



3.3 **The Deuteronomist History: The Golden Age of Monarchy** David Moseley, Ph.D.

Last week we focused on the Rise of the Israelite Monarchy by looking at King Saul, who truly embodied all the paradoxes of Kingship, and the conflicts between Public Duty and Private Interests that Monarchy exposes. Saul's decline, due to official and personal failings, was paralleled by David's ascent – a comparison that was particularly harsh on Saul. Now we turn to the Rule of King David - the so-called "Golden Age" of Israelite Monarchy: a time period when private piety and public virtue purportedly intersect in the person of the Shepherd from Bethlehem. But even David is less than perfect: it's possible to make the case that he's guilty of multiple massacres as he consolidates power; and that the scandal with Bathsheba looks more like a rape (from the perspective of the current age of powerful men abusing their positions to prey upon vulnerable female subordinates). The tumult in his family, as his sons rise up in rebellion against him and compete for the opportunity to succeed him on the throne of Israel, threatens to unravel all of his achievements as the boundaries of private and public evaporate in the era of Absolute (Theocratic?) Monarchy. But David does establish a Dynasty: he is succeeded by his son (with Bathsheba), Solomon. Nevertheless, in spite of King Solomon's much-vaunted Wisdom and the construction of the Temple during his reign, his vast household descends into decadence and dissension, and his government spirals toward upheaval and civil war that will divide the united Kingdom of his father for generations to come...

Assignment 11 for Class on Saturday 2nd December 2017

Reading

The readings for this week are the narratives of the Reign of King David, and of his son, King Solomon. They can be found in the books of **II Samuel** (David) and **I Kings 1-11** (Solomon).

The contents of **II Samuel** can be sub-divided into four sections:

- (1) The establishment of the rule of David after the death of Saul [1-4]
- (2) The rule of David [5-12]
- (3) Absalom's Revolt [13-20]
- (4) Miscellaneous Appendices [21-24]

The most important section is the second [chs. 5-12], in terms of exposing the polarities of the highs and lows of David's reign.

I Kings 1-11 is a straightforward narrative of the reign of King Solomon, dominated by the construction of the temple, and the falling away of Solomon as a prefiguring of the decline of monarchy itself.