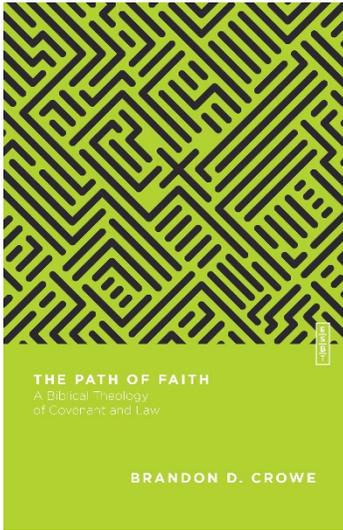


## EXCERPT



### ***The Path of Faith***

*A Biblical Theology of Covenant and Law*

March 2, 2021 | \$22, 208 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5537-7

**Brandon D. Crowe** (PhD, Edinburgh) is professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary and book review editor for the *Westminster Theological Journal*. He is the author of *The Message of the General Epistles in the History of Redemption: Wisdom from James, Peter, John, and Jude*.

## A Primer on Covenant Theology

Sometimes the right leader makes all the difference—especially in times of crisis. Good leaders cast a vision and inspire confidence. They understand what’s important and what needs to be done. They recognize the challenges. Good leaders benefit those they lead. Nations need good leaders.

Consider the crisis in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. When Winston Churchill first became prime minister of Great Britain in May 1940, things looked grim. The Nazis were marching through Europe, threatening France and the British troops there. Soon the British would be cornered at Dunkirk. Yet Churchill’s punchy oratory engendered optimism and lifted morale. Upon ascending to the premiership, he resolved, “I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.”

Things did not get better right away. But Churchill was resolute: “We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.” It’s difficult to overestimate the importance of Churchill’s speeches and his presence for wartime morale; these played a key role in the eventual outcome of Allied victory.

Scripture has much to say about leadership, especially the need for a king over God’s people. Though God’s people were wrong in their motivations for asking for a king (they were rejecting the Lord; see 1 Sam 8:5-9), kingship is consistent with God’s design for humanity from the beginning. Adam and Eve are to rule as vice-regents over creation (Gen 1:26-28). The Abrahamic covenant includes the promise of kings (Gen 17:6-8). Jacob prophesies of a king who would come from Judah (Gen 49:10-11). The history of Israel reveals that without a godly king, chaos reigns and the people go their own way. In the previous chapter we saw that after the exodus, Israel entered into a special covenant relationship with the LORD as a new nation. Golden opportunities were before them, but soon the despair of reality set in. The people were stiff-necked and sinful, and soon they were in trouble. They faced opposition in the Promised Land, confronted internal divisions, and suffered from a lack of leadership. The nation was floundering, both in terms of their prosperity and their godliness. Their difficulties were directly correlated to their lack of covenantal obedience. They needed a king.

For many today, being subject to a king is a foreign concept. Contemporary politics are different from those of the ancient Israelites. And yet kingship is incredibly important for understanding God’s covenant dealings with his people. A godly king unifies God’s people and leads them in righteousness; lack of a godly king leads to grave consequences. If God’s people are to walk in obedience to his law, they need a king to guide them, protect them, and show them the way.

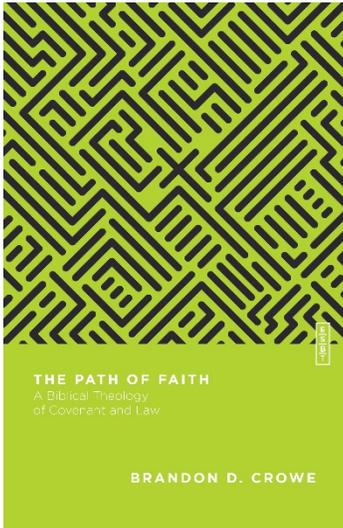
First Samuel recounts the official beginnings of Israel’s kingship. In the days of Samuel the prophet, the people cried out for a king (1 Sam 8:1-22; 12:17-18). Though the people’s reasoning was wrong—they wanted to be like other nations—their request



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for a king accorded with the plan of God. Judges showed us that the people needed a king to lead them in righteousness, and already in Deuteronomy Moses had spoken about the laws that God's king should follow (Deut 17:14-20, esp. Deut 17:15). God's people would soon discover that there's a big difference between a godly king and an ungodly king. Samuel makes the consequences clear in his farewell speech:

And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the LORD has set a king over you. If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and *if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well*. But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king. (1 Sam 12:13-15, emphasis added)

Notice the correlation Samuel makes between kingship, obedience, and blessing for God's covenant people.

The first king anointed is Saul son of Kish—an impressive physical specimen (1 Sam 9:1-2). Saul fights valiantly and does much to unite Israel (see 1 Sam 11:6-11; 14:47-48). Yet overall, Saul proves to be a failure. He offers a prohibited sacrifice (1 Sam 13:8-9). He does not obey the command to wipe out the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:1-31). He makes rash oaths (see 1 Sam 14:24), even swearing to disobey God's law when he consulted with a necromancer (1 Sam 28:10; see also Lev 19:31; 20:27; Deut 18:10-11). Saul is not a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14), and his kingdom would not last (1 Sam 13:13; 15:23, 26-29; 28:17-19). Saul is rejected as king because he disobeys God's word. Saul embodies the dichotomy between sacrifice and obedience (1 Sam 15:22). What God wanted was not external obedience but true obedience deriving from a heart that loved him. The people needed a leader like David.

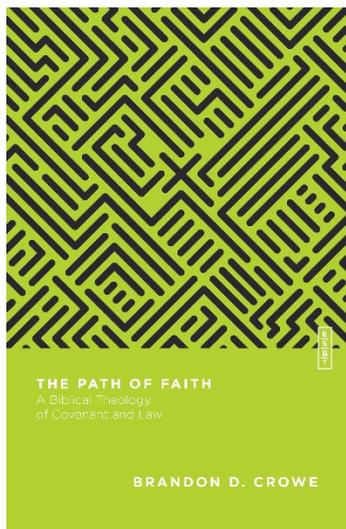
David is anointed king in 1 Samuel 16:12-13, and he proves to be a king after God's own heart (see 1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). Soon after his anointing, David battles the giant Goliath, the Philistine champion of Gath. It's crucial to note that when David fights Goliath he does not do so as a private individual but as the anointed king of Israel. David fights the battle on behalf of the nation; the victory that he wins benefits the people. In this first major action of the newly anointed king, we see a man who fears the LORD and trusts in his deliverance. Surely David knew about the LORD's victory over giants in previous generations—like Og of the Rephaim and the Anakim. David trusts in the LORD who had proven superior to any wicked forces in the past, and he is not scared of even the most massive opponent from among the uncircumcised. From this point, David is increasingly victorious over God's enemies, especially the Philistines. What Samson began (Judg 13:5), Saul (and Jonathan) continued (1 Sam 14), and David extends (1 Sam 17-18; 2 Sam 5:17-25; 8:1). Under David's kingship, the giants are further eradicated (2 Sam 21:16-22; see also 1 Chron 20:4-8) and the Promised Land comes more securely into the possession of God's covenant people. Having a righteous king provides a means for realizing the blessings God promised to his people (see 2 Sam 8:15). Godly leadership makes a huge difference.

—Adapted from chapter four, "The Kingdom: David and His Dynasty"



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## DETAILS



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The closely related biblical themes of covenant and law are among the most important in Scripture. In this ESBT volume, Brandon Crowe considers these themes throughout both Old and New Testaments, laying out key principles such as our obligation to obey our Creator, how Jesus' perfect obedience to God's law opens the way to eternal life, and what the law means for us today.

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August 18, 2020 | \$22, 224 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5539-1

With Israel's exodus out of Egypt, God established a pattern for the salvation of all his people—Israel and the nations—through Jesus Christ. In this ESBT volume, L. Michael Morales examines three redemption movements in Scripture: the exodus out of Egypt, the second exodus foretold by the prophets, and the new exodus accomplished by Jesus.

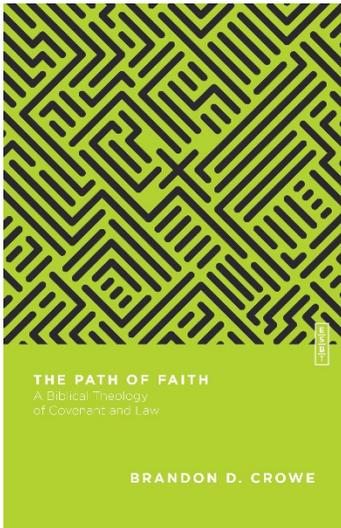


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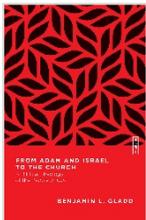


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