

## **Sermon 34: 2 Samuel 2:1-3:5: Establishing God's Kingdom**

### **OUTLINE**

David seeks the kingdom  
Abner seeks the kingdom

### **INTRODUCTION**

Saul is dead and you would expect that David who had been anointed King years earlier would suddenly ascend to the throne and rule Israel. This is not the case. Chapters 2-4 cover a 7 ½ year period, only at the end of which David will be the uncontested king. These chapters will be dominated by two men seeking to make themselves king in Israel, David and Abner. David seeks God's will and God's kingdom, Abner seeks his own. The overarching theme in the opening 5 chapters of 2 Samuel is that God keeps His promise to make David King, we zoom in now to look at how David as a believer cooperates with God in His providential outworking of this promise, noting the triumphs and failures, and we also want to remind ourselves of the stubborn blindness of unbelief that always resists God's kingdom.

### **David seeks the kingdom**

Where is David in 2:1? He is still in Ziklag. Why is he still there? Saul is dead should he not just up and go to take the throne of Israel? V1, '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.'" This note of inquiring of the Lord is an important one which indicates whether a man is in a good or a bad place spiritually. We see here that David is seeking God's kingdom but He is also seeking to do it in God's way according to God's timing not his own. He could rush into Israel and take the throne expecting all the promises of God to suddenly manifest in a sudden fullness of fulfilment. But no David is being realistic not idealistic. Notice how he only asks about cities in Judah. He asks this recognising that though Saul is dead the nation will still be in mourning and will not yet be prepared to accept David as king. The fulfilment of the promise is certain though still yet more delayed.

We stand in a similar situation today. The promise of God's new Creation is certain but its arrival is not yet. Christ won the victory at the cross in the same way Saul was defeated, but a sudden arrival of victory is not God's way here. He in His wisdom has chosen a different way and better way, a way that still engages our need to trust when we don't understand. This attitude here in David of submitting to God's timing and seeking His will is a good model for us as we live in a similar type of time. No sense of false expectation but rather a patient and compliant waiting. We do not order God, we do not grow impatient with His timetable but we continue to trust in Him. Prov. 3:5-7, 'Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.'

Notice that in seeking the Lord's will David is not abdicating his mind and thinking. The nature of his question reveals that he has thought deeply and realistically about this situation. To trust in God and wait does not imply a passivity in thought or planning. David has been wise and asks good questions. This is not merely case of having an empty mind and following a feeling. David has limited his choices to the most likely ones on account of

Judah being his blood, and the fact that he has already softened them up with gifts. God directs him to Hebron, this would have been the most important town in Judah.

It appears that David has come to learn his lesson. He did not inquire of the Lord and he went into Philistia for over a year. We are seeing a man who is thinking with God's promises in mind, expecting their fulfilment, but he is also thinking about God's ways and not assuming God to work as he expects. As a result of God's leading David moves his whole family and his men and their families and relocates out of Philistia for good, v2-3. If you have ever relocated your family you will appreciate how hard it can be. But David is a man who has made God His Lord. When we become Christians we do not merely receive Jesus as Saviour but as Lord. We recognise that we do not merely get fire insurance but that our whole lives are brought under His Lordship. Friends are you in this pliable place of yielding all to God. Is your faith merely something external or do you actually seek God's will in every part of your life and make expensive sacrifices to do it. Seeking God's will could involve giving up much, changing where you live, what you do with your money, ending certain relationships. Seeking God's will is not merely seeking His blessing, it is giving up our wills for His not merely trying to get Him to bless our selfish plans.

The people come to David instead of David forcing himself on the people and they make him king, v4.

Next we note David's first act as king. What do you think this would be? It speaks of a man who is not merely about his own business but God's kingdom. He commends the men off Jabesh-Gilead. You will remember that the men of JG had travelled a great distance and risked their lives to rescue the bodies of Saul and his sons in order to give them a proper burial, and then fasted for them for 7 days, 1 Sam. 31:8-13. These were men loyal to Saul because he had saved them from Nahash the Ammonite. David commends these men for their loyalty. His first act as king is one of commending those who treated his enemy with respect.

In v8-11 we see that a civil war breaks out and Abner Saul's uncle anoints Ish-Bosheth as king in Israel. And v11 emphasizes that David is king in Hebron over Judah for 7 ½ years, a significant delay to become king, after the death of Saul. We are reminded here of how God works. This day David is only king of a single tribe, but it is the day of small beginnings whose end cannot be resisted. Think of David's life and how it has gone. He began as a youngest son, he then tended sheep in the despised role of a shepherd, then he kills Goliath and he is entrusted with further command in Saul's army. When he fled from Saul he had to rule a small band of families who were nomadic. Then he ruled over them when they were settled in Ziklag. Now he gets to rule over a single tribe, but God is building him up to the whole nation. God did not thrust him straight into responsibility but trained him for the role.

This is how God works in our lives. He is making something of all of us, we presently have gifts and opportunities. We are situated in our families, workplaces, and neighbourhoods at God's will. Are we being faithful with the small? Are you tending the sheep as David had to do when he started out when he was just a teenager? Every day every action is an investment in our future character and usefulness to God. God is building His kingdom but He is doing it by making us mature through trials and long waiting, through tested faithfulness and expanding opportunities.

But this time in David's life is like where we are now in history. Christ is the king, He has been given the name above all names. He is sitting on the throne, but we are now in the

time when the gospel is going out to all nations. The final result of Christ ruling over all is inevitable, it is coming, we must live in light of it. We must not balk at the position of the church or the apparent defeats the church suffers. We are to be faithful.

But all is not well in David's life, even here we see some disturbing seeds of future destruction. In 3:2-5 we are told about David's family during this period of 7 ½ years. David already had three wives, Michal, Abigail and Ahinoam. In this list we are told about Maacah the princess of Geshur, a political marriage; Haggith; Abital; and Eglah. Here we see evidence of David continuing to have worldly practices, political marriages to strengthen his position. Please notice that Amnon and Absalom and Adonijah are in the list and they will all present great problems further on. Despite David having faith, and being brave in the Lord's battles, even having a passion for God, he was not applying God's laws in his bedroom and in his sex life; in the area of marriage, and this will plant seeds which will bear terrible fruit later on. The cost to family is what David had to reap.

### **Abner seeks the kingdom**

Our portion introduces us to a new player, Abner. This is Saul's uncle and the leader of Saul's armies. He sets up Ish-bosheth as a puppet king, and attempts to rule the kingdom through Ish-bosheth. Abner is the epitome of the unbelieving man. One who knows who is to be king but who rejects it, and who strategizes to make himself king. Abner is Jewish, so naturally he has external religion. But it is merely by word and not something from the heart. He makes oaths in God's name 3:9, all the while knowing that God has promised David the throne, 3:17, 30-31; yet who resists the will of God. The next few chapters are going to show us Abner as a great failure who cannot overturn the promise of God to David. He will act and attempt to overturn God's will but will fail. He fails in battle, in politics and in negotiating to make David king. And God makes David king as promised.

In v12 we are told that Abner is the aggressor who went out against David's forces. 3:12-32 is a very detailed narrative. One can get the wrong impression thinking that Abner is a good guy, one must not think this. True Joab, David's nephew is not a nice guy either, but the purpose of the narrative is to explain why in 3:26-30 Joab is going to murder Abner. We see a preamble where Abner instigates a contest of 24 men who all kill each other. We see fierce fighting which results in Asahel Joab's brother being killed by Abner. And finally Abner's whining plea to stop fighting. But all is just a symptom of the fact that Abner will not submit to the will of God.

The bible teaches us that all people know truth. They know that there is a Creator, and they the difference of right from wrong as it is written on their hearts. When we confront the people of this generation to tell them that Jesus is God come in the flesh to die to save us. All these truths are rejected and suppressed by the unbeliever. God has spoken. He has promised a day of judgement, a day when every knee will bow. However, we are like Abner, we have heard but we do not believe it. We know what God says, but we will act in rebellion seeking to exalt ourselves against the truth of God. The world today is full of this denial of truth and action that is seeking to lead a revolution to the overthrow of God's ways. When the world shouts down the values that have shaped western culture for 2000 years, and forces a submission to its views on gender, identity and sexuality it is attempting an Abner. Behind the dummy governments we appoint for ourselves is an Abner who is actually attempting to have his own way.

Jesus Christ is the King, proven by the resurrection of the dead, attested to by eye witnesses whose writings have supernaturally been recorded and preserved. Have you

submitted to the truth? Do you know that Jesus is King and yet you resist? Are you acting to build your own kingdom like Abner and not the kingdom of God? Are you attempting to set yourself up as King instead of submitting to Jesus? No you may say. But every time you reject God's law, and God's King you set yourself up as God. Jesus resurrection not only proves that He is in fact the King but that one day, even though you die now, you cannot escape you will be resurrected to give an account for your rebellion. Death is no escape from the reality that we must all give an account. Lay down your arms and accept Christ as your king today!