing right in their own eyes, is debated. Some scholars, including one of my professors in my doctoral work, argued that doing right in their own eyes was a good thing, and that this was the period of peace and harmony throughout Israel's history when there was no king.

And when the kings came, this is a bad thing. But I would argue, most scholars would argue that, no, this is a bad thing. And doing right in their own eyes, as opposed to doing right in the Lord's eyes.

The term doing right in blank's eyes occurs 40 times in the Old Testament, 30 times doing right in God's eyes, and the other times doing right in their own eyes. A couple of times doing right in their own eyes is sort of neutral, sort of like, do you want the carrots or the green peas? Do whatever is right in your own eyes. You can decide.

It's no big deal. But the other times, the other eight times, it's always a bad thing. It's in contrast to doing right in God's eyes.

So, I think the author here is saying, things are this bad because everybody's doing right in their own eyes. And why is it that they're doing right in their own eyes? It's because there's no godly king as the leader, as the model. I need to have you keep your fingers here in this passage.

And I want to take you back to the Deuteronomy passage because I apologize that I forgot to say one thing about the text there. So, we'll hold it here, come back to Deuteronomy 12, 17. And so we look at this list of the things that the king is not to be or to do, Deuteronomy 17, verses 15 through 17.

But now, verses 18 to 20 are the things that the godly king is to do, is to be. And so they're not to marry, you know, multiply horses, wives, marry, etc., etc. But rather, what the king is to do, verse 18 says, when he sits on his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests.

It shall be with him. He shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law, these statutes, doing them, so his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, that he may not turn aside from the commandments to the right or the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children in Israel. So, what is the key to success for the godly king? It's to be rooted in God's Word.

He is to be rooted in the Torah, the law, and that's the key to success. So, the key to success is not being the great warrior. The key to success is dependent upon God.

So now back to the judge's passage, that's the backdrop. And I think the author of Judges is saying, everybody's doing right in their own eyes, because there was not a king in place, a godly king who would be the model for keeping God's Word, following the Lord. The king is not to be the model of the great warrior.

God is his warrior. They're dependent on God, and the king is to be a model. Sometimes we think in the Old Testament about the offices of priests and judge and king and prophet, and the priests and prophets especially are the spiritual offices.

The king and the judges are more political, administrative offices. But I would argue even the judges and the kings had a spiritual function to them, especially the kings, who are to be the models and the leaders in being rooted in God's Word. So in a sense, we could turn this around, the last verse of Judges, and say, because there's no king in Israel, everybody does right in their own eyes, because there's no godly king.

Or the flip side, if there had been a godly king in Israel, things would not have gotten to this point. And so, in some ways, the summary of the message of the book of Judges is the author is waving a little flag and saying, we need a king. We need a godly king to counter this kind of everybody doing whatever they want to do.

That's part of it. So that's looking ahead to ultimately, we're getting down to the Davidic covenant. So finally, the last thing we'll do here in this segment about the covenants and kingship is to look at 1 Samuel 8. So please turn to that.

And this is the passage where Israel now asks for a king. It's clear that it's a sinful request, but we'll try to put it into the context of what we've just looked at. So, 1 Samuel 8, verse 1, says, And Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.

And there are a couple problems with that. Right away, we should have sort of our ears pricked up. First, it's the first time that someone has taken it upon themselves to appoint a judge.

In the book of Judges, whenever the need arose, it was God who raised up the next judge. So, Samuel is taking it upon himself on his own authority to do this. And that shouldn't surprise us then that it begins to unravel.

Secondly, it seems like for the first time, someone is trying to establish what we might call a dynastic succession. In the book of Judges, judges were chosen from all around the country. God raised them up independently from each other.

But Samuel is trying to appoint his own sons and establish a family line of judges, which again is contrary to what we've seen earlier. So, it shouldn't surprise us that things unravel. In verse 3, it says his sons didn't walk in his ways.

They turned aside after gain, etc. And that triggers the elders of the people to come in verses 4 and 5 and ask Samuel for a king. So, verse 5, it says, Behold, you are old, your sons do not walk in your ways.

So, appoint for us a king to, literally in Hebrew, it says to judge us. I think a lot of versions say to govern us, to lead us, something like that. But the word is to judge.

And I think that's significant because if you think back to the book of Judges, the primary function of the judges, they were raised up in response to a military threat. And God raised up the next judge to help against that. So here they're asking for a king to do what the judges had done, namely, to lead them in battle.

The difference is that the judges were raised up in different times and different places in an ad hoc fashion. And then they went their way. A king would be someone with an established bureaucracy, would be an established institution that would be a great burden.

And Samuel talks about that in the verses following here. So, they asked for a judge of them like the nations. So, what are they doing? They're asking for this.

They're asking for a king after the model of what is around them. So, it shouldn't surprise us that Samuel is angry about this in verse 6. It's displeased. And God says in verse 7, don't worry about it.



I've got you covered. They're not rejecting you. They're rejecting me.

So very clearly, the request for a king here in 1 Samuel 8 is a sin. And it's a rejection of God as their king. Now, this is the passage where I learned, and many people would argue that the point is that God wanted them never to have a king, that he should only be their king and never have a human king.

That's why I learned that that was sort of God's grudging second-best concession to Israel's sinful request. But my view today is more that no, the office of kingship was part of God's plan from the very beginning. And it was to be a very special type of kingship, a countercultural kind of a king.

And that was his plan. And the reason for the problem is not the fact that they requested a king. The reason for the problem is what kind of king they were asking for, a king after this model.

So, Samuel gives him a warning about all the burdens the king is going to have in verses 11 through 18. But now verse 19, the people continue to refuse and their motivation becomes clearer. So verse 19, 1 Samuel 8, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel.

They said, Nope, there shall be a king over us that we may also be like the nations. Well, we knew that from verse five, that our king may judge us. We also knew that from verse five, but the last clause of verse 20 gives us the real motivation that he may go out before us and fight our battles.

So that makes it clear. This is the kind of king they were asking for. I think that if they had come to Samuel and said, give us a king to lead us in the study of the Torah, Samuel would have said, great, good idea.

So again, my point is, it's not the fact that they asked for a king, it's the kind of king they wanted. And that was the reason for their sinful request. So God begins the idea of kings being the means of blessing the nations through the Abrahamic covenant.

It leads ultimately to the covenant that God makes with David. You can look at that on your own. It's in 2 Samuel 7. Remember Saul is the one that's first established as king, but he shoots himself in the foot several times and is rejected as king.

David from the line of Judah is then established and God makes great promises to him in 2 Samuel 7, that a descendant of his would always be on the throne. And of course, we trace that through the prophets and into the New Testament as leading to the great new covenant. So, let's finish this off by looking at the New Testament,

one passage, and that's in Matthew 1. So, Matthew 1 is the introduction to the book, obviously, and it has the genealogy of Jesus, verses 1-17.

And it's broken up into these three groupings of 14 names a piece, 42 names total. But look at the beginning. Verse 1 is essentially the title of the book, but also the title to the genealogy.

The genealogy of verse 2 starts with Abraham, and takes us down to Jesus in verse 16. But the title to the book, the title to genealogy says this, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. Now, all of these names following this are ancestors of David.

So out of those 42 names, why were those two chosen to be in the title of the book? And I think the answer is in this picture of the covenants, that Matthew is saying, I want to introduce the story of the Messiah. I want to introduce the story of the new covenant by anchoring it in these twin peaks of Old Testament theology. Those are twin pillars throughout the Old Testament, and that leads to the new covenant.

And so that's Matthew's way of saying, you can't understand the story of Jesus without understanding the promises God made to David and Abraham. And so, this is not just a symbol of blood descendant from those two, which of course it was, but Matthew is using those two names to kind of tell us about the theology that he wants to build upon those twin peaks of Old Testament theology. So, all of this helps us to see the framework of the books we're talking about in this series of lectures, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. We can see a number of things along that line.

This is Dr. David Howard in his teaching on the books of Joshua through Ruth. This is session 11, Covenants Excursus.