

## Go up to Hebron

2 Samuel 1:1- 2:7 (Key verse 2:1)

*In the course of time, David inquired of the LORD. "Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?" he asked. The LORD said, "Go up." David asked, "Where shall I go?" "To Hebron," the LORD answered.*

The death of king Saul, his sons and the armies of the Lord in battle with the Philistines meant a serious crisis for the nation of Israel. The identity of the nation of Israel as God's people was at the verge of being erased and locked in the history books. For this reason, David mourned and lamented at this great tragedy, and wanted to return back to Israel. So, he inquired of the Lord, "*Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?*". The Lord answered David to go up to Hebron of Judah where he'll be anointed as king of the nation of Israel. In today's passage, we'll learn what the Lord God did to restore and save the nation of Israel. I pray that we may see the heart of God towards the distressed nation of Israel, and us. Amen!

Do you remember what happened in the 1 Samuel book? Previously, Saul continued to pursue David. David lost faith in God. He left his home country Israel and in exile, lived in the Philistine territory for a year and four months. Now the Philistines were getting ready to fight with Israel and David was also ready to fight against his very own people. However, the Lord God intervened and moved the hearts of the Philistines commanders to refuse David from joining them in battle. So, David was sent back to Ziklag where he stayed with his family and his men. However, when he reached Ziklag, he found his community completely raided by the Amalekites. They had attacked and burned his community, and taken captive the women and everyone else in it, both young and old. David however found strength in the Lord and went to fight the Amalekites, and by the grace of God recovered everything that was raided, and everyone who was taken captive. Meanwhile, the fight between Saul's Israel and the Philistines grew more and more fierce, and sadly, Saul, his sons, and his army and the nation of Israel were defeated and killed. When the Israelites along the valley and those across the Jordan saw that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. And the Philistines came and occupied them.

Can you imagine the terrible state the nation of Israel was in? Now when David returned to Ziklag from striking down the Amalekites, he was told about the death of Saul by a certain Amalekite man. Look at verse 1-2. ***After the death of Saul, David returned from striking down the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days. 2 On the third day a man arrived from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor.*** The man began to describe how Saul died; answering David's frantic questions. Look at verse 4-10. ***4 "What happened?" David asked. "Tell me." "The men fled from the battle," he replied. "Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead." 5 Then David said to the young man who brought him the report, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?" 6 "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa," the young man said, "and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots and their drivers in hot pursuit. 7 When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I said, 'What can I do?' 8 "He asked me, 'Who are you?' " 'An Amalekite,' I answered. 9 "Then he said to me, 'Stand here by me and kill me! I'm in the throes of death, but I'm still alive.' 10 "So I stood beside him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my lord."*** So, from this man's testimony, and having seen Saul's personal items (the crown on his head and the band on his arm) which David knew very well, he concluded that indeed Saul had died.

How then did David respond to Saul's death? Look at verse 11-12. ***11 Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. 12 They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and for the nation of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.*** David was shocked by these news. He mourned, wept and fasted till evening. One could find David's reaction a bit abnormal. How could he mourn, weep and fast for the man who made his life so miserable? This man Saul wanted to kill David in many occasions. Why would David be touched by his death? Why isn't he rejoicing and giving thanks to God for He has brought to shame his enemy? It is because David wanted to honour God. He could not let his humanistic thinking take over the will and heart of God. This was not the place nor can there ever be a time to pursue personal and selfish goals at the expense of the will of God.

Look at verse 12 again. What does it mean that David mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the Lord and for the nation of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword? It means he realised the grave danger that the nation of Israel was in. The nation's king is dead. He was killed by the godless Philistine people. Spiritually, the nation of Israel is near death as well. There is no one available to guide the nation back to God.

Let's see how David continued to mourn for Saul and Jonathan. David wrote a poem for them and ordered the people of Judah to be taught this lament so that they too can see what happened with his eyes, and most importantly, with the eyes of God. David describes Saul and Jonathan as mighty men in battle and admired by the people. Look at verse 22-23. **22 "From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied. 23 Saul and Jonathan—in life they were loved and admired, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.** What does he say about Jonathan? Look at verse 25-26. **25 "How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. 26 I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.** Yes, David could mourn and say all these because he had received the love and grace of God. Now suddenly he is able to see with great insight, not with the eyes of man, but with the eyes of God. How did God bless the nation of Israel through Saul? Look at verse 24. **24 "Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.** Under Saul, the nation of Israel was indeed glorious, and its people were well taken care of. Just like beautiful daughters who were clothed in scarlet and finery, adorned with ornaments of gold, so was Israel among the nations of the world.

Moreover, David mourned because the Name of the Lord was despised and tarnished by the Philistines. Look at verse 20. **20 "Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice.** The death of Saul meant that the unbelieving and godless people of Gath, Ashkelon and the Philistine would rejoice as though God of Israel has been defeated. Yes, David was angered by this and burned with the heart of God to restore not only honour for the Name of the Lord, but also for the nation of Israel to restored as they regain their pride and identity in the Name of the Lord. Look at what happened to the Amalekite man who reported the death of Saul to David. Yes, he might have come to David with what seems to be humility as he bowed down before David, with his clothes torn and covered in dust. However, he had ulterior motives and did not fear God nor did he have any regard for Him. From 1 Samuel 31: 4-6, we understand that Saul fell on his own sword and therefore died. **4 Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me." But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. 5 When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. 6 So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.** However, this man claimed that he killed Saul. He lied. He must have lied so that he could gain some reward from David for killing Saul his enemy. Indeed, he didn't fear God, and moreover, he used the death of Saul for his own gain to the extent that he thought of killing the Lord's anointed. David however was a man after the heart of God. He wanted to please and honour God. But here is this godless fellow gloating about how he killed God's anointed and how he is seeking gain. Here is this fellow who claimed that he escaped from the Israelites' camp as though he was either a slave or was fighting against the Israelites, without any fear of God in his demeanour. In no way did we see where God said the Israelites could have the Amalekites as slaves, but rather God commanded that they completely destroy them, both young and old. What did David do to him? Look at verse 14-16. **14 David asked him, "Why weren't you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" 15 Then David called one of his men and said, "Go, strike him down!" So he struck him down, and he died. 16 For David had said to him, "Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, 'I killed the LORD's anointed.** Yes, David killed this godless Amalekite man.

I therefore pray that we can also have it in us to burn with the heart of God and to honour the Name of the Lord always. When we see that our brother and sister has fallen into sin, and far away from God, do we mourn in prayer for them or do we just let them be? I was greatly moved by all your concern for me through your words of encouragements, delicious food and money contributions; even from the guys I play football with. I never understood how I mattered to all of you. However, I could understand that I am indeed loved and admired by you all; a good thing to know that is helping me heal from falling in the hands of those criminals. Please continue to pray for me with that concern to, most importantly, return to God. When we see that we have fallen into sin, are we filled with godly sorrow to repent or do we just remain in our stubbornness? May God raise us all to be shepherds of His people in this world. Amen! When we have sinned, may God soften our hearts to repent from our sins. Amen!

Let's see where David's concern for the fallen Israel led to. He must have asked himself many questions on what steps to take. For some time, David sought the help of God in this very difficult matter. He did not just mourn and lick his wounds, nor act based on his limited and corrupt mind. Rather, David was hopeful in God. So with a prayerful heart, David brought his concerns to God. Most importantly, David inquired from God to get a clear direction. Look at our key verse 2:1 for the day. **In the course of time, David inquired of the LORD. "Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?" he asked. The LORD said, "Go up." David asked, "Where shall I go?" "To Hebron," the LORD answered.** I am sure we can see the heart of David for Israel. However, what about God's heart for the fallen Israel? Can you see it? God was pleased to see David inquiring from Him. It is only from God, and only through God's

way, that the fallen nation of Israel could be restored. So, God answered David and gave him a clear direction to leave the foreign land of Ziklag, and go back to his country that was in a dire need of help. God directed David to go up to Hebron. So, David obeyed God and left Ziklag with his men and their household including his own household, and went to Hebron. Look at verse 2-3. **2 So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 3 David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns.** What a joyous homecoming this might have been! What then, does it mean to go up to Hebron?

Firstly, to go up to Hebron means to repent, and to return back to God. David has been staying in this foreign land of the Philistines for a year and four months. Coming to this foreign land was one of the biggest downfalls in David's [spiritual] life. Can you imagine that David was even ready to make a treaty with these Philistines and fight his own people? But now, God commands him to come out of Ziklag and return back to God's holy land; Israel. What do we know about this town in Judah called Hebron? This is a town where the patriarchs [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob] were buried. David would be reminded of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; how He has been faithful to Israel. As David thinks about this in Hebron, seeing the grave of his ancestors in the cave of Machpelah, he'll be all the more moved to come back to God and carry on the spiritual legacy and the will of God. It was not only a great homecoming, but indeed a joyous day even in the heavens that David has indeed repented from his sin of seeking refuge in a godless nation of the Philistines, even at the cost of neglecting his people and God. Perhaps this can be an encouragement to us all that we also go up to Hebron and repent from our sins.

Secondly, to go up to Hebron means to take up God's calling and lead Israel to God. Do we all remember how Prophet Samuel anointed David as the king of Israel after God rejected Saul? But David never assumed this office until now because he was exiled in a foreign land. However, let's look at verse 2:4a. **4 Then the men of Judah came to Hebron, and there they anointed David king over the tribe of Judah.** What a great day was for Israel! Not only has David returned home, but more so he had resolved to carry out God's plan for the nation of Israel and lead them to God. David was not supposed to be just an earthly king. He, however, had an important spiritual duty of rebuilding the fallen Israel. David was told that the men who anointed him king are actually from Jabesh Gilead. These were honourable and brave men who had good ties with king Saul. They are the ones who tried to give Saul a respectful burial. Look at verse **5 he sent messengers to them to say to them, "The LORD bless you for showing this kindness to Saul your master by burying him. 6 May the LORD now show you kindness and faithfulness, and I too will show you the same favor because you have done this. 7 Now then, be strong and brave, for Saul your master is dead, and the people of Judah have anointed me king over them.** These men from Jabesh Gilead might have been heart-broken at the death of their king Saul. They were in a desperate need for a leader to save Israel from this crisis. However, David reassured and calmed their hearts by telling them that he will indeed lead them. In this way, David began his life as a king, not only politically but most importantly spiritually to lead Israel to God.

In conclusion: Let us give thanks to God for sending Jesus Christ to us. Just at the right time, while in sin, distressed and being held captive by Satan, God provided for us Jesus. Just as He never lost sight of Israel, God has never abandoned us, but rather sent Jesus to heal our broken and wounded hearts. We have The Great Shepherd; King Jesus who is constantly looking for us, searching for us as though a shepherd searching for a lost sheep, to deliver us from the evil one and all the heartaches of life. We have our heavenly Father God who is longing to see all of us repent and return back to Him. We have Jesus who longs to be with us, and constantly knocking the door of our heart. For this reason, may David's return to Israel be an encouragement for us all to not sit in our sins, but to repent and come back to God. Amen!