

Will God's King Rule in Your Life?

2 Samuel 2:1-11

By Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas

Turn with me if you would once again to the books of Samuel and we begin tonight in 2 Samuel chapter 2. We'll be tracing the life of David, now as a king, and soon in a few chapters we'll see him crowned king in Jerusalem, but that's not quite yet. We are about halfway through David's life. He's about thirty years old here. Saul - he will live another forty or so years - Saul is dead, as is his son and David's friend, Jonathan. And along with them two other sons of Saul had died at Mount Gilboa at the battle, the massacre by the Philistines as it was recorded for us in the closing chapter of 1 Samuel. Now the defeat of the Israelites on Mount Gilboa left the Philistines in charge.

If you have an ESV Study Bible with you tonight, and you'll be weighed down if you actually brought it into the sanctuary with you tonight, but if you possess an ESV Study Bible I would recommend to you, maybe tonight when you go home, do look at the maps especially in 2 Samuel chapter 1 and 2 Samuel chapter 2. There are two just beautiful maps that help you focus everything in an instant. Basically, on the western side along the Mediterranean coastline, almost the entire coastline is occupied by the Philistines. And from east of that, from the bottom of the Dead Sea, right up north, though not including Tyre and Sidon, is the land occupied more or less by Judah and Israel. Judah and Israel are two separate entities as we shall see tonight and in subsequent weeks.

For the past dozen years, David has lived the life of a fugitive. Ever since Samuel anointed him as the next king Saul has tried to kill him, half a dozen times. David, you remember, has lived as a double agent among the Philistines. We've had problems even justifying some of the things that David has been doing. He's been on the edge as a double agent. Sometimes he's crossed the edge perhaps, but everything has now changed. Everything has now changed. Saul, the megalomaniac Saul, is dead. He is dead by his own hand. He had been wounded, fatally wounded perhaps, by the Philistines, but he had taken his own life on Mount Gilboa. David had learned things in adversity that perhaps he could never have learned in prosperity.

Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish essayist and historian says, "For one man who can stand prosperity, there will be a hundred that will stand adversity."

Do you hear what he said? It's easier sometimes to take adversity than

prosperity. Be careful what you ask for. Be careful what you ask for, because in prosperity many a man and many a woman has fallen. All has changed. Saul is dead. The time for Saul is ended and the time for King David has begun.

Now as we read this chapter, before we read it let's look to the Lord in prayer. Let's pray.

Father, we are thankful for the Scriptures. Thank You for the Bible. Thank You for keeping it pure throughout the ages. Thank You tonight for Bible translations that make the Scriptures come alive to us. We thank You tonight that every jot and tittle, to the least stroke of a pen, is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine and reproof and correction and instruction in the way of righteousness that the man of God might be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Grant the blessing of Your Spirit now, that as we read we might also be illumined, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2 Samuel chapter 2 and verse 1. This is God's holy and inerrant Word:

After this David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" And the Lord said to him, "Go up." David said, "To which shall I go up?" And He said, "To Hebron." So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. And David brought up his men who were with him, everyone with his household, and they lived in the towns of Hebron. And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

When they told David, "It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul," David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, "May you be blessed by the Lord, because you have showed this loyalty to Saul your lord and buried him. Now may the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to you. And I will do good to you because you have done this thing. Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant, for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim, and he made him king over Gilead and the Ashurites and Jezreel and Ephraim and Benjamin and all Israel. Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

I. David seeks guidance from God.

Now the first thing I want to see here is this — the guidance that David seeks. Staggering, isn't it? You know, David has been anointed king ever since he was a teenager. He's thirty years of age. He's known for a dozen years that he's going to be king. The only obstacle of him being king is Saul. Saul is dead. But he goes to the Lord. He knows he's going to be king but he goes to the Lord. He asks the Lord, he inquires of the Lord. He's seeking guidance. He wants direction. He wants God to tell him where he should go.

Calvin preached a series of sermons on 2 Samuel. Our dear friend, Dr. Douglas Kelly, translated them from their original French into English so that the rest of us can enjoy the fruits of Calvin's ministry. Calvin makes this extraordinary comment on this passage. He says, "Because although he was on the way, he still knew he could err seriously if God did not guide him." If God didn't guide him, if God didn't direct him, if God didn't watch over his every step, David knew that he could err.

God tells him, "Go to Hebron." Hebron is about a dozen, fifteen miles, maybe even twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is nothing. Jerusalem isn't on the map yet. It will be chapters five and six before we come to Jerusalem and David establishes Jerusalem, but for now it's Hebron. In the north, it's this place called Mahanaim. Later it will become Ephraim in Samaria, but for now it's these two cities. And God says to David, "Go to Hebron." He didn't run ahead of God's providence.

You know, sometimes we do that. We think we know what God wants for us so we run ahead, we presume. So many things that are done prayerlessly, so many decisions, from trivial decisions to perhaps important decisions. Do you know the reason why you pray for important decisions is because you pray for trivial decisions, it's because you have a habit of praying for God's guidance. We're not told how this guidance came. He probably consulted Abiathar the high priest. He probably consulted those urim and thummim, those means of guidance for God's people under the Old Testament when they were under the "rudimentary principles of this world," as Paul says in Galatians 4. We don't need those anymore. We're, as Paul says in that reading from this morning, you remember in Galatians 4, we've grown up now. We are sons in God's house. He's given to us His Word. He's given us the Bible to guide us and direct us.

God has a plan you see, and He has a plan for David, but He has a plan for you and for me. You know that, that God has a plan for you. God has mapped out your life. God has made the decisions for your life — who you should date, whether you should date, who you should marry, what job and vocation you should engage in, where you should live.

And David, I find this so instructive, David inquires of the Lord. He knew what his future was. You could have sat David down and said, "David, how do you see your future?" "Well, I'm the anointed king!" But he seeks God's corroboration at

every point. The kingdom has now come to Hebron. The kingdom of God comes to Hebron.

Hebron, it's the boonies. It's a nowhere little town. It's insignificant, this tiny little tribe of Judah, nothing in comparison to the Philistines. Some few years before this the Philistines had swept all the way up the western coast of the Mediterranean Sea. You may ask yourself, "What is the size of David's kingdom, God's anointed king?" It's small. It's insignificant. It's tiny. It wasn't much to write home about. It wasn't much to splash in the headlines. It's nothing like Solomon's kingdom. It's not even like David's kingdom as we shall see it later in 2 Samuel. It's small. It's insignificant.

"The kingdom of God," Jesus says, "is like a mustard seed" that grows and grows and grows and grows. Jesus said that, the Son of David, God's anointed King said that. Great David's greater Son said that in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. "The kingdom of God," He said, "is like a mustard seed." You plant it, you plant it in somewhere like Hebron, and by the power of God, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, it grows and grows and grows. Who would have believed? You know if you had heard Jesus from the boat on the Sea of Galilee say, "The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that grows and grows," would you have believed that there are two thousand million Christians in the world today, five hundred million evangelical, Bible-centered Christians in the world today?

God plants His kingdom in Hebron, this small backwards little town. But it's the beginning. It's the beginning of God's rule. It's the beginning of God's reign. It's the beginning of God's great program. You might have looked north. You might have looked to the threats of the Philistines, but they shall not endure.

This week, some of you have seen it I'm sure, in the newspapers — in *The London Times*, on the BBC, in *The Wall Street Journal* headlines — in *The Wall Street Journal* yesterday, Steven Hawking's essay, "God Did Not Create the Universe," this powerful force in the world today. Did you read the article? Did you read the conclusion, the final sentence? He writes well. He's a terrifyingly good writer. That closing line — "Who are the lords of the universe?" he asks. "We are. We are." And what's God's answer to that?

You know, a few years ago we were celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of DNA, the double helix. Those scientists, one of them was James Watson, he got a Nobel Prize for it. You know James Watson said, "The two stupidest sentences in the English language are, 'Love thine enemy' and 'The meek shall inherit the earth.'" He credits his own success to his own lack of meekness and his own self-promotion. Against those kinds of forces God says, "Go to Hebron. Go to Hebron."

You plant a little church in the midst of Los Angeles or you plant a church in the midst of New York or you plant a church in Paris or you plant a church in London,

you plant a church in communist China, and what does God do? There are hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands and millions of Christians in China. There was a story in the news this week of a factory that could not believe that hiring Christians brought greater productivity. They want to study this thing. Why is it that Christians have greater productivity, less dissention, less qualms, less strife? They want to study it. The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed and it grows and grows and grows.

II. The king's invitation.

Well the second thing we see in this passage is the king's invitation. You see it there in verses 4 through 7, at least the second half of verse 4 through to 7. Now I need to remind you of this incident with the men of Jabesh-gilead. Right at the very end of 1 Samuel, the closing paragraph of 1 Samuel records what the men of Jabesh-gilead did. When the Philistines had killed Saul and Jonathan and two others of his sons, they took their bodies and they hung their bodies on the walls of Beth-shan. And the men of Jabesh-gilead, Saul had saved Jabesh-gilead way back in 1 Samuel chapter 11 from that hatchet man, Nahash the Ammonite, and they're returning the favor. They make this trek. They schlep this twenty mile journey to recover the bodies of Saul and his three sons and bury them in Jabesh-gilead and David, David is thanking them for their bravery and for their courage.

And he says in verse 6, "May the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to you, and I will do good to you because you have done this thing. Now therefore--"

You know David's a politician. You understand that. He understands how these things work. He's going to need the support of Israel. He's going to need the support of those who had formerly been supporters of Saul. So he begins to invite these men of Jabesh-gilead to his side.

"Let your hands be strong and be valiant for Saul your lord is dead and the house of Judah has anointed me as king." It's all very cordial. It's all very understandable.

What will the men of Jabesh-gilead do? What will they do? Will they join the ranks of Judah and Hebron? Hebron was a long way away from Jabesh-gilead. Actually we don't know what they did. We're not told what they did. But they're being invited you see, they're being invited to give their allegiance to God's anointed king, a king who desires to show them mercy and grace and favor and kindness. It's a little glimpse of the Gospel. It's a little glimpse of what David's greater Son will do. He came into the world and the first words from Jesus' mouth are, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of heaven is at hand." The rule of God has come and it's come through Jesus, God's King. David is calling upon the men of Jabesh-gilead and he's saying, "Come and join us."

Yield to the administration of God. Join the Lord's army. Join the Lord's people and you'll know kindness and love and faithfulness and provision."

But there's a rival. It's what you see in verses 8 through 11. Jabesh-gilead is a long way away from Hebron and there's a fly in this soup and his name is Abner - cousin Abner, cousin that is to Saul, the chief commander, military head-honcho in Saul's army, Abner. Now there's a reference in verse 10 to two years and there's a reference in verse 11 to seven and a half years, and what that probably means is that this deed, this event that's being described here takes place in the final two years of that seven and a half year reign of David in Hebron. It probably took five and a half years for Abner to even begin to think about the future after the massacre of the Philistines. And Abner takes Saul's fourth son. Three of his sons had died with him on Mount Gilboa. He takes the fourth son, Ish-bosheth, he's forty years old, and he makes him king of Israel. And all of a sudden you see, all of a sudden there's opposition to the rightful king. The rightful king is David. He is God's king. He is God's anointed king, but there's a rival to God's king.

It's always the way. It's always the way. Jesus says, "I build My church," and He builds His church — where does He build His church? In enemy occupied territory. He builds His church against, right up to the gates of hell. There's always an enemy. There's always opposition to the kingdom of God. It's that seed principle, isn't it, in Genesis 3 - the seed of the serpent fighting and opposing the seed of the woman.

What do we make of this opposition? Do you remember that dream that Daniel had? It was Nebuchadnezzar's dream but it was Daniel who interpreted the dream in Daniel chapter 2. You remember Nebuchadnezzar saw a dream of a gigantic statue and then a stone is hurled against that statue and breaks it. And this stone grows and grows and fills the whole earth. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to understand what Daniel chapter 2 is saying. The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. It's like a little stone, but it grows and grows and fills the whole earth.

What do we make about this opposition, this reign of the king of Israel in the north that's in opposition to the reign of the rightful king? Well, this rightful King will say, "Ask of Me, ask of Me, and I will give you the uttermost parts of the universe for your inheritance." One day a king will come, like David, great David's greater Son. Remember the question the disciples asked Jesus after the ascension in Acts chapter 1? They said, "Lord, will you this day restore the kingdom to Israel?" There are about as many things wrong with that question as there are words in the question, but the crucial thing is they understood one thing, that Jesus had come to establish His kingdom. He'd come to plant His kingdom. And that kingdom is planted in a world where there's hostility and opposition and counterclaims and idols that claim to be gods that are no gods. But of the rightful King, of the rightful King it will be said that, "Jesus shall reign

where'er the sun doth its successive journeys run. His kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till moon shall wax and wane no more." That's the kingdom that we belong to. That's the kingdom that we belong to.

Whose kingdom will you support?

You know, what's this passage about? It's asking you, it's describing a piece of history three thousand years ago, but it's saying to you and me tonight, "Which kingdom do you belong to? Which king do you give your allegiance to?"

What did Ligon say this morning from Luke 12? He wants — you know we're trifling with such inconsequential things and the Father wants to give us a kingdom. Where is your treasure tonight? Where's your treasure tonight? Is it in the King of kings and Lord of lords? Have you seen in Jesus something that raptures your soul? Because where your treasure is, that's where your heart is going to be. This little cameo, it's a little cameo in church history and it's saying, you know, God plants something and it's really, really, really small, but it's going to grow and it's going to grow and Babylon will fall. Babylon the great will fall and this King will reign, and He'll reign forever and ever and ever.

So that's the question. Whose kingdom are you in, the kingdom of the world or the kingdom of heaven? Which king are you following? Which king are you giving allegiance to? Because there's only one true King and He sits at the right hand of God and His name is Jesus, Jesus.

Father, we thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the confidence it gives us. Thank You for the courage it gives us in a hostile and evil world. We can lift up our heads without any sense of embarrassment or shame because we serve the King of the universe, the only King there is. Lord, give us now that faith, strong faith, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Please stand. Receive the Lord's benediction. Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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