

GOD ESTABLISHES DAVID AS KING OVER ISRAEL

2 Samuel 2:1-5:16 (Key verse 5:12)

And David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

In today's passage, David rose to power as king over Israel. At first, we might not think much of this. I mean, all throughout history, countless kings had risen to power. Right? However, according to today's key verse, David's kingship is different from any other kingship because..... the Lord had established [David] as king over IsraelAND.... had exalted his kingdom for a very special purpose. **Then what was the Lord's purpose?** The Lord did this.....for the sake..... of His people Israel. Yes, the Lord wanted to bless His people Israel by placing a shepherd king like David to rule over them. The Lord also wanted to bless His people Israel by giving them rest from their enemies....and allow them to live safely and securely in David's powerful kingdom. I pray that through today's passage, the Lord may move our hearts through the deep love He had for His people Israel. Amen.

As we learned in last week's passage, David was still living in exile when an Amalakitite brought him the news..... that Saul had been killed on the battlefield. You will remember from our study of 1 Samuel..... that for the previous 7 years, David was fleeing from Saul who wanted to kill him. You will also remember that God had already anointed David as the next king of Israel. Therefore, the Amalekite naturally thought that David would be pleased by the news of Saul's death. However, instead of celebrating, David mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul. David was so sincere in his mourning that he struck down the Amalakitite for lifting his hand against the Lord's anointed. Because of David's sincere love and deep respect for Saul, he even wrote a song of lament for Saul and ordered that the men of Judah should memorize it.

Do you remember what David then did before he returned from exile? Yes, David inquired of the Lord. (2:1) This also, was very impressive!! David knew that he was the next king of Israel. Therefore he could easily have marched down to Israel and claim the throne. But he did not do so! Instead, David earnestly prayed to Lord. For the Lord to lead him out of exile and establish him as king over Israel. Then where did the Lord send David? To the capital city of Israel? No! The Lord, surprisingly, sent David to Hebron, a small town in Judah. Now many kings in waiting would question the Lord's direction here. For why send David to Hebron if he was to be king over all Israel. Yet, David obediently accepted God's direction and settled in Hebron. Then God sent the men of Judah, and anointed David king.....not over all Israel, but only over the tribe of Judah. (2:4)

This is interesting; right? Why did God anoint David.... king over only Judah? Was David not supposed to be crowned king over all Israel, like Saul? Look at chapter 2:8. Appointing David king of Judah, was merely the first step because, Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army (and Saul's first cousin (1 Sam 14:50)) took Ish-Bosheth..... son of Saul..... and brought him over to Mahanaim. There Abner made him king over Gilead, Ashuri and Jezreel, and also over Ephraim, Benjamin.....and all Israel. Practically, this meant there were now two kings in Israel! The Lord made David king of Judah. While Abner made Ish-Bosheth king over the other tribes of Israel.Now if you were in David's shoes, how would you have reacted to this rebellion? Most leaders in David's shoes would muster their army and attack the rebelling tribes of Israel, right? Most leaders would also assassinate Abner and Ish-Bosheth for opposing their legitimate rule. But what did David do? David patiently trusted the Lord to deal with Abner and Ish-Bosheth. While he faithfully reigned as king in Hebron over Judah (2:11)

Unfortunately, Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, and Joab son of Zeruiah, the commander of David's army, was the complete opposite of David. Unlike David, these two men were proud.....impatient.....and selfish men who did not have any fear of God. Look at 2:12. Once, when Joab and Abner met in Gibeon, Abner foolishly suggested that some of their men fight hand to hand in front of them; just for a bit of entertainment. Joab foolishly agreed. Then things quickly turned ugly, as 24 young men each grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust his dagger into his opponent's side, and they fell down

together.....dead! From there, things degenerated into a fierce battle between Joab and Abner's men. But because David trusted the Lord, the Lord was pleased to fight for him. Look at 2:30-31. Besides Asahel, nineteen of David's men were found missing. But David's men had killed **THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY** Benjamites who were with Abner. That means for every one of David's men that died, 18 of Abner's men were struck down!!!! Which made David's men clear victors of this battle. Nevertheless, because Abner killed Joab's brother Asahel, a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David broke out. (3:1) This war prevented David from becoming king over all Israel.

At first, this looks like a mistake, right? Surely, when David returned from exile, he never intended to engage in a long war with the house of Saul. Otherwise, he would never have mourned for Saul when David heard he died!! Neither would he simply have remained in Hebron while Ish-Bosheth reigned from Mahanaim. Then why did the Lord allowed this war between the two houses to break out? Look again at 3:1b. David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker. This war between the house of David and the house of Saul was all part of the Lord's plan to establish David as king over his people Israel. For through this war, the Lord Himself.....worked behind the scenes..... to remove those who opposed David's ascension to the throne, while at the same time, ensuring David one day becomes a strong and powerful king for the sake of His people Israel.

Abner was one of those enemies who opposed David. In fact, humanly speaking.....Abner was David's greatest obstacle to the throne of Israel. For he was the one who held the actual power behind Ish-Bosheth's throne. Yet one day, when Ish-bosheth accused Abner of sleeping with one of his father's concubines..... Abner furiously defected to David. Listen to what Abner said to Ish-Bosheth. I am going to read from the NLT. "Am I some Judean dog to be kicked around like this?" he shouted. "After all I have done for your father, Saul, and his family and friends by not handing you over to David, is this my reward—that you find fault with me about this woman? May God strike me and even kill me if I don't do everything I can to help David get what the LORD has promised him! I'm going to take Saul's kingdom and give it to David. I will establish the throne of David over Israel as well as Judah, all the way from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south." (3:8-10) What a remarkable change in Abner's attitude!! All this time he was strengthening his position in Saul's house, to oppose David. Yet, with one serious accusation against him, the Lord flipped his heart.....and so switched Abner's allegiance from the house of Saul to David. Do you think it is too good to be true? Look at 3:17-18. Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and said, "For some time you have wanted to make David your king. Now do it! For the Lord promised David, 'By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.'" Abner also spoke to the Benjamites and then went to Hebron to tell David everything that Israel and the whole tribe of Benjamin wanted to do. (3:19-20).....When David prepared a feast for Abner and his men.....Abner said to David, "Let me go at once and assemble all Israel for my lord the king, so that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires." (21) This is truly remarkable!! Is this really the same Abner who opposed David's kingship? Yes, it was!!But Abner after the Lord worked so powerfully to turn his heart towards David. Here we can see just how faithful the Lord was to David. Moreover, we can see that no one could stand in the way of the Lord.....to firmly establish David as king over Israel...Not even Abner!

But then yet again, something unexpected happened! Do you remember how Abner had killed Joab's brother Asahel in battle? (2:23) Well, since that day Joab held a grudge against Abner. So when Joab heard that Abner had come to David and gone back peacefully, he brought Abner back to Hebron. But David did not know it. Then Joab took him aside into an inner chamber.....and there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed [Abner] in the stomach, and he died. (3:27) With this one selfish act of vengeance, Joab seemed to have ruined all the progress the Lord had made to bring the tribes of Israel over to David. Because not only was Abner (the only man who could bring the tribes of Israel over to David) dead, but it sure looked like David was the one who killed him. If this was true, then the tribes of Israel would never trust David nor accept him as their king.

Then how did David respond when he heard what Joab did? Yes, he burned with wrath and anger against Joab. (3:28-29) But he did not punish him. Instead, he humbly prayed and asked God to deal with Joab. (3:39) Then David said to Joab and all the people with him, "Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth and walk in mourning in front of Abner." King David himself walked behind the bier and wept aloud at Abner's tomb.....while singing a lament for Abner. (3:31-34) And when people came and urged David to eat something while it was still day; David took an oath, saying, "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets!" So on that day all the people thereand all Israel.....knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner.....Moreover, all the peoplewere pleased; indeed, everything the king did..... pleased them. (3:35-37) Isn't it remarkable to see, how the Lord uses seemingly terrible events and situations.....to advance His plans? For surely, Abner's assassination seemed to have threatened David's ascension to the throne. Yet, when David trusted the Lord.....and asked the Lord to deal with Joab.....the Lord could work powerfully to turn the hearts of all Israel to David! And so allowed everyone in Israel to accept David as their king.

Unfortunately, David fever in Israel caused two foreigners.....one named Baanah and the other Rekab; to murdered Ish-Bosheth while he was taking his noonday rest. (4:5) They then cut off his head and traveled all night to bring the head of Ish-Bosheth to David at Hebron. But even though it cleared the way for David to ascend to the throne, David did not accept their evil deed. But continued to trust in the Lord to deliver him out of every trouble (4:9).....So David gave an order to his men, and they killed Baanah and Rekab. They cut off their hands and feet and hung the bodies by the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-Bosheth and buried it in Abner's tomb at Hebron. (4:12)

Then finally, after 7 years and 6 months (5:5), the Lord dealt with Abner and Ish-Bosheth.....the two men who opposed David's ascension to the throne of Israel. In the process..... and because of David's reaction to every challenge he faced, the Lord had also turned the hearts of all Israel to David. Now, the way was open for David to be established as king over Israel. Look at 5:1-2. Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron to embrace him as their leader. They said to David, "We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.' It is quite sad, that the tribes of Israel only turned to David after the Lord removed Abner and Ish-Bosheth as their leaders. For here we can see they clearly knew that the Lord chose David to shepherd His people Israel. Nevertheless, David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord. And they anointed David king over Israel. This then in fulfilment of the Lord's will – not only for David, but also for His people Israel!

Then what was David's first act as king of Israel? Look at verses 6-9. Yes, David conquered Jerusalem. (6-16) After the conquest of the promised land, the Israelites had never been able to take the impregnable fortress of the city of the Jebusites, Jerusalem. But David conquered Jerusalem because he fought by the power of God. After conquering it, David established Jerusalem as his capital city...."And (look at verse 10a) David became more and more powerful because the Lord God Almighty was with him." In fact the Lord made David so powerful that one of the neighbouring kings, Hiram king of Tyre.....honored David by building a beautiful palace in Jerusalem for David to live in. Then, one day, while sitting on his throne..... in a beautiful palace.....located in the fortified city of David.....a 30 who was only 30 years old at the timeame to know something.

Let's see what that was, by looking at our key verse, 5:12. (We can read it all together) Then David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel. David knew that his rise to power was not accidental.....nor was it due to his own doing. But aswe have seen throughout today's passage, it was because the LORD had established him as king over Israel. The question is, why did the Lord do this? Why did the Lord go through so much trouble to call David 15 years earlier, then used Saul to persecute him for 4 years in Israel, until things got so bad that David fled into exile to live among the Philistines? Why after three years did the Lord then go through all the trouble to send David back to Hebron only to take 7 years and six months to work behind the scenes until David ascended to the

throne? Why did the Lord do all this? And why did the Lord exalt David's kingdom above any kingdom in the history of the world?

Look again at the key verse. The Lord did all this *for the sake..... of His people Israel*. Ever since the Lord brought His people Israel into the Promised Land, the Canaanites and surrounding nations, always disturbed and oppressed them. Then the Israelites would cry out to the Lord, who would raise a Judge to deliver them from the hand of their enemies. But once the Judge died, the people would slip back into sin and the oppression would start all over again. This continued for almost 400 years. During this time, the Lord had compassion on His people Israel. And was eager to deliver them once and for all from their enemies. To achieve this, God planned to establish a kingdom for his people and appoint a king to rule over them. So they could find rest from their enemies and live peacefully and safely under the reign of their king. Praise God, for the Lord brought his plans to fulfilment when He established David as king over Israel. During a period of 4 years, the Lord prospered His people through David who reigned over them with God's righteousness and justice.

The Lord's love for His people Israel is truly amazing, right? Yet, it was merely a taster for what the Lord would do and has done for you and me, through King Jesus. The truth is David's kingship points to the arrival of King Jesus. Just like the Lord established David as king over Israel at Hebron, so the Lord established Jesus as our king on the cross. For it is through Jesus that the Lord wants to bless you and me to live safely and joyfully under His Kingship, even now in this world. Moreover, through Jesus the Lord wants to plant His kingdom in our hearts, to give us eternal hope to one day live with Him. In His kingdom where Jesus will wipe every tear from [our] eyes. There in the presence of Jesus, there will be no more death^b or mourning or crying or pain. (Rev 21:4) Praise the Lord for King Jesus and for His eternal kingdom!!

In conclusion. How should we respond to this amazing love of God in Jesus' Kingship? Abner and the elders of Israel delayed accepting David's kingship for 7 years and 6 months even though they knew it was from God. It doesn't make sense, right? Sadly, however, you and I do exactly the same to Jesus. We know that Jesus is our shepherd King. We know that He is the only one who can deliver us from our sins and free us from the agonies of this world. We also know that Jesus is the only one who can protect, provide and help us live in this fallen world. Yet like Abner and the tribes of Israel resisted David, so we.....to our own detriment..... also in rebellion resist Jesus' kingship in our lives as we hold on to the Abners and Ish-Bosheths in our lives.

I sincerely pray we all repent of our stubbornness to resist Jesus' Kingship!

May the Lord in His great Love remove our Abners and Ish-Bosheths before Jesus so we all embrace Jesus Christ as our king! Amen