

James Philip Bible Readings

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THE BOOK of II SAMUEL

The second book of Samuel continues the story of David from the point at which we left it at the end of the first book. The emphasis here however is different in a number of ways, and it is instructive to see the comparisons and contrasts between the two books. In 1 Samuel, for example, the three characters of Samuel, Saul and David tower over all the others, almost to their exclusion; but in 2 Samuel there is a much more varied canvas, almost like a mediaeval painting, with a richness of portraiture and characterisation that marks the golden age of Israel. And, yet, paradoxically, in the midst of such a galaxy of character studies, it is unquestionably true that it is the story of David; and in this respect, the two books stand in the relation of preparation to fulfilment. What was promised in the first, is fulfilled in the second: in the one David is under training and, on the whole, it presents a uniform picture of the disciplines and testings that he was called to pass through. In the other, we see him coming into his own, and it is a David in the full flower of his genius as soldier, statesman, administrator, prophet, poet, sweet psalmist of Israel, that we see now. His reign divides naturally into two parts the seven and a half years in Hebron, and the thirty-two and a half years in Jerusalem, over the united kingdom. In our study of it we shall see how the young David passed from training into service for the Lord, and how the earlier disciplines qualified him, and gave him capacity, for all he was called upon to be and do. And a great work indeed lay to his hand, no less than the rehabilitation of the land after Saul's long years of misrule.