**Survey Old Testament**

**2 Samuel 11 David and Bathsheba**

1. It was not a passionate youth who deliberately walked into this sin, but a man of God who had now reached middle age. It is easy to see how David got into this sin: (1) he was self-confident, after enjoying victories and prosperity; (2) he was disobedient, staying home when he should have been on the battlefield; (3) he was idle, lying in bed in the evening; (4) he was self-indulgent, giving freedom to his desires when he should have been disciplining himself; and (5) he was careless, allowing his eyes to wander and yielding to the “lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes” (1 John 2:16).

**2 Samuel 11 David and Uriah**

1. Instead of calling on the Lord and confessing his sin, the king sent for the husband and tried to trick him into going home. This, of course, might have covered the sin. But Uriah was a better man than his king, and he refused to go home! When his first plan failed, David tried a new scheme and made the man drunk. But even under the influence of wine, Uriah was a more disciplined man than sober David!
2. David decided to have the man murdered and then to take his wife. Joab was willing to cooperate. Uriah carried his own death warrant to the battlefield that day. The plan worked and the brave soldier was killed in battle. David “put on a front” and waited until the week of mourning was over; then he married the widow..

**2 Samuel 12 David and the Lord**

1. At least a year passed, during which time David covered his sins. Read Ps. 32 descriptions of David’s feelings during that difficult period. He became weak and sick physically; he lost his joy; he lost his witness; he lost his power. God gave David plenty of time to make things right, but he persisted in hiding his sins. Finally, God sent Nathan, not with a message of blessing as in chapter 7, but with a message of conviction. How easy it is to be convicted about other people’s sins! But Nathan fearlessly told David, “You are the man!” David's repentance prayer is found in Psalm 51.
2. God was ready to forgive David’s sins, but He could not prevent those sins from “bringing forth death” (James 1:15). God’s grace forgives, but God must allow sinners to reap what they sow. “He shall restore fourfold!” David had declared punishment concerning the man in Nathan’s story, so God accepted his sentence. The sword never did depart from David’s household: the baby died; Absalom killed Amnon, who had ruined Tamar (chap. 13); then Joab killed Absalom (18:9–17); and Adonijah was slain by Benaiah (1 Kings 2:24–25). Fourfold! Add to these trials the awful ruin of Tamar, the shameful treatment of David’s wives by Absalom (12:11; 16:20–23), plus the rebellion of Absalom, and you can see that David paid dearly for a few moments of lustful pleasure.
3. Immediately the chastening hand of God moved, and the baby became ill, but David fasted and prayed for the life of the child. David’s fasting and prayers could not alter the counsel of God and the child died.
4. This tragic episode began with David pampering himself at home, but it ends with him taking his rightful place on the battlefield and leading the nation to an important victory. It is encouraging to see that God was willing to use David again in spite of his sins.

**2 Samuel 13 David and his eldest sons**

1. The central figure of these chapters is Absalom, David’s third son. The eldest son, Amnon, was murdered by Absalom, and it seems likely that the second son must have died young, since he is never mentioned again. At any rate, after murdering Amnon, Absalom was free to make his own bid for the crown.
2. Tamar was Amnon’s half-sister. Marriage with a half-sister was prohibited under the law Lv. 18:11 and Dt. 27:22. His lust, deceit and brutality make him a very unpleasant character and obviously not a suitable man to rule Israel. David was furious after hearing of what Amnon did to Tamar, but evidently did nothing to punish the wrongdoer.
3. Absalom waited two years before taking action, in order to deceive his father. This chapter shows that even the king’s sons were not free to come and go as they pleased, but needed royal permission to leave the court. So Absalom had to lay his plans carefully.

**2 Samuel 14 Joab’s scheme.**

1. We may reasonably think from v 19 that Joab had tried to persuade David to forgive Absalom and bring him back to the royal court. If so, he failed to persuade him. Joab seems to have been anxious to ensure a smooth succession, and clearly viewed Absalom as the man to succeed David. He thus had the interests of the nation at heart, but he twice gave his support to the wrong son of David.
2. Failing to persuade David, he decided to trick him instead and made use of a wise woman. Like Nathan in ch. 13, she pretended that there was a case for David to deal with. The ‘moral’ of her story was that the welfare of a whole family is more important than the proper punishment of an individual, and David agreed with her. Applying this principle, she argued that the welfare of the whole nation was more important than the punishment of its crown prince and that, therefore, Absalom ought to be recalled from exile.

**2 Samuel 15 Absalom’s conspiracy.**

1. There is no doubt that Absalom was a natural leader, with many skills and abilities. If his character had been different, he might have been an excellent king after David. It is remarkable that he was able to persuade so many people in Israel to support him and to turn against David.
2. David had two choices, either to stay in Jerusalem and face a siege, or to flee to safety. He chose the latter course, which saved Jerusalem from damage and gave him time to maneuver and to organize an army against Absalom. David’s officials had little choice, since Absalom would certainly have dismissed or even killed them. The concubines were given no choice at all.  His men were David’s personal troops, with his foreign bodyguard; the regular army was probably supporting Absalom. The loyalty of David’s personal troops, here voiced by their captain Ittai, ultimately gave him the victory.
3. It was a good sign for David that the two high priests remained loyal. It is interesting that David sent the ark of God back to Jerusalem, David did not believe that the ark would magically bring him victory. He could also make use of some loyal men in Jerusalem. Another loyal friend sent back to Jerusalem was Hushai. The story as a whole makes it clear that Ahithophel was an outstanding adviser, and his support for Absalom was a cause of great concern for David. David therefore sent Hushai back, in the hope that he could contradict any advice given to Absalom by Ahithophel. It was an idea that proved successful.

**2 Samuel 16-17 Hushai and Ahithophel**.

1. Entering Jerusalem unopposed with his army, Absalom no doubt formed a council of advisers, among them Hushai and Ahithophel. Hushai’s purpose, as we know from 15:34, was to deceive Absalom and undermine Ahithophel’s advice. He immediately succeeded in deceiving Absalom, implying that he believed that Absalom was the one chosen by the Lord.
2. Ahithophel’s counsel concerned the military aspect of the rebellion made good sense. Speed and surprise would win the war. Once David was dead, all opposition to Absalom would be pointless.
3. Hushai’s advice was based on the fact that Absolom’s army was bigger than David’s. The flaw in his scheme (as Hushai well knew) was that it involved a long delay, and so would give David and Joab, with all their military experience, ample time to make proper preparations. Hushai’s scheme was so bad, in fact, that Ahithophel soon committed suicide (23). The biblical author recognizes that Absalom and his officers were misled by God as much as by Hushai (14). Thanks to Hushai, David was able to make his headquarters in a fortified city, while Absalom and his army, crossed the Jordan (24). Absalom’s commander-in-chief Amasa lacked the skill and experience of Joab, to whom he was related.

**2 Samuel 18 Absalom’s death.**

1. Inevitably, the casualties that day were great. David’s men were able to show their superior experience, while Absalom’s troops knew little about the terrain and suffered heavily as a result (8). The writer concentrates his attention on the lives of only two men, David and Absalom.
2. So David was ready to risk his life (and Absalom not only risked his life but lost it) but David’s troops were wiser than the king, and ensured that his life was not endangered. Joab ensured that Absalom’s life was ended, and with his death the battle and the war ended too. Joab saw matters more clearly than David, who found it impossible to view his son as an enemy.
3. Joab knew that David was more interested in Absalom’s welfare than in the outcome of the battle. So Joab chose a foreign soldier to bring David the bad news of Absalom’s death. David’s final words are ironic: if he had simply remained in Jerusalem he would have died instead of Absalom! David’s deep and irrational grief was not good, if Joab had not talked to David and convinced him to go out and congratulate his army, they may all have left him that night.

**2 Samuel 19-20 David’s return and Sheba’s revolt**

1. Wars, and especially civil wars, may achieve their aims but they inevitably give rise to new problems. David had won, but the country had lost its unity, and chapters 19 and 20 reveal something of the consequences. David was eventually successful in re-establishing unity for the remainder of his reign, and so God’s promises to him were fulfilled. He did not lose the throne, but his later years were unhappy ones.

**2 Samuel 21-24 David’s reign and problems.**

1. These last four chapters of 2 Samuel are often referred to as an appendix to the book. These chapters illustrate some of David’s other problems, and show how God provided guidance and loyal supporters for David in all his difficulties. They show too how his experiences of life and of God together made him ‘the sweet psalmist of Israel’. Lastly, this section opens some important future perspectives.
2. The final paragraph brings the books of Samuel to an end, with a strong forward look. The threshing-floor of Araunah becomes a sacred place, a shrine for sacrifices, offerings and prayer, in fact, Solomon’s temple. Here is a scene of hope and fellowship (and the plague came to an end).

**1 Kings 1 Solomon’s rule established**

1. Here we find David in the weakness of old age, unable to keep warm. Waiting in the wings is Adonijah, the fourth of six sons born to David by six different wives while he was king in Hebron. David’s first son, Ammon, had been murdered by the third, Absalom, who himself died while leading a rebellion against David. As no mention is made of David’s second son, Chileab, he had presumably died too, leaving Adonijah as the eldest surviving son and natural heir to David’s throne. Adonijah had not only set his heart on the throne but had enlisted the support of some notable members of David’s court.
2. Without David’s knowledge, Adonijah arranged a feast with sacrifices and had himself proclaimed king. Nathan the prophet was not of Adonijah’s party and now he emerges as the supporter of Solomon. It becomes apparent in these verses that David had sworn an oath to Solomon’s mother, Bathsheba, that her son would be the next king.
3. First, having been coached by Nathan, Bathsheba reminds the king of his oath and informs him of Adonijah’s feast. Then Nathan makes his own carefully timed entry. Nathan pretends to think that David might have sanctioned Adonijah’s celebration and politely points out that certain people, including himself, have not been invited.
4. David stirs himself and seizes control of events, swearing that his former oath will be fulfilled at once. Calling for Solomon’s other main supporters, Zadok the priest and Benaiah, he swiftly gives instructions for Solomon’s immediate anointing at Gihon, a spring outside the eastern wall of Jerusalem. Accompanied by his chief supporters and David’s bodyguard, Solomon goes riding on King David’s mule. David does not attend, perhaps because he was too frail. The large crowd, assembled at short notice, indicates that Solomon was a popular candidate. Adonijah hears the noise of this crowd and a full report of events soon reaches him; realizing that it was over for him, his supporters quietly disperse.
5. Adonijah himself expects that Solomon would want to kill him, so he seeks refuge by taking hold of the horns of the altar. Israelite altars had pointed projections which stood up from the four corners of the square top. Seizing two of these ‘horns’ gave a person sanctuary. Solomon acts decisively but with shrewdness and caution, promising to spare Adonijah’s life so long as he remains loyal.