

I Will Make Myself Yet More Contemptible  
2 Samuel 5-6  
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## Introduction

If you've heard the music to the Broadway play, *Hamilton*, the song "The Room Where It Happens" is one of the catchier tunes. Some of the lines from the song are:

"Congress is fighting over where to put the capital / Then Jefferson approaches with a dinner and invite / And Madison responds with Virginian insight / Maybe we can solve one problem with another / and win a victory for the Southerners / in other words a quid pro quo... No one else was in the room where it happened."

It's a clever song discussing the compromise that established Washington DC as the nation's capital in 1790. If you don't know the story, essentially Alexander Hamilton and the northern states wanted the federal government to take on states' debts, so they struck a deal with Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who wanted the capital in the South. "George Washington chose the exact spot on the Potomac River and the rest is history."<sup>1</sup> New York and Philadelphia were more logical spots for the capital, as they were the significant population centers of the colonies, but a small circle of powerful men made decisions that would shape the nation's future.

Picking a capital city is an important part of every country's or state's governance and identity. Sometimes a country or state picks a capital located in its geographical center, as with Madrid, Spain, Abuja, Nigeria, and even Dover, Delaware. Sometimes, the capital is the most populous city, as with Seoul, South Korea and Lima, Peru; but more often, it's not.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the choice of capital city was put to a popular vote, as when voters chose Denver over five other Colorado cities in 1881. But typically, the governing bodies determine the location of the capital, though it can be a messy process - like when California moved its capital seven different times in five years, finally settling into Sacramento for good in 1854.<sup>3</sup>

Our Scripture text today explores the settling of Israel's capital city. Here at the beginning of David's reign, Jerusalem was nothing, it was just a town where the pagan tribe, the Jebusites, lived. Yet it was strategically situated. Here's how Eugene Peterson describes it:

"It sat there squat and grotesque, a small fortress city on a rock outcropping. To the east and south the ground fell away sharply into deep ravines, an impregnable natural defense... the Jebusite walled city was named Jerusalem, 'City of Peace.' And in fact the Jebusites lived quite peaceably... nobody bothered the Jebusites. Nobody, that is, until David decided to make it his capital city. It was a perfect location for his purposes, sitting as it did on the spine connecting the northern tribes of Israel with the southern tribe of Judah, and unclaimed by either side."<sup>4</sup>

This morning, we'll see the battle to capture the capital city, followed by the problems that David ran into as he attempted to make Jerusalem not only a political center but also the worship center of Israel. He'll encounter threats from his enemies, scorn from his own house, and even the Lord's strong rebuke, but he would not be deterred. David knew what he wanted and, armed with the knowledge that he was the Lord's chosen king, he would stop at nothing to get it.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-42258989>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/story/how-do-countries-choose-their-capital-cities>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worldatlas.com/cities/capital-cities-of-the-united-states.html>

<sup>4</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Leap Over A Wall* (New York: HarperOne, 1997), pp. 133-34.

Chapter five looks at the events surrounding the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital:

### **I. War and (the City of) Peace (Chapter 5)**

*<sup>1</sup> Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and flesh. <sup>2</sup> In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the Lord said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.'" <sup>3</sup> So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. <sup>4</sup> David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. <sup>5</sup> At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years. <sup>6</sup> And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off"—thinking, "David cannot come in here." <sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David. <sup>8</sup> And David said on that day, "Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack 'the lame and the blind,' who are hated by David's soul." Therefore it is said, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house." <sup>9</sup> And David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built the city all around from the Millo inward. <sup>10</sup> And David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him. <sup>11</sup> And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, also carpenters and masons who built David a house. <sup>12</sup> And David knew that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel. <sup>13</sup> And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron, and more sons and daughters were born to David. <sup>14</sup> And these are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, <sup>15</sup> Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, <sup>16</sup> Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet. <sup>17</sup> When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. But David heard of it and went down to the stronghold. <sup>18</sup> Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. <sup>19</sup> And David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?" And the Lord said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand." <sup>20</sup> And David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. And he said, "The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like a breaking flood." Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim. <sup>21</sup> And the Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away. <sup>22</sup> And the Philistines came up yet again and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. <sup>23</sup> And when David inquired of the Lord, he said, "You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come against them opposite the balsam trees. <sup>24</sup> And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the Lord has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines." <sup>25</sup> And David did as the Lord commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer.*

David's official coronation starts this chapter, with elders and representative of the tribes of Israel coming to Hebron to anoint him. It has taken 20 chapters since we first met David to reach this point of his being enthroned over all Israel. Verse four says that he was thirty years old and would reign for forty years. Only the first seven years of his reign would be in Hebron, though, as he set his sights on a better city. We all know Jerusalem as the great city of God, the center of the Holy Land where all kinds of spiritual events happened up through Jesus' day. But the city had no connection to God's people until David chose it. When Joshua had come into the Promised Land at first, he attacked Jerusalem but was unable to conquer it (Joshua 15:63), so David did what Joshua could not do. And verse 7 is the first time we hear the name Zion attached to Jerusalem; it was the highest hill around the city. It will be referred to repeatedly in the Psalms and the Prophets as shorthand for the city of Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> John Woodhouse, *2 Samuel: Your Kingdom Come* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), p. 157.

David's attack on the city is not recorded in great detail, but there's a clue to how it happened in verse 8 - *"Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack."* There's this taunting from the Jebusites that the blind and lame could defend the city against David's army, they were so confident that its walls could not be breached. But somehow David knew its weakness and apparently took the city easily because the narrator immediately moves on to describing David's building up both his literal house and his household. More wives, concubines, sons, and daughters were added to David's house as workmen built the palace out of cedar.

You can understand why the Philistines came looking for David. The last we saw them, they had killed Saul and three of his sons and routed the Israelite army, occupying many of their cities in the north. David had been living among them as an ally to King Achish. Now they received a report that David had not only resurfaced among his people, but that they had crowned him king and he had conquered a city for himself as a home base. So they came out to the Valley of Rephaim twice to square off against David's forces, and both times God delivered the enemy into Israel's hands. The second time, God Himself went forth in battle, moving through the trees ahead of His army to strike down the Philistines. Verse 12 captures this section best: *"And David knew that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel."* This is beginning of the glory years for Israel.

Now that David had established his capital and beat away his enemies, he knew there was one thing missing that belonged in Israel's capital, so he gathered his men to become

## **II. Raiders of the Lost Ark (6:1-13)**

*<sup>1</sup> David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. <sup>2</sup> And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim. <sup>3</sup> And they carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart, <sup>4</sup> with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark. <sup>5</sup> And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. <sup>6</sup> And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. <sup>7</sup> And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God. <sup>8</sup> And David was angry because the Lord had broken out against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day. <sup>9</sup> And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and he said, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" <sup>10</sup> So David was not willing to take the ark of the Lord into the city of David. But David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. <sup>11</sup> And the ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household. <sup>12</sup> And it was told King David, "The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing. <sup>13</sup> And when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal.*

Most of you have seen the Indiana Jones movie, so you know that the Ark of the Lord is not a boat! It was a chest with ornate craftsmanship, made of wood but gold-plated inside and out. The Ark contained three items from the time of Moses: the tablets of the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna from Israel's wilderness years, and Aaron's rod (Hebrews 9:4). It's interesting that those three things would remind Israel of God's commands (the tablets), His provision (the manna), and His

deliverance (the rod).<sup>6</sup> The ark had been kept in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle where the priests would make their sacrifices throughout Israel's wanderings. It was where God chose to dwell with His people; not that He could be contained by a box, but that it was His throne and His footstool. There were strict rules: even the priests were forbidden to look upon it or touch it.

The Philistines had taken the ark from Israel after a battle thirty years earlier back in 1 Samuel 4, and it was said that *"the glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured"* (4:22). But the ark was too powerful for the Philistines, it not only caused the head and hands to fall off of their statue of Dagon, but it brought a plague of tumors from the Lord to whatever city it was stored in. It ended up in a town called Kiriath-jearim. But now David wanted to recover it and bring "the glory" back home to Jerusalem, signaling that not only would this capital city be his royal city with his palace, but also the worship capital for the King of kings.

David took 30,000 men to retrieve the ark; I'm not sure if he expected a battle or if he just wanted a huge group to bring it back with him. So he led this wild travelling worship band with every kind of instrument being played to celebrate the whole way home. But in the middle of all of the music and rejoicing, the oxen that was driving the cart that held the ark stumbled and Uzzah made the fatal mistake of trying to steady it. And God struck him down then and there; some of the translations use the word "smote" which sounds more medieval. Why did God strike Uzzah dead? Maybe that angers you as much as it did David. The man just did what anyone looking on would have done to protect the ark from falling out of the cart. It sure seems like it was an act of heroism not an act of defiance towards God. Don't intentions count for anything?

Let's back up - the fact that they put the ark in an ox cart was already a bad start - the ark was only supposed to be carried by the Levites using poles so that no one touched it. Uzzah was a Kohathite, a priest who would have known the instructions for carrying the ark. Numbers 4:15 says very directly: *"The sons of Koreth shall come to carry these, but they must not touch the holy things, lest they die."* Here's what R.C. Sproul said about Uzzah's touching the ark:

"(it) was an act of arrogance, a sin of presumption. Uzzah assumed that his hand was less polluted than the earth. But it wasn't the ground or the mud that would desecrate the ark; it was the touch of man. The earth is an obedient creature. It does what God tells it to do ... it was man's touch that was forbidden. Uzzah was not an innocent man. He was not punished without a warning... There was nothing arbitrary or whimsical about what God did in that moment."<sup>7</sup>

You can understand when it says that David was both angry and afraid, and why he would shut down the parade and abandon the mission then and there. But after three months, David heard that the Philistine family that was keeping the ark were being blessed by God. David wanted some of that blessing, so he resumed his plan to bring it to Jerusalem. Had anything changed? 1 Chronicles 15:13-15, a parallel passage, tells us that David learned his lesson; he announced to the priests and Levites who would help him carry the ark this second time: *"Because you did not carry it the first time, the Lord our God broke out according to the rule.' So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel. And the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles, as Moses had commanded to the word of the Lord."*

David was taking no chances this time, and he even added the extra precaution of making an animal sacrifice after six steps. It's an echo of the Sabbath – six steps, then rest and worship. It's not clear

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<sup>6</sup> Peterson, p. 148.

<sup>7</sup> R.C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1985), pp. 141-42.

whether they just did the sacrifice after the first six steps, or how I always understood it to say that it was a repeated sacrifice every six steps. Which would have taken forever and involved thousands of sacrifices before they reached Jerusalem. But it also would have reminded everyone how serious an effort David was making to please God and to honor His holiness.

The final scene from today's passage brings us back to David's first wife who has a problem with his **III. Dirty Dancing (6:14-23)**

*<sup>14</sup> And David danced before the Lord with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. <sup>15</sup> So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the horn. <sup>16</sup> As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart. <sup>17</sup> And they brought in the ark of the Lord and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. <sup>18</sup> And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts <sup>19</sup> and distributed among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed, each to his house. <sup>20</sup> And David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, "How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" <sup>21</sup> And David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord—and I will celebrate before the Lord. <sup>22</sup> I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor." <sup>23</sup> And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.*

Have any of you seen the movie *King David* starring Richard Gere that came out in 1985? It's not "youth group appropriate" and it changed a good bit of the details of the Biblical account (though compared to more recent Bible movies like the Russell Crowe *Noah* or *Exodus: Gods and Kings*, it's very faithful.) The scene of David dancing leading the procession of the ark is a very cool scene and it's followed with Michal's scolding him when they are alone. But Richard Gere is just wearing a loin cloth as he's dancing in the streets, but I don't think that's what the text is saying: he "*danced before the Lord with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod.*" A linen ephod was what the priests wore, a kind of apron that went over a robe. Most of us hear the wife scolding him for uncovering himself, so we assume that David was dressed close to naked. I think that in order to dance with the linen ephod and the robe on, he had to tuck the bottom part into his belt, exposing his legs. That was not proper kingly behavior, and Michal had never seen her father act like that, so she called him vulgar and shameless. Alexander Whyte, an old Scottish minister, commented that: "Those who are deaf always despise those who dance."<sup>8</sup> David worried about what God thought, Michal worried about what everybody else thought. "*I will make myself yet more contemptible*" – I'll become even more undignified because I dance out of pleasure for my Lord.

Now, if you want to apply this as a prescription for our worship service, that we should be dancing with wild abandon, let me hit pause on that. This was not the weekly worship service; dancing was not being instituted as a regular element of worship. This was a one-time, national occasion; it's like dancing at a wedding or when your team wins the championship or when the war is over. If it teaches us anything about worship, it's that our hearts are focused on God and what pleases Him; it's not about the actions necessarily but the heart attitude behind them.

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<sup>8</sup> Alexander Whyte, *Bible Characters* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1900), p. 172.

## Conclusion

You may have heard this well-known quote by the author, Annie Dillard:

“On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies’ straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offense, or the waking god may draw us to where we can never return.”<sup>9</sup>

Annie Dillard is not a theologian, but what a great reminder that we stand before a holy, all-powerful God when we worship. All of our lives are *coram Deo*, before the face of God. But particularly when we come into His presence in corporate worship, we don’t pray and sing and take communion for the benefit of our fellow worshippers; we’re not there primarily to attract new people and grow our numbers and budgets. We are first and foremost responding to the great revelation of God’s character and actions in our lives, giving Him the praise and glory that He deserves. When we act like we’re just attending a social club and that all is safe and sanitized, we have betrayed our view of worship and the reality of who God is. We don’t often approach God and the Bible and church with urgency as matters of life and death. But why not? They certainly are.

David was angry and afraid of God’s actions because they were a reminder of God’s holiness and justice. And we all are wired the same way, we don’t want to acknowledge God’s holiness. If we recognize His holiness, then we also have to recognize the seriousness of our sin and the fact that we are unholy. Isaiah the prophet’s encounter with God brings that into sharp contrast, he cried out: “*Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!*” (Isaiah 6:5). The full force of God’s holiness and presence would devastate us. And what God drives home with the death of Uzzah is that His holiness and justice will be executed no matter how shocking or surprising it is to us. Romans 1 tells us that all people know deep down that there is a God, it’s just that most people suppress that knowledge. But as much as anyone tries to pretend there’s not a God who will judge them in the afterlife, it will not change the fact that God has established a standard of holiness and He will judge those who fall short of it. Uzzah’s death is a stark reminder of that God means what He says, and He will not, and cannot, allow His holiness to be disregarded or challenged.

I want to think once more about the city of Jerusalem. As you know, it was conquered by the Romans in AD 70 and the temple was destroyed for good. Christianity does not revolve around the Holy City. It’s fine to visit there, I’ve been there and there’s a lot of fascinating things to see, to understand where Jesus walked and died, but it’s not the spiritual center of our faith anymore. The New Testament tells us that we should yearn to be back in Jerusalem, but not the old Jerusalem; the new Jerusalem that is part of the New Heavens and the New Earth. Revelation 21:1-4:

“*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.<sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”*

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<sup>9</sup> Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), pp. 40-41.

What a transcendent, amazing vision. But not everyone will be there. Psalm 24:3-4 says, *“Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.”* It’s clear from the Bible that our hands are filthy and our hearts are impure; we have fallen short of God’s glory. In our natural state, we are selfish, sinful wretches who want nothing to do with God and holiness. How do we get clean hands and a pure heart? How will we ever be accepted into the heavenly Jerusalem? We get an explanation in Hebrews 12:22-24:

*“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”*

To be enrolled as a citizen of heaven we must be made righteous and perfect in the sight of God. That’s clearly not something that we can do on our own, we need someone to do it for us. We need a mediator, someone who makes us worthy by His actions. And God has given us that in His own Son, Jesus, who died on the cross so that His shed blood could atone for our sins. God is holy, He is the judge of humanity and will not let the impure into His heavenly city. But we are made holy through Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life – no one comes to the Father except through Him. Beloved, if you have found forgiveness and salvation through Jesus, you are bound for the Promised Land and will be a citizen of God’s heavenly kingdom for all eternity when you die. Maybe we should be dancing and celebrating! Let’s close in prayer, Amen.

#### Benediction

Colossians 1:11-14 – *“May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*