

KING AND COVENANT

2 Samuel 5:1-16

Rev. Richard D. Phillips

Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC, January 9, 2011

And the king said to his servants, “Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? And I was gentle today, though anointed king” (2 Sam. 3:38-39).

David had been waiting. His waiting began in his youth when the prophet Samuel unexpectedly appeared at David’s hometown of Bethlehem and anointed David as Israel’s new king. The waiting grew painful during David’s years of fleeing from the malice of King Saul, a plight that almost drove David past the point of endurance. Saul’s death did not end the waiting, however, for his household continued their opposition to David’s rule. For seven years, David continued to wait on the Lord to remove the opposition from within Israel, during years of civil war that ended in murder and strife. But David kept waiting for the Lord to fulfill his promises. “Trust in the LORD, and do good,” David counseled; “dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness” (Ps. 37:3-4). His life provides the chief testimony to the truth of his psalm: “Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him... For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land” (Ps. 37:7-9).

2 Samuel chapter 5 records the day when David’s waiting came to an end, and the Lord granted David the desire of his heart. In so doing, God provided a picture of Jesus Christ ascending to reign over his kingdom. The three features that stand out as David began his reign over Israel are also part of the heritage where Jesus reigns. First, David’s Israel gained a bond of unity as God’s Word was confirmed. Second, Israel experience conquering power in taking up the mission God had set before them. Third, Israel enjoyed the blessings that

flowed from the divine kingdom established by God for his glory. In all these ways, David's reign in Jerusalem depicts the glorious results in every heart where Jesus has taken up his throne to reign.

ISRAEL'S UNITY IN CONFIRMING GOD'S WORD

The end to opposition against David came with the appearance of the leaders of Israel's tribes at Hebron, David's stronghold in Judah. God showed his power in bringing these people who had so long rebelled against David's claims to kingship, now eager to enter into union with the divinely anointed leader. Neglecting to point out that their faction had collapsed with the death of Saul's son, Ish-Bosheth, the elders gave three reasons for accepting David as king. The first reason was relational: "Behold, we are your bone and flesh" (2 Sam. 5:1). The Israelites were one people, descended from the patriarch Jacob. It was absurd and self-destructive for them to be at strife; Israel's kinship called for a common bond and kingship. Their second reason was experiential: "In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel" (2 Sam. 5:2). David had long since proven his fitness to lead, having successfully led Israel's forces in battle against the Philistines and demonstrating both faithfulness and ability to reign. The third of the elders' reasons was biblical: "And the LORD said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel'" (2 Sam. 5:2).

In pointing out God's anointing of David to rule of Israel, the elders condemned their actions in at least two ways. First, their knowledge of David's legitimacy as king reveals their civil war as simple and hard-hearted rebellion. It was because of their unwillingness to yield to God that Israel had been made so vulnerable against the Philistine occupation. Second, the elders condemned themselves by appealing to the authority of God's Word last in their reasoning. The fact that God had appointed David as shepherd-king over his flock should have been the first and only reason for their acceptance. Nonetheless, their sin proves the power of God's Word: despite their rebellion, God's promise to David had come true, attended by no power other than the will of God alone. Christians are reminded by this to persevere when God's Word is opposed and when God's promises

have yet to come true. The Lord is able to overcome all opposition and to establish his Word in the hearts of his people. Against the royal venom of King Saul, despite David's many follies and sin in his years of flight, despite the organized rebellion of ten whole tribes, and despite the ruinous violence of his own friends, God's Word still proved true for David just as it will prove true in our struggles as well.

The example of the Israelite elders also shows that the church enjoys unity as she is led by divinely appointed leaders. God's people are at rest when they are shepherded by officers who clearly meet the Bible's qualifications (see 1 Timothy 3:1-13). The elders of Israel called on David to "be shepherd of [God's] people," and faithful shepherds produce a peaceable flock. Peter called elders to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 1:3). More-over, the church is unified by the Spirit-anointed preaching of Spirit-gifted teachers, who lead the congregation soundly into God's Word.

As a result of the northern tribes accepting his rule, "King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel" (2 Sam. 5:3). Just as God binds his people to himself through covenant, God binds believers to one another in a similar manner. A covenant is a solemn, oath-bound relationship sealed in God's presence. By entering into this covenant, the elders were committing themselves to David's rule, just as David was committing himself to be a faithful servant-ruler over the people. Church membership today likewise brings people into relationship with the church, spelling out their biblically-sanctioned duties and promising the faithful ministry and care of the church elders.

Bill Arnold shows how their covenant with David brought the Israelite elders into the peace of his kingdom: "This agreement likely specifies the rights and obligations of each party. Once terms have been agreed to and the [covenant] ratified, the elders of Israel anoint David king over all Israel... Here the people of Israel pledge themselves to David and accept an obligation to him. He, in turn, grants them a royal promise." In anointing David as king, the

Israelites were confirming God's earlier anointing, just as any church that confirms God's Word in obedience is bound to enjoy the blessing of a unified and fervent congregation. Thus began David's reign over all Israel that would last for over thirty years (2 Sam. 5:4-5).

CONQUERING POWER IN GOD'S MISSION

Having received the kingdom from God, David's time of waiting was over. The time had come for action, and David wasted little of it. It speaks volumes about David that having received his long-awaited crown he did not bask in glory and ease but immediately set Israel in pursuit of its divinely-given mission. It is always a sign of Christ reigning that his church takes up with zeal the mission Christ has given, namely, the worldwide spread of his gospel (Mt. 28:18-20). In David's time, this mission called for the completion of the long-neglected calling for Israel to conquer and subdue the Promised Land. Therefore, having united the tribes under his kingship, "the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites" (2 Sam. 5:6).

David's resolve to seize Jerusalem was astute both politically and spiritually. Politically, his newly reunited nation needed a capital that would serve as a true center for the government. David's base in Hebron was too far to the south and was also a stronghold of his own tribe, Judah. Jerusalem, on the other hand, was a city that God had allocated to the tribe of Benjamin (Jos. 18:28), the tribe of David's former rival King Saul, but Jerusalem was also located on the border of Judah. Therefore, just as Washington D.C. was designed to unite the new American states as an entirely new city that was situated right on the north-south divide, Jerusalem would be a truly national capital located on the border between Judah and the northern tribes.

The difficulty with David's plan was that Jerusalem was not occupied by the Israelites, but had remained a stronghold of the Jebusites all through the centuries since the Israelites' arrival in Canaan. This is why David's plan was not only politically astute but also spiritually invigorating. The Jebusite fortress was a national disgrace, a symbol of Israel's failure to complete the conquest commanded by the Lord. God had promised to give over the seven Canaanite nations to Israel, who was to "devote them to complete destruction," not allowing them

to remain as inciters of idolatry. “You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them,” God demanded (Dt. 7:2). The Israelites had failed in this generally, and there was no greater example than the Jebusite fortress atop Mount Zion. Judges 1:21 records that “the people of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem, so the Jebusites have lived with the people of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day” (Jud. 1:21). John Calvin comments: “When, therefore, they feared their enemies and fell back, it was a sign that they did not add faith to what God had said to them (Heb. 4:2).”¹

David grew up in the vicinity of Jerusalem, which was near his hometown of Bethlehem, so he was painfully aware of the Jebusites. This probably explains David’s first action on the public stage, after he had slain the Philistine giant Goliath. Taking Goliath’s own sword, David cut off the massive head and then took it to Jerusalem (1 Sam. 17:54). In this way, he was serving notice to the Jebusites that the power of God was still present in Israel, and pledging himself to the removal of the condemned people.

Having now entered into his kingdom, so many years later, David immediately acted upon his youthful pledge, leading the united tribes against the stronghold. The Jebusites were undaunted, having survived the Israelites for centuries. They jeered David as he approached: “‘You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off,’ thinking, ‘David cannot come in here’” (2 Sam. 5:6). This indicates that the Jebusites considered their fortress to be so strong that they could not only resist but could mock David with defiance. Little did the Jebusites consider that just as they were not merely contending with men but with God, their mocking of King David was a provoking of God, who is able to humble his foes.

We can understand the Jebusites’ self-confidence if we consider the daunting geographic obstacles to any attack on their city. Located atop a steep, finger-shaped hill surrounded by valleys, the city also boasted man-made fortifications that would likely defy any assault. Even blind and lame defenders could hold the city, they boasted. They failed to realize, however, that the king opposing them was the

¹ John Calvin, *Sermons on 2 Samuel I-13*, trans. Douglas Kelly (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), 185.

king who had felled the giant Goliath with a stone, the king came “in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel” (1 Sam. 17:45). Little did they realize that behind David was the power of the Lord. Well might David have answered the Jebusite jeers with the words that he long before spoke to the Philistine Goliath: “the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hand” (1 Sam. 17:47).

Relying on the Lord did not make David passive in the attack, however, but rather encouraged his boldness. We see this in the plan he devised for Jerusalem’s assault. Verses 7-8 tell us how “David took the stronghold of Zion.” “David said on that day, ‘Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack ‘the lame and the blind,’ who are hated by David’s soul.’” It seems that David was aware of a hidden route of access behind Jerusalem’s walls, a water shaft that was accessible from outside the city. It is probable that David had learned of this during his years of living near this fortress. 1 Chronicles 11:6 adds the detail that David offered the command of his army to the man who would lead the assault up the water shaft. To what must have been David’s chagrin, his trouble-making nephew, Joab, seized the opportunity: “Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first, so he became chief” (1 Chron. 11:6).

The point for us is that confidence in God’s power and zeal for God’s mission will inspire the holy boldness needed for victory in spiritual warfare. We may need to address an issue of personal sanctification, just as David was acting to remove a source of temptation from Israel, yet the demands may seem to exceed our strength. The Christian should reckon on his or her duty to the Lord, coupled with God’s power to provide the strength we need to advance against our sin. Combining these two motivations will increase our zeal and lead us to a boldness in pursuing godliness that God is certain to bless. The same is true with respect to the mission of evangelism. Christ’s people are to use the weapons that the Lord has given us, taking bold measures to carrying out the mission of the gospel. If the Lord grants us opportunities, we should boldly exploit the means to advance the advance of Christian salvation, just as David boldly exploited his knowledge of Jerusalem’s water shaft. In David’s time, the mocking words of the Jebusites became a legend. Verse 8 says, “Therefore it

is said, ‘The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.’” We, too, should gain boldness from our experience of God’s power in order to be even more bold in future spiritual contests.

Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, ^athat is, the city of David.

⁸ And David said on that day, "Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack 'the lame and the blind,' who are hated by David's soul." Therefore it is said, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house."

(2Sa 5:7-8 ESV)

I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, ^twhom you have defied.

⁴⁶ This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. ^aAnd I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day ^bto the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, ^cthat all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,

⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that ^athe LORD saves not with sword and spear. ^bFor the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand."

(1Sa 17:45-47 ESV)

Jerusalem as a symbol of remaining sin.

And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off"--thinking, "David cannot come in here."

⁷ Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David.

⁸ And David said on that day, "Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack 'the lame and the blind,' who are hated by David's soul." Therefore it is said, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house."

⁹ And David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built the city all around from the Millo inward.

(2Sa 5:6-9 ESV)

DAVID’S KINGDOM BLESSED

We have considered

TYPE OF CHRIST

We have considered