

Dr. Donal Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Lecture 4, Divinization of Kings

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This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament Backgrounds. This is session 4, Divinization of Kings.

Well, we're registering comments about one of the epochal shifts in human experience.

That epochal shift is away from the centrality of religious entities like temples and priests to quasi-religious entities like kings and palaces. This is really important as it fits as background material for the Old Testament and where we're going to go. So, I know right now it might seem like we're far removed from the Bible, but if you'll be patient with me, what we're going to be working toward in this hour is the concept of the divinization of kings, that is kings in Mesopotamia becoming deities, and then the abandonment of that, and then how all of that is crucial material for understanding pagan thought about how religion worked.

And I think you're going to find that's very helpful material for understanding not only the world of the Old Testament but how we think as human beings. So, it's a while to get there, but you know, let me just pause a minute and tell you, one of the things about a speed-up culture that we have that drives someone like me nuts is that it's like we're always in a hurry to get to nowhere. If you're willing to take the time to build a foundation, you can build a skyscraper.

But if you want to build a shed, all it takes is just a little wood flooring and you're ready to go. So, we're building a skyscraper, so if you'll be patient with me, I think we can get there. All right, so what we're talking about is the city of Kish, and this is the city where kingship was first experienced.

I don't actually have this on my map for you, but it's somewhere down here on the cursor in southern Mesopotamia, and Kish was a very important city in the 3rd millennium BC, 3000 and plus, and 2nd century, 2nd millennium BC, about 2000 and plus. So, here is Nippur, and Kish was not too far from Nippur, and so this is the city where after the flood, kingship was supposedly first lowered, and I mentioned to you last class hour, the first half of the kingship of the Sumerian king list we think is just mythological. The second half has got its share of non-historical material, but there is some evidence about the kingship that amazingly tells us that there was some historical value to the second half of this listing of kings, one of which is thus far the first clear instance of a royal palace that has been found in Mesopotamia is at the city of Kish.

That's interesting given the fact that in the Sumerian king list this is where it said kingship was first experienced. Secondly, royal inscriptions always utilize the title king of Kish as the most prestigious of earthly titles. Now in a democracy, we not uncommonly don't know about royal titles, and amazingly they are all over the Old Testament.

God has royal titles up the wazoo, an old Iowa saying I picked up in three years of ministry in Iowa. You can forget that one. You don't have to remember wazoo, but what I was after is making the point that God is a royal figure in the Bible. We tend to think of him just as a sort of in Greek terms of he's this unembodied being who's just in heaven, but in the Bible, he's pictured all over the place as a king.

We just don't recognize the language. So, as a king, he has all kinds of royal titles. The Bible has royal titles like king of all kings.

That's a royal title. And so, the title king of Kish is he might have 30 or 40 of these titles that are piled up around his person. And so, king of Kish is a royal title even when he wasn't king of Kish.

If he was king of say Babylon, he might try to claim for himself the title king of Kish because it was so prestigious. So, this was the most impressive of early kings' royal titles. Third, and this one I can't explain and if you don't get it, it doesn't matter that much, but down here in southern Mesopotamia there's a square.

This square is called the capital district because most of the royal capitals of ancient Sumer were in this area, which is down here in the lower part. These include cities like Uruk, Ur, Nippur, Warka, and quite a few others. Kish is in this area down here that we call the capital district.

So, all we're arguing is that Kish would be in the right place to be a royal capital. Lastly, several of the kings who are mentioned in the Sumerian king list turn out to be individuals who apparently actually existed. One of which was Enmebaragesi who is mentioned in the Sumerian king list as a king of Kish.

We have actually found an inscription from this king in the archives at Kish. He existed. Secondly, somebody that many of you have heard about, even if you don't know much about him, is Gilgamesh.

Gilgamesh himself has been found to be listed as a king of Ur in some inscriptions. Now, it's universally held that Gilgamesh was a real person. He was apparently a king of major talent.

And because he was such a great king, he became mythologized into the figure we now know about as Gilgamesh, the mythological figure. So, what all of this is telling

us, friends, is that there is some historical evidence to suggest that Kish was indeed a specially important city for the subject area of kingship. And as we get ready to leave this, I'm just going to make three comments about the value of what I just told you about for the Sumerian king list.

One is that it's the earliest form of historiography. What we mean by that is historiography is different from history because historiography is a term reserved for describing how you write history. The way we write history in America is very definable.

It's exhaustive facts. That is presented as utterly impartial. And, of course, it's secular.

Well, that's the way we do history. The Sumerian king list tells us how they did history. And so, one of the things that we see about this that is most important is that the earliest historiography, that is, the way they did history in Mesopotamia, centered around kingship.

So, as I'm trying to lay the ground for what I think is the most important part of our whole semester, I'm tracing for you the development of kingship. And so, what we see is the earliest documents that we have as their primary concern kingship. I think I can show you this in the book of Genesis as well, if you can be patient with me.

So that's the one thing. The second thing that's really interesting and counterintuitive is that this earliest historiography is largely recorded in the dreaded term genealogies. Even I don't like genealogies.

One reads the genealogies and wonders why this is here. Well, it's because, in the way the ancients thought about writing history, genealogies were the primary way in which history was preserved. That might well be because genealogies existed largely orally, and therefore, they could be memorized. But in fact, this seems to support the book of Genesis, where in Genesis 5 and Genesis 10, we have the record of God's historical material codified in genealogies.

It's the same methodology, I think, maybe not identical, but it's the same methodology that we have in Genesis 5 and 10 as we have in Mesopotamia. I would even go so far as to say that it may have its roots in kingship because most Old Testament people, evangelical Old Testament people today, would argue that Adam and Eve were the first king and queen in God's plan. When we look at Genesis 1 and 2, we see the language that's used. It's royal language.

So, it may be that therefore the reason for the genealogies in 5 and 10 may in part be to preserve the royal lineage that actually goes back to the first king and queen, Adam and Eve. So again, we can talk about that down the road. My point was

genealogies, in critical thought, genealogies are the sign that something belongs late in the period of the Old Testament, when in reality, in Mesopotamia, genealogies fit in early historiography.

That's true for both the Sumerians and the Assyrians, both of whom have a king list that stretches for thousands of years. So, that's a relatively helpful thought when we realize that our Old Testament fits nicely with the way the ancient people thought. The third thing is that the Sumerian king list reveals the ancients' ability to preserve historical information over long periods of time, very long periods of time.

As a student of the Bible, my thought is that, well, if the Mesopotamians could do this, whoever was responsible for giving us that wherever those genealogies came from in Genesis 5 and 10, then they could well be able to preserve historical material just as the Sumerians and the Assyrians did. So, the Sumerian king list, in some initial ways, sets the stage for understanding the emerging importance of kingship in our thinking. So, with that, I'm going to try to move on because I may have been going a little too slow here for your purposes.

So, what we're moving toward is, in part, the first great empire. So, apart from the dynasty of Lagash, it is not until the dynasty of Lagash that any real kind of history is possible. Lagash was connected with the Tigris and the Euphrates by a canal.

It was the only place where there were detailed inscriptions for a relatively long line of rulers, and it was the only place where economic archives were long enough, large enough, to study the state. Ur-Nnanshe is the founder of this dynasty. His reign is characterized by, which is what kings do; they fight battles.

You might remember in 1 Samuel 8, when the Israelites asked for a king, like all the other nations, you might remember that they're asking for somebody who will fight on behalf of them. And so, Ur-Nnanshe is in constant conflict with the city of Uma over water rights. There are several following kings of little importance.

By the way, here's a picture of the earliest chariot. It doesn't exactly look formidable, does it? It's a little wooden-wheeled device pulled by a couple of horses, but it must have been a terror weapon in 2500 BC. And so, this is a picture of the earliest chariot.

This is the royal standard of Ur that is above. Beneath it is the picture of the chariot. And here is a picture of the first phalanx.

People seem to think that Alexander the Great or the Macedonians invented the phalanx. In fact, the ancient inhabitants of Ur, as you might be able to tell, the soldiers are all lined up here. Here are their helmets at the top.

Here are their shields. And here are their spears. And they are lined up in a mass formation to fight the battle.

So once again, one of the king's most, I'll use this word, guys, one of the king's most sacred responsibilities is to fight on behalf of his people. And we see this established very early in the record. The next important king was Aconitum, who was a vigorous campaigner, waging war successfully against Elam.

Elam is in southern Iran. He manages to create a certain hegemony over Sumer. Okay, nobody has ever done this before.

Sumer is an area of city-states, and they were not united until this individual came here. He created this hegemony over Sumer, but he is most famous for his stela of vultures, which celebrated his victory over Uma. This is one of the earliest treaty formats characterized by long stipulations followed by curses if the stipulations are violated.

Again, see that, I understand why that means absolutely nothing to you except this is the way God gave his treaty with Israel. The treaty is characterized by stipulations. What is that? Those are the individual commandments, the law commandments, and curses if the stipulations are not met.

So, what this means is when Moses gave us the law, it was a treaty format that was already 1,500 years old. Okay, so perhaps the most interesting king we've talked about is the coming Uruk-Haganah. He is one of the more intriguing kings of the ancient Near East, and he is universally called the reformed king.

He attempted to limit the prerogatives of the king over the city gods. Now, I'm just going to hurry over it because I'm trying to get to what we're all interested in. What this means is kingship had developed so much power that there was a blowback, a pushback in these ancient Sumerian cities, and Uruk-Haganah sought to return to what was the norm of the past when kings didn't have so much power.

Sounds like the Ronald Reagan of his era. He is one of the more intriguing kings. He sought to limit the power of the king over the city gods, i.e., he tried to put the temple back onto an equal footing with the palace.

Secondly, he tried to limit the powers of the state and bureaucracy, as well as limiting taxes. These attempts to decentralize power were clearly in tension with the trend of everything in this era. This is like Hans Christian Andersen putting his finger in the dike when there's already a river flowing through the dike.

This isn't going to stop things. Third, he instituted a limited abolition of debts, perhaps the forerunner of the so-called biblical jubilee, and we'll talk at length about

that later on. It's one of my most favorite parts of the course, the famous jubilee when God set aside every seven years, debts were to be canceled.

Well, we think that maybe this might have gone back to Uruk-Haganah, who was the first king to do this. Apparently, his reform failed along with his, he seems to have attempted to take Sumer back to its old city-state format, and that failed, but it was more than that. He tried to recapture what was the declining lost culture.

For example, the Sumerians had a really interesting practice. Whereas the Semites, of whom the Hebrews are descendants, the Sumerians did not practice polygamy like the Semites; they practiced polyandry. Wealthy women could have multiple husbands.

Well, he makes a point in his reforms to try to tell that he was returning Sumer to that practice. Thus, he's called a reform king because he's trying to reform them to go back to where they had been, but looming on his horizon is kind of what life is like for all of us. Things that you didn't know were coming.

His attempts at reform were aborted by the rising figure of, and he's one of my favorite names in all of Old Testament backgrounds, Lugal-Zage-Si. Lugal-Zage-Si was the king of Uma, and usually Uma was on the losing side with Lagash in these wars, but he apparently defeated Lagash, and then Lugal-Zage-Si captured all of Sumer and created a clear bona fide kingdom of Sumer. He declared the city of Uruk to be his capital. Lugal-Zage-Si has given us the first royal Sumerian inscription in literary style.

He also is the first king to do something that hints at what is an important factor. There was a great movie maker who scared the daylights out of Americans two generations ago, Alfred Hitchcock. There wasn't much violence, but he did it with foreshadowings so that either by music or little things happening on the screen, he was building up this fear level in you so that you knew something was about to happen.

Well, this is a foreshadowing. When Lugal-Zage-Si captured these Sumerian cities, he did something that will reverberate in history: He usurped the titles of the city gods for himself.

Now, quickly, I can tell you that in ancient Sumerian thought, the real king of every city was the patron deity of that city. That patron deity was the king. He had his own royal titles, his own palace, his own servants, and his own army.

He was a king. But when Lugal-Zage-Si captured these cities, he took the royal titles that had belonged to those kings and appropriated them for himself. What I'm suggesting to you is what's happening in history is a centralization of power that will not stop until kings are divinized, and that has all kinds of implications.

So, Lugal-Zage-Si is the first to do that. Well, okay, so here's what I'm taking you to. So, Urukagina, is like the little fish who's swallowed up by the bigger fish.

The bigger fish is Lugal-Zage-Si. Well, there's a great big fish who's going to swallow up Lugal-Zage-Si and all of Sumer and all of Mesopotamia, and he won't stop until he dips his sword in the Mediterranean Sea, and his name is Sargon, one of the most interesting of all ancient Near Eastern people. He introduces us to a period that has come to be called the Old Akkadian Period.

Sargon, by the way, you want to be careful here, guys. For those of you who read your Old Testament, you might remember there is a Sargon in the Old Testament, but that's not the same Sargon. Sargon is an Assyrian king who is dated about 700 BC.

This Sargon is an Akkadian king who's dated about 2350 BC. Sargon's name means true or just king. Okay, enjoy a little bit of my humor for just a moment.

He called himself a true king because he was a usurper. He wasn't the true king. As a matter of fact, he started out his life not as a king, not as a prince.

He started out his life as an unknown baby, set adrift on the Tigris River. Now, here's what he tells us in his Sargon myth. He tells us that his father was an unknown farmer and that his mother was a temple prostitute.

He tells us that when he was born, his mother, therefore, since she was a temple prostitute, set him adrift on the Tigris River. There in a little boat, he floats downstream, and he lands at a place called Kish. There, he is spotted on the banks of the river and taken by a royal figure, a female royal figure, taken into the royal palace and raised in the royal home.

He doesn't have royal blood, but he is raised in the royal palace. Now, sometimes students, when I'm teaching this, they immediately start saying, wait a minute, that sounds like Moses. Well, first of all, there are similarities, but there are some pretty important differences as well.

Moses had a father, and he had a mother, and his mother put him on the Nile River, not to offer him as a sacrifice to the river god, but to save his life. Almost certainly, Sargon's mother put him in the little boat to be a sacrifice to the river god. Secondly, the Nile is a very slow-moving river.

That little arc that Noah was in, that could have floated for days on end. The Tigris is a pretty fast-flowing river, and it would have tipped the boat over relatively quickly.

Of course, while Moses was raised in the royal court, Moses had no interest in being king, at least not of Egypt.

There are some significant differences, not the least of which is that one mother is a prostitute, and the other is Moses' mother is a good Israelite. So, I don't think that there are any real similarities. And furthermore, like some scholars, I'm skeptical that there's any truth to the story.

Kings knew it was important to fabricate their stories to make them acceptable. And so, in the theology of their world, for him to say, my mother was a religious figure, we think of a prostitute in exclusively negative terms, but his mother was a religious figure. And so, he had his origin in a temple with a mother who was a priestess by putting him in a boat and having his life spared.

That serves as propaganda for saying that the gods guided my arc right to the city of Kish, which happens to be the most important royal city in Mesopotamia. And then, to say that he was raised in the royal palace after those circumstances, all of that could have been just fabrication for explaining how he came to be king because he was illicit, not true. So, at any rate, this intriguing figure gives us the first world empire, and he sets us on a course whose arrival will reverberate right down into the pages of the Old Testament.

So, he reigned for 56 years, making him to be one of the longest-living kings in all of Mesopotamia. And here are some of the factors about this striking figure. He was the first person in history to have a Mesopotamian empire.

It covers all of what we call Iraq and maybe over into what we call Syria. If you have an empire if you have an empire, friends, that's because you're forcing people to be in it. If you have a kingdom, you're their king, and chances are they want you to be their king.

If you have an empire, you're ruling over captured people, and they don't necessarily like that, especially because Sargon was a Semite, and he's going to be ruling over Sumerians. These are two different peoples. If you were to think of two different groups, like, say, Americans and Chinese, you would have a vague reference for how different these people were.

Sumerian and Akkadian are languages not related at all. They're two different cultures. Now, they're not radically different, but they're different.

So, because of that, he had to figure out ways to make a kingdom work. So, he was the first king to conceive of the idea of garrisoning cities. What he did in each one of these Sumerian cities in the south was he had military troops.

He talks about the special group of 5,400. These are perhaps his body of most loyal troops that he used to garrison these cities, and so what it meant is he had a military force in every city who kept an eye on each Sumerian city to make sure they didn't revolt. Third, in order to have an empire, he appointed Semitic officials and so what he did in appointing Semitic officials is he allowed the Sumerian administrative figures to have a place, but right alongside them, he appointed a Semitic counterpart, so that you have both a Sumerian and a Semite basically doing the same job.

Last, and these are techniques that are copied by almost all subsequent empires, last, he was the first king to rule by taking political hostages. So, what he did in each one of these important Sumerian cities he would take hostages from the royal family, bring them to his capital city, and then use them to guarantee that the Sumerian official would not revolt because his sons were in captivity with Sargon at Kish. These are really brilliant.

One doesn't know whether Sargon conceived of these ideas or whether he had advisors. Nobody else did this before Sargon, so these are really brilliant motifs. Second, I call these political precedents.

This is not the best terminology. In our country, in our culture, we think of politics and religion as two separate things. In actuality, I could have just as easily called these religio-political precedents.

This period is the first that might be called imperial. The interests of the royal house are now of first importance. What Sargon does is he makes it absolutely clear that everything in the state is subordinated to the king and his palace.

Let me repeat that. This is an empire that stretches from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. Sargon made it clear that everything in the kingdom was subordinated to him as king and to his royal palace.

Now, it may be just an accident but do be reminded in the Bible that before David built or tried to build the temple before he did, he took care of conquering Jerusalem to be his own palace city. And be reminded that when Solomon became king, the first thing Solomon built was his palace. The second thing he built was the temple.

Be reminded that Solomon spent far longer time in his palace than he did in God's temple. All of these are just suggestions that tell us that in a true royal period, everything is subordinated to the king and the palace. So that means a change in royal titularity.

Whereas prior to Sargon, the king of Kish was the most prized of all royal titles, now in the new emerging kingdom empire, the favorite title is the king of Agade land,

with a gradual usurping of the god's titles for himself. Small but important. Secondly, taxes.

In the past, taxes occurred, but taxes all went to local, everything within the city walls. Now, taxes occur partly to support the local city but partly to support the standing army and the occupation forces. What Sargon did was he created a standing army, and then he paid for it through local taxes.

Third, bureaucracy. In the early dynastic period, bureaucracy was functional and local. We could call it city-state bureaucracy.

Now, Sargon rules through the family, through the royal family. He pays servants with land grants, and he owns all the land. This is an utterly dramatic shift from all tradition.

What Sargon does is literally subordinate everything to himself and the royal palace. When I say to you that he installed his daughter as high priestess, what that meant is, for the first time ever, the royal daughter of the king serves as the premier religious figure in the whole country. This is just monumental.

Sargon did all of this in a subversive fashion. So here is a quick synopsis of how, in modern terms, presidents of a country can become dictators. What Sargon did was turn the entire governmental system on its ear.

And what I mean by that is, prior to him, the temple was still fairly dominant, and the central religious figures were all appointed by the temple. What Sargon did is he centralized all of the religious offices somehow in himself, and then claimed divine justification for this by pointing out that none of his takeover could have happened without the power of the gods. It was standing things on their ear because he utilized in a powerful way a truth that everybody believed in: you could only succeed through the power of the gods.

So, what Sargon did was say, I conquered, I conquered the whole world. I could not have done that without the help of the gods, and therefore, they're behind me in all these changes. Well, this is something that, believe it or not, goes on in the pages of 1 and 2 Kings in our Bible.

So, we can show you how all of this plays itself out. So, he also did what great kings did. He built a new royal city that was his.

It was the city that he named Akkad, or Agade, and Agade was his city built brand new from the ground up. This is just exactly what David is intent on doing when he becomes king. His first act is to capture Jerusalem to be the capital city of his emerging empire.

So, this new capital city will replace Kish as the sacred city, the new power center for this whole enormous empire is now not Kish and Sumer, but is Akkad in central Mesopotamia. So let me show you, since I can show you on a map where the rough area where Akkad is at. So, if we were to if you can't tell, it's not very clear, but this area right here is the area in Mesopotamia where the Tigris and the Euphrates come closest together.

Okay, and we don't know exactly where Akkad was, but it was somewhere in this vicinity where the two rivers come closest together. It's one of only two cities in antiquity, two royal cities that we haven't found. Hopefully the day will come when we'll find it because when you find the royal city, you find the royal library.

When you find the royal library, you find the historical documents. It'll be a grand day when that gets found, but we're not, we're not there yet, and it'll just give me more things I have to cover in this class. So, I'll just move on.

The third of his innovations is cultural. He ordered his scribes to adapt the cuneiform writing system, which, up to this point, was for the Sumerian language. He ordered a wholesale adaptation of the Sumerian writing system to Akkadian, and of course where this is going is to remove Sumerian as the premier language to Akkadian as the premier language.

Following this, Sumerian is hardly ever seen on official inscriptions without Akkadian alongside. In just a matter of two centuries, Sumerian will be largely a dead language. Secondly, there is the high quality of art.

I forget that not everybody watches Saturday morning cartoons. That would be true of my students. So, when I try to make this analogy, some of them don't get it.

Years ago, I remember when there was a cartoon series about cute little purple figures called Smurfs, and if you ever saw any of the Smurf cartoons, you noticed that they were 100% lookalikes. Well, the Sumerians were the same way. They look like little Smurfs.

You couldn't tell one Sumerian from another. They were all real squat, unlike me, you know, I'm six foot four. So, unlike someone tall like me, they were all short and squat.

They were all hairless. They had no body hair. They all had no top.

They were all dressed in the same outfit. It was a grass-layered skirt, and they all walked around like this all the time. It was hysterical.

Well, in other words, it wasn't real art because it was usually done in some form of mud or stone. Sargon began an epochal change in art because if you ever saw his bust, and all you have to do is go to Google, put in Sargon, King of Akkad or something, and his royal bust, it's just among the most beautiful pieces of artwork ever conceived by humans. It is so realistic, and it is in metal, and he did what he did in so many other things.

He innovated in a dramatic fashion. All right, the fourth thing that I would like to talk about, and this will springboard quickly into where we're going, is his religious innovations. Whereas the primary economic entity in the ancient cities of the third millennium Mesopotamia was the temple, Sargon now took it upon himself to support the temple financially.

No longer was the temple a financially independent institution, it was supported now by the wealth of the king fully. This was a continuation of the phenomena of centralization. Secondly, the king has himself positioned as the center of the national cult.

Not because the king was saying he was God, but because he appointed his daughter as the high priestess over the whole land then the king, in essence, had centralized religious power in himself in ways that were completely unprecedented. Now then, I'm hurrying, but what I want to do as I look back at this with you is draw a few conclusions that can make us, because it's so much information, it's really confusing. What I want to do is make the point then that what has been happening for a millennium is the centralization of power that first occurred in the temple, and then over the space of a millennium, gradually centered in a city king, ultimately into a king Lugal-Zage-Si who ruled over kings, to Sargon who ruled over an empire.

Centralization of power is a phenomenon that was both inevitable and the direct result of urban centers' requirements. It was going to happen; the question is when. When we get into the biblical text later on, I'm going to suggest that the same kind of centralization of power occurs on the pages of the Bible.

And I hope I can show that to you because God put in careful hedges around the Israelite king, limiting him probably with this kind of royal centralization in mind. When the Israelites ask, give us a king like all the other nations. This is the prototype that they have in mind. Somebody who will give us utter safety, who will fight all of our battles, somebody who can be the most powerful person in the world.

Alright, this is not what God has in mind when God is thinking about kingship. So, what I would suggest to you is that Sargon is the most epochally important individual that we've talked about since we started this series of lectures. He's the king who really set the direction for centralization.

It's a centralization that will result in divinization, but then that will back up and result in kingship that then goes on for the rest of the Old Testament. So, Sargon is followed by several other kings who are of not great importance for us, but the last great ruler of this dynasty is a king called Naram-Sin. He is a really intriguing ruler.

I've given you a picture of him here, I'm not sure if you can see it. But this is the so-called Stele of Naram-Sin, and he's climbing up a mountain, and at the top of the mountain is this star which symbolizes deification. And what he's telling you in his artwork is that Naram-Sin is declaring himself to be a god king.

He was the first Mesopotamian king to have himself declared to be a god. There are a number of points which seem to make this apotheosis a fact. So, what is the evidence of his kingship? They are one, the use of divine determinative.

Now, let's suppose that we're talking about... You might remember earlier we talked about the river. And so, we had this cuneiform sign, and it was built on the fact that the cuneiform sign looked like a genuine river. Now, here's a problem that the ancients had.

There are really two rivers. There's the river that they get water from, that they fish in, that they bathe in. But then there's the river god.

Well, if you're writing a sentence and you draw the cuneiform sign for the river, how do you communicate to your audience that it's the deity? Well, this sign that I have on your class notes in front of you is called the divine determinative. It's the sign that tells you this is god, and that means he's talking about the river god. He's talking about the river god, not the river.

It's called the divine determinative. It tells you about the identity of what it's put in front of. Well, Naram-Sin is actually two names.

This is the Akkadian term beloved, and I know that looks like our word sin, but that's the word Sin, and that's the name of the moon god. The moon god in Mesopotamia was called Sin, the moon god. So Naram-Sin's name means beloved of the moon god Sin.

He wanted his audience to know that he was claiming deity, so what he did is he had the divine determinative drawn in front of both names so that the audience would understand that he's not just Naram-Sin because of Sin, he is the god Naram-Sin. No mistaking that by using this in front of both theophoric elements in his name, he's claiming to be deity, first king ever to do this. Secondly, he employs the title king of the four quarters.

Now, that's how the English translations tend to translate it, but I should tell you it's kind of funny to students. It doesn't mean he's only got a buck, that is four quarters. What it means is the four points of the compass.

It's an ancient way of saying king of the universe. In other words, go as far east, as far west, as far north, as far south. I am the king of the universe. Well, that's really interesting because that's the first time an earthly king ever took for himself the title of king of the universe that always belonged to the gods.

Not only does he call himself king of the universe, but he also calls himself, interestingly enough, this too is a first. He calls himself husband of Ishtar. Ishtar is the most important female deity in the Mesopotamian pantheon.

He's the first earthly king to refer to himself as husband of Ishtar. Now, that has some really important points as well, and not too far down the road, I'll try to explain what this means. But there was an ancient Sumerian religion, there was the most important religious event of the year, was the sacred marriage.

And in that sacred marriage, the priestess of Ishtar would be married to, ritually, would be married to a god whose name was Dumuzi. Now, you don't have to remember any of this, but in this marriage in which Ishtar remembers she's the most important female deity, she marries annually, and every year, they reenact Dumuzi, who is a deity. Dumuzi is a vegetation god, and so obviously, what this annual marriage was designed to accomplish was magically, through the sexual union of Ishtar and Dumuzi, to create fertility for the land.

This has gone on as far back as we can go; we can't find when this began; it's been around... All right, well, what Sargon did is he declared his daughter to be the high priestess, and then she engaged, sexually, with priestly personnel and replaced Dumuzi with an important figurine figure, I should say. And, of course, where this is going is that in a very short period of time, the king himself will become the sexual partner of the high priest. The sacred marriage, then, will revolve around the king and Ishtar.

So, this all has enormous religious considerations. The third point in Ishtala is a little harder to see, I'm not sure if you can or not, but in ancient iconography, that is the way that they pictured things in official art when you wanted to show that a being in the art, like you have artwork there, you have figures at the bottom, you have a figure at the top, in the ancient world, there were two ways that you could show, well, at least two ways, that you could show that the figure you're looking at is a god, or whether it's a person. One way that you can tell it's a deity is if the figure is larger than the other figures.

And so, if you look at the figures, you can see that Naram-Sin, at the top, is about two and a half times the size of anybody else in the picture. That's an important way in which you can tell that he's presenting himself as a deity. The second thing is, and I'm not sure that you can see it, but the second thing is, he's wearing what's called a horned helmet.

If you look carefully, you can see it kind of looks a little bit like those old Nordic Vikings who had these horns on their helmet, except that this was long before there were any Vikings. This is about 2300 BC. This is the sign of deity. In other words, if you're looking at the horned helmet, what makes it evidence of deity is the horn.

See, in other words, when you go as far back as you can in deity, in the subject area of the deities, the sign of kingship is the horn because the most powerful animal in their whole world was the bull, and the bull had these powerful horns, and therefore, the horns became ultimately the symbol of a deity. And it's really kind of interesting because this same kind of theology can make its way into the Old Testament. For example, this is the first Hebrew word that we will have learned this semester, so this is a sacred moment.

You didn't know any Hebrew, and now you're on your way to being multilingual. So, the first Hebrew word that we're going to learn is the word charon or Kharon. Now, you might look at that and say, that looks a lot like the personal name that we know, like a girl's name, Karen. K-A-R-E-N. And you would be right. Charon is a loan word.

So, I'll just put it up. So, charon. Charon is a loan word from Hebrew into English.

The Hebrew word charon means horn or crown. And if you look carefully, you can see that the consonants are the same. Look at our word crown, and then look at the word charon.

As you can see, the consonants are the same. C and K, two R's, two N's. So our word crown in English is a loan word from Hebrew.

And that crown in its earliest forms doesn't go back to the kind of crown we think of. I don't know about you, but what I tend to think of the King of England is probably because he's the only king I know whom I've seen a crown. But they have a golden crown, which is circular, and then it just has upsurges of gold that make it very ornate.

But in antiquity, the earliest crowns were just horned. Right? And so, he's wearing the horn crown, which means the crown means his deity. Okay? But interestingly enough, the Hebrew language has the same idiom because the word crown in Hebrew, Charon, can mean either horn or crown.

It's just amazing that it remembers or preserves the same idiom that the horn equals a crown, a crown equals a horn. I remember when I became a Christian, I was brand new, just three months from graduating from high school. I remember reading the Psalms.

And I remember the Psalm would say, Thou anointest my horn with oil. And I remember vividly thinking, How bizarre is that? Because I had this picture in my mind of a horn. And I thought, why on earth would you want to put oil on a horn? Because that won't work.

That'll interfere with the horn working. Well, of course, it's because the King James translators chose to translate it as horn. But that's a different word than crown in English.

So, we don't use the word horn as crown, even though I suspect that the word horn and crown are the same. The letter h and the letter h are all the same letter. In other words, in German, you might remember in German, the h sound can be h. And so I have a suspicion that horn, horn, crown, and charon are all the same word.

Okay. So, what I think he's doing is he's wearing the horned crown precisely to communicate that he is deity. Now, this is all a little esoteric up to this point.

But it begins to take on contours of interest as we move toward this discussion. It might be rightfully asked, why would a king have himself divinized? Okay. There surely must have been theological developments that made such phenomena possible or necessary.

The answer to the question is one that is, at best, theoretical. So, what we're asking you to consider is how it is that this went from something reserved for the deities, the crown; after all, remember, in the early Sumerian cities, the king was the deity of the temple. So, how is it that this went from the deity being the king to an earthly king being the deity? How did it go from titles that had never been used for anything but a king to titles being used for an earthly deity? And how did it go that the sexual union called the sacred marriage went from two royal persons, Ishtar and Dumuzi, to the king and Ishtar? We have a dramatic shift in culture, sociology, and religion, and we have to ask ourselves, we need to ask ourselves the question: why? Why is this happening? And what we can tell you about, because we're approaching the end of this lecture, what we can tell you about is, to the ancients, theology was always central to their worldview.

So, they weren't engaging in some philosophical shift; they were engaging with this shift because of dramatic religious repercussions. We want to talk about that because, once again, one of the things that we're after is to paint a clear picture of

what the Bible talks about with this hugely important subject area of kingship. Before I stop the tape on this lecture, let me just make a point to you.

This is so foreign to us that most of us don't think about our Lord Jesus as king, even though the New Testament pictures him repeatedly as king. And that's the way he was thought of, at least by many, because when Pilate had him crucified above the cross, he was king of the Jews. So, we need to re-engage with this powerful metaphor of kingship if we're going to understand both God and our Lord, as well as what seems like conflicting evidence about kingship in the Old Testament record.

So, this great shift occurs here. We'll pick it up in the next lecture with a full-blown divinization of kings. Okay, thanks for your attention.

This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament Backgrounds. This is session 4, Divinization of Kings.