

Dr. Don Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 15, People Groups, Rise of the Monarchy, Audio Podcast Overview

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Welcome to another deep dive. Today we're heading back to ancient Israel. Oh, ancient Israel. Yeah, to explore, you know, how its monarchy came to be.

Okay, and our main source is a lecture by Dr. Donald Fowler. Okay, he's a real expert on Old Testament background. Thanks, and get this: We're going to find out who the Philistines really were- not just the Samson and Delilah version. Then we'll discover this city called Ugarit, okay? It basically popped up out of nowhere.

And it totally changed how we understand the Bible. Okay, and the big question: Why did Israel go from, like, yeah, a bunch of scattered tribes to a full-blown kingdom? That is a good question. So, okay, let's unpack this: Philistines. Yeah, we know from those epic Bible stories, right, right, but I feel like there's more to them than meets the eye. Oh, absolutely, like way more.

Yeah, think of it this way: Okay, the Philistines were like part of these sea peoples. Yeah, this mysterious group that migrated across the Mediterranean. Oh, and basically they turned the ancient world upside down. Seriously, that sounds straight out of mythology.

I know, and there's so much we still don't know about them, which makes it even more intriguing. Yeah, get this, though: the Egyptians. Okay, they actually settled the Philistines. Wait, it's some of their key cities.

Why would they do that? Oh, it's a strategic move, okay, like they saw the Philistines as a Valuable asset in protecting their borders. And think about this: the name Palestine, okay, actually comes from Philistines. Whoa Really? Yeah, their impact is undeniable.

That is wild. I know, right? You rethink their whole role. Yeah, history. Absolutely, and speaking of impact, yeah, something that really stood out to me.

Okay, it was how the Philistines had this monopoly on iron. Oh, huge, like that had to be. Oh, yeah, a big deal back then, right? Absolutely a match, right? Yeah, everyone else is, uh, working with bronze.

And all of a sudden, iron- yeah, iron smelting was like Cutting-edge technology back then. Yeah, and the Philistines had mastered it, using these special bellows, wow, to crank up the heat because regular fire just wouldn't cut it. So they were basically the only ones who could make iron, pretty much. Yeah, they had iron swords, iron tools. Hmm, and get this: they even supplied the iron for those Infamous Canaanite iron chariots mentioned in the Bible.

Oh, wow. Yeah, they basically had the ancient equivalent of a weapons monopoly. They were like the arms dealers, right? I wouldn't want to be on their bad side.

Nope. All right, let's shift gears. All right.

Talk about this lost city of Ugarit. Ooh, yes, the farmers plowing their fields, right? Stumbles upon it, and boom, boom, it's like finding a treasure trove. Yeah, a treasure chest of Ancient history, ancient history.

I know it's incredible. Talk about a lucky find. Oh, absolutely, and Ugarit's like this time capsule, right? That totally changed how we understand the Bible. Okay, for one thing, they found one of the oldest alphabetic languages ever discovered. Yeah, that alone is mind-blowing. But what's really fascinating here is that Ugarit gave us a ton of info about Canaanite religion and culture, which the Old Testament doesn't really explain; it fills in those gaps. You know, it gives context. For example, there's this word, groves, in the Bible, often thought to mean trees, right? Yeah, but Ugarit revealed that it actually referred to, okay, these wooden idols.

Used in Canaanite worship. Oh, wow, so it really clears up a lot of confusion about certain verses. So it's like reading the Bible with footnotes from Ugarit. Yeah, I think that's pretty cool. It makes those stories come alive. Speaking of stories.

Yeah, let's talk about the period of judges. Yeah, you know, the time of divinely appointed leaders. Yeah, it's sort of a Golden Age.

We often hear about, right, right. Ah, the Golden Age. Yeah, that's the common perception. Yeah, but if you dig a little deeper, okay, the Book of Judges actually paints a different picture.

Oh, really? Yeah, it's less about ideal leadership. Okay, and more about the lack of it.

It's about chaos, everyone doing their own thing. Okay, in fact, the book never actually calls those figures judges. Yeah, we just don't see them. No way in that context.

That's totally different from how I always pictured it. It's a good reminder to look beyond the surface. Yeah, okay, and there's more when you read closely. Yeah, you notice that key terms like Torah, Prophet, arc, they're basically absent.

Oh, well, which suggests, you know, yeah, some serious religious backsliding going on. So not a Golden Age after all. Not really.

No, like a time of unrest and Uncertainty. Yeah, I even argue that it was a period of anarchy, a lack of unity and consistent leadership, right, which I think is really important as we shift gears. Okay, to the biggest question: Why a monarchy? Right, weren't the Israelites supposed to be led by God exactly? You know what prompted this drastic change, and how does all of this the Philistines, Ugarit, the chaos of the Judges tie into this Monumental shift?

Yeah, that's where things get really interesting. Okay, the story of the monarchy isn't about rejecting God. Okay, it's about this desperate need for Stability and unity. Yeah, in the face of all these threats, they craved a leader who could unite them, protect them- someone visible. Exactly, the chaotic period of the Judges made them realize, okay, that they needed a different kind of leadership.

They needed a king. Okay, someone who could bring order. Yeah, someone they could rally behind. That makes a lot of sense. Yeah, but if God was supposed to be their leader, right, wouldn't choosing a king feel like, yeah, rejection of his rule? Well, that's a question that haunted the Israelites, and it's attention. We'll explore as we delve deeper into the story of the monarchy, but remember, even though God allowed for a king.

He was still ultimately in control. Okay, his plan was unfolding even through these Tumultuous times. This is already making me rethink so much of what I thought. I know, I know, right? Ancient Israel is fascinating, and we've only just begun. Buckle up, because the next chapter takes us into the reign of the first king. Okay, a figure both Powerful and deeply flawed.

Oh, no, I can't wait to hear about it. I know it's a good one. Okay, so we've got this chaotic backdrop. Yeah, of the Judges period, right? The Philistines flexing those iron muscles.

Yeah, they're iron muscles, right, and Ugarit shaking up how we understand ancient culture. No wonder the Israelites were ready for a change, but I'm curious: how did this whole king thing, right, even come about? Well, picture this: the Israelites, right? Yeah, feeling vulnerable, desperate for stability. Mm-hmm. They approached the Prophet Samuel.

Okay, and they basically say, okay. Hey, we want a king, just like all the other nations, and Samuel, being the Devout guy he was. Oh, yeah, probably wasn't too thrilled about that.

No, not at all. I mean, they already had a king, exactly. They had God, right? He saw it as a rejection of God's sovereignty, a lack of faith, you know, in the one who had always been their guide, right? But God, in his wisdom, understood the people's desire- yeah, for a visible Human leader. Hmm, and He allowed it. It sounds kind of like a, yeah, parent letting their kid.

Yes, learn a lesson the hard way. That's a great analogy, even though they know. Yeah. Yeah, it might end in tears, exactly, exactly, and it wasn't like God just said, okay, fine, have your king.

No, no, he also warned them about the potential pitfalls, right? Yeah, of human leadership. Yeah, how power can corrupt, how a king could become a tyrant. Oh, yeah, you know, it's a warning that echoes throughout history. Oh, absolutely, even today. Yeah, power can be.

Oh, yeah, a tricky thing. Absolutely. So who was chosen as the first king of Israel? Saul, okay, from the tribe of Benjamin.

Okay, tall handsome guy. Definitely looked the part. Okay, but his reign. Yeah.

Well, it's a bit of a Shakespearean tragedy. Oh, no, give me the Juicy details. So at first Saul's doing great, right? Unites the tribes. Scores some victories.

Okay, against the Philistines, all seems good. But then cracks start to show. He gets paranoid, disobeys God's commands, lets his Insecurities. Yeah, it drives him to make bad decisions classic case of power going to someone's head You could say that there's that that famous story of him offering a sacrifice He wasn't supposed to right, you know his pride and

fear got the better of him Yeah, eventually he loses the throne and ultimately his life what a downfall I know right it reminds me of that saying heavy is the head that wears the crown exactly, right? Saul's story is a stark reminder that even those in positions of power, right, are human, right? Yeah, prone to the same Flaws and temptations, right? Anyone else? But even in Saul's failures. Yeah, God's plan was still- oh, absolutely- moving forward, right? Yeah, and that's where we meet David, this young shepherd chosen by God to be the next king. David, now, there's a name.

I know that needs no introduction: David and Goliath. Right, the warrior poet, or your poet, the king, yeah, made Jerusalem the capital, exactly. It's almost hard to separate the man from the legend. Yeah, he's a complex figure. Yeah, that's for sure. And his story is full of twists and turns.

Okay, just like Saul's, but there's a Key difference. Okay, David's known for his deep devotion to God; even when he messes up, he owns it, repents, and seeks forgiveness, so a king who actually walked the walk. Yes, it's not just talk; he's described as a man after God's own heart.

He expands the kingdom. Builds a powerful army. Okay, lays the groundwork for what becomes, yeah, a Golden Age under his son Solomon. Okay, so David was a successful king.

Yeah, a devout follower of God. Mm-hmm, but wasn't he the king of Israel? Also, yeah, that whole scandal with Bathsheba. Oh, right, like even the Man after God's own heart.

Yeah, he had his flaws. Oh, absolutely, right. You're right, the David story, yeah, like all human stories, has its dark side: his adultery with Bathsheba and the events that followed, including the death of her husband, Uriah.

Yeah, those are stains on his legacy that can't be ignored. It's a reminder that even the best of us can fall. Absolutely terrible choice, and David faces the consequences. His family's torn apart right by conflict in his kingdom. Yeah, threatened by rebellion. Hmm, it's a harsh lesson, right, that no one.

Yeah, not even a king is above the law. But even with all that drama, yeah, David still keeps turning back to God; he does right, and that's an important takeaway no matter how badly, yeah, we mess up. There's always a path back to God. He offers forgiveness and restoration when we sincerely repent; that's a message we could all use. Yeah, a reminder of that sometimes, absolutely. So we've gone from Saul, right, the tragic king, yeah, to David, the flawed but devoted. Yeah, the flawed but devoted leader.

Yes, what happens next? Well, David's son Solomon, okay, takes the throne, and with him we enter another, yeah, fascinating chapter. Okay, in the story of ancient Israel, Solomon, the wise king, known for his legendary wealth, those grand building projects, his wisdom, and wisdom that supposedly rivaled the Egyptians. Oh, yeah, his reign must have been quite a- oh, he definitely lived up to his reputation. Under Solomon, Israel reached peak power and influence.

Okay, it's a golden age: peace, prosperity, and Impressive achievements. He built the magnificent temple. Yes in Jerusalem.

Yes, a symbol of God's presence and the nation's devotion. His court was like a magnet for scholars and dignitaries from all over must have been the place to be. It was a time of incredible Yeah opulence and grandeur. Solomon's wisdom. Yeah, was renowned throughout the region. Yeah, he forged alliances, okay, with neighboring kingdoms, securing peace and stability for Israel. So it seemed like nothing could go wrong, right, but there's always a, but there's always a but, right? Sadly, yes, despite his wisdom, Solomon made some critical mistakes: those massive building projects.

Yeah, and his extravagant lifestyle placed a heavy burden, yeah, on the people, right, and Resentment started brewing, and I remember reading about, yeah, his many foreign wives. Oh, yes, despite warnings, right, against those kinds of alliances, exactly, didn't I cause some problem, big problems? Those foreign wives brought their own gods, right, and religious practices into Israel. Mm-hmm. It led to this blending of religions, right, a straying from the worship of Yahweh.

So even with all his wisdom, Solomon's choices, yeah, ultimately weakened the kingdom, and those compromises would have devastating consequences. Oh, no, after Solomon's death, yeah, the kingdom would face its biggest challenge yet.

Okay division. Oh no, so the kingdom that David and Solomon worked so hard To build all falls apart. It's a heartbreaking turn of events, and that's where we'll pick up a final part of our deep. I think we'll explore the aftermath of Solomon's reign, the divided kingdom.

Okay, and what this turbulent period means for us today. I'm already on the edge of my seat. Oh, I know it's a good one. Okay, so we've gone through the ups and downs of ancient Israel.

We have the you know, the chaotic period of judges the rise of Kings like Saul David Solomon a big name each one leaving their mark for better or worse for better or worse, right? Yeah, but yeah, it seems like even the wisest King can make choices that unravel everything. Yeah, they're human too. Right, right.

I'm kind of nervous to find out. Oh, yeah, what happens next? It's a wild ride. So after all that work, yeah, to unite the tribes, the kingdom splits. It does. It's like watching a house divided against itself, right? Yeah. Yeah, what led to this? Yeah, what led to this dramatic breakup? This dramatic breakup? Well, after Solomon's death, okay, his son Rehoboam, yeah, yeah, takes the throne, but instead of learning from his father's mistakes, right, Rehoboam basically doubles down on some of the policies that had created all that resentment among the people. Like, what kind of policies? Well, thank you.

Okay, heavy taxes. Okay. Yeah, and mandatory labor for those big building projects, right? Yeah, Solomon was so fond of, yeah. So the people were burdened, and they pleaded with Rehoboam for relief. So did Rehoboam listen? Sadly. No, no, he basically told them to suck it up. He was arrogant, out of touch, right? Completely ignored the Growing discontent. Wow, talk about bad leadership.

Oh, yeah, the people just take it lying down; they did not, okay. Ten of the twelve tribes basically said Enough is enough Wow, they broke away. Okay, forming the northern

kingdom of Israel. Okay, so ten tribes in the north, right? What about the other two? They remained loyal, okay, to the Davidic dynasty, okay, and formed the southern kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital. Okay, two kingdoms. Yeah, to destiny, right? What happens to them? Do they ever did they get back together get back together? Sadly, no, for the next two centuries.

Okay, they coexist sometimes as rivals, sometimes as uneasy allies, right? It's a period of political intrigue, religious reforms, and the constant threat of powerful empires, right, like Assyria and Babylon, okay, lurking in the shadows. It sounds like things are about to get. Oh, yeah, more complicated. Yeah, it's about to get messy.

So the northern kingdom of Israel. Yeah, they struggle with stability, instability, and a return to idolatry. A string of kings, okay, many corrupt and unfaithful to God, led the nation further and further away from its covenant with Yahweh. So they basically fell back into the same patterns that led to the need for a king in the first place. It's a sad, familiar cycle, and eventually this is the spiritual and political decline, yeah, at all. It's to their downfall downfall in 722 BC.

Okay, the Assyrian Empire, known for its brutality and military might, conquers the northern kingdom. Oh, wow. The people are scattered.

Mm-hmm. Their kingdom is no more. That's a tragic end to a kingdom. It is that once held so much promise.

Yeah, what about Judah? Well, they held on okay for a while longer, okay, but their story takes a similar turn despite the efforts, okay, of some good kings like Hezekiah and Josiah, who tried to bring about religious reforms. Okay, revive the nation's Covenant with God. Mm-hmm, Judah also fell prey to, yeah, idolatry and corruption. So they succumbed to the same forces that brought down Israel, unfortunately. Yes, and in 586 BC the Babylonian Empire, okay, led by King Nebuchadnezzar, right, conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, wow, and took many of the people of Judah into exile. It's a devastating blow.

It is not only to their political independence, but also to their religious. Yeah, and cultural identity. Absolutely.

I mean, their holy city. Yeah, lies in ruins; their temple destroyed right there; people scattered. Well, it's, uh, it feels like the end, yeah, of an era.

Yeah, it's a time of immense sorrow. Yeah, people, but even in this darkness, are there glimmers of hope? There are, really. Yeah, so because throughout this period. Okay, prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Yeah, continue to speak God's Word, calling the people to repentance, offering a message of hope for a restoration, even in exile. Yeah, their faith endures; they cling to this Belief that God will bring them back home. Their faith is tested and refined in the fires. Yeah, of suffering, and the prophets remind them that God's covenant with them

Yeah, it isn't broken, right? They prophesy that one day, God will restore his people to their land, rebuild the temple. Okay, and establish a new covenant with them, and this one based

not on external rules but on a transformed heart. Exactly. Wow, that's powerful. These prophecies sustain the people, you know, through their long years. Yeah, of exile.

Yeah, pointing towards a future of redemption. It's a reminder that even when everything seems lost, yeah, God is still at work. Yeah, weaving his purposes into the fabric of history. This has been an incredible journey.

It has I mean, we've seen the rise and fall; we have kings, the allure and danger of power. The consequences of straying from one's faith. Yes, straying from one's faith, but also the enduring hope that can sustain a people, even in the darkest of times, and these Ancient stories aren't just dusty tales from the past, right? They offer timeless insights into the human condition yeah, the human condition our relationship with power.

The consequences of our choices. They remind us that even in the face of failure and defeat. Mm-hmm. There's always the possibility of redemption and renewal, redemption and renewal.

Yeah, that's a message we can all take to heart. Absolutely. Well, thank you for guiding us through this. It's been my pleasure; this deep dive into the world of ancient Israel, I've enjoyed it.

It's been a real eye-opener for our listeners. Yeah, as you go about your day, mm-hmm, consider this: What choices are you making? Yeah, what impact are those choices having on yourself, your community? The world around you, and how can you even, in your own small way? Yeah, contribute to a future of hope and restoration. Those are, uh, yeah, those are powerful questions. They are, and I think they're, yeah, the perfect way to wrap up our absolute deep dive today. Thank you for joining us.

Thanks for joining us, everyone. Well, uh, we'll be back soon. We'll be back soon with another, yeah, fascinating exploration of history.

Yes, and it's relevant to our lives today