2 Samuel Lesson 2 (2021)

DAVID IS ANOINTED KING OVER JUDAH

2 Samuel 2:1-3:5

Key Verse 3:1

“ The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time. David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.”

Saul was dead. He was the first king and served the nation Israel. In chapter 1, David showed his respect for Saul and Jonathan, teaching the people of Judah the lamentation to remember how God has worked through Saul’s life. Saul was David’s enemy until the last moment of his life, but David didn’t hold a grudge against him. He honored him as God’s anointed king. After the death of Saul, many came to David at Ziklag. “Day after day men came to help David, until he had a great army, like the army of God” (1 Ch 12:22). But David trusted in God who promised him the kingdom and who gives in his own time and his own way. David chose to follow as God directed. We see today that God is the director of David's path. David rose to his position according to God’s timing.

1. David Anointed King Over Judah (2:1-7)

Look at verse 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 again, ‘Where shall I go?’ ‘To Hebron,’ the Lord answered.” David wanted to go back to his own country. His mind was to his own tribe, his father’s family; he wanted to know which way he would take in this matter and he asked God. David had many friends (1Sa 30:26–31) who would welcome him. However, he did not hurriedly move from Philistine territory without first seeking the Lord’s guidance. God led him to Hebron. David went up there with two wives and the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns. When the people heard that David was in Hebron, the men of Judah came to him, and there they anointed David king over the tribe of Judah (4).

Here, we see David’s greatness and life principle. He believed that God goes ahead of him and that God’s time and God’s ways are absolutely right and the best. So he didn’t go ahead of God. This was his common practice throughout his life since he has followed God. For many years, he was a fugitive, being chased by Saul with life threatening situations. Now he became free after Saul’s death. If he wanted to, he could do anything to make an immediate move to secure his position. Furthermore, many people came to him and made him their leader while he was in wilderness. In other words, he was highly regarded throughout his leadership. However, his leadership was not by his own efforts, but by God’s leading, and he knew it. After he came to Hebron, he would claim to the people of Israel, “God anointed me as king, so from now on I am your king.” If you were in David’s shoes, what would you do? Most likely, we may take action to improve ourselves as soon as possible and by any means. That is what we often see in many worldly leaders.

However, David didn’t follow the way that the world leaders often do. He wanted to follow God’s leading. He was king in Hebron over Judah for seven years and six months. (11) When he lived as God’s anointed king, God used David’s life to establish a united Israel kingdom. He became the shadow of the kingdom of the Messiah. And the Messiah would be called the Son of David. We recall that God had promised that through Jacob when he blessed his sons. To Judah, “The Scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his” (Gen 49:10). Through the tribe of Judah, God raised David to be the ruler. Through his descendants, Jesus came and God raised him as the king of kings forever.

God is with people who honor, trust, respect and obey him. In the case of leadership, don’t you think each one of you considers yourself a kind of king over somebody around you? You are, in some way, leaders in your communities. Then let us learn about the true kingship. David’s secret was to put God as his king with absolute trust and faith. He desired to obey God’s rule over his life and over all things. He asked God and God answered him. God led him and David followed. When God is our king, we can be a good leader. The key for success in one’s life is a genuine relationship with God who is the true Ruler of all. We need to know the way to come to the Ruler. Today David showed his example. He recognized God and came to God in prayer. He was ready to follow God’s direction. Can we put God as our true king over our own life, over our family, over the ministry and over wherever we are? In our life journey, we encounter many situations to make decision. In the case of choosing life-long spouse candidate, schools, careers, marriages and so on. Let’s come to God, seeking his leading moment by moment with our concerns and cares.

In next segment, David showed special attention to the people of Jabesh Gilead who honored Saul after his death. When David heard of the men of Jabesh Gilead, he sent messengers and said, “The Lord bless you for showing this kindness to Saul your master by burying him. May the Lord now show you kindness and faithfulness, and I too will show you the same favor because you have done this. Now then, be strong and brave, for Saul your master is dead and the people of Judah have anointed me king over them.”(5b-7) David’s concluding statement to the men of Jabesh Gilead was an invitation to recognize him as their king.

1. War Between the Two Houses (2:8-3:5)

Meanwhile, Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul’s army rose, taking Ish-Bosheth son of Saul to be the king over Israel at Mahanaim. Who is Abner? He was king Saul’s cousin and became an army commander during Saul’s reign and fought many battles. He had ambition and acted quickly after Saul’s death to take over the political arena. He reached all tribal leaders and made great moves, forming the nation Israel. Ish-Bosheth was forty years old when he became king and reigned two years. However, he seemed to have no actual power or support from the people. He was a puppet, being controlled by the army commander. The tribe of Judah remained loyal to David. David was king in Hebron. During this time, the nation Israel was divided in two: Israel and Judah. The house of Saul appeared strong and no match with one tribe of Judah in number and all resources.

One day, Abner with the men of Ish-Bosheth went to Gibeon. Joab, the army commander of Judah with David’s men met them. Abner proposed to Joab, “Let’s have some of the young men get up and fight hand to hand in front of us.” Probably, they were bored and wanted to play a game. Joab said, “All right, let them do it.” So they counted off twelve men from each side. However, this twelve pair duel game was disastrous. They fell down together, killing each other. After seeing this, entire armies rose and started to fight. The battle that day was a fierce battle. Verse 17b said, “Abner and the Israelites were defeated by David’s men.” The men of Judah didn’t give up pursuing the men of Israel until sundown.

In the course of the civil war, three sons of Zeruiah were named in this chapter. They were Joab, Abishai and Asahel. Zeruiah was David’s older sister and her three outstanding sons joined David. They were part of six hundred men while David was in the wilderness. Joab was a major important figure during David’s reign as a military leader. We will study about him in later chapters.

Abishai appeared in 1 Samuel 26. At that time, Saul, with three thousand selected troops and Abner as his army commander, came to the Desert of Ziph and searched for David. When he confirmed that Saul arrived, David had a plan to sneak into Saul’s camp during the night. Abishai volunteered, saying, “I will go with you.” David and Abishai went to the camp. Saul was lying asleep inside the camp. Abner and all soldiers were lying around him. Nobody knew David was there. Abishai said, “Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I won’t strike him twice.” David said, “the Lord himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die.---But the Lord forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let’s go.” David spared Saul’s life a second time. Abishai witnessed David’s attitude toward Saul that night.

Now Asahel was as fleet-footed as a wild gazelle. He was more swift and faster than anyone else. He determined to catch Israel’s commanding officer in the battle at Gibeon. He chased Abner, turning neither to the right nor to the left. He was in a straight line toward Abner. Abner warned him to stop chasing. But Asahel refused to give up. Unfortunately, Abner’s spear prevailed Asahel’s swift move. The end of Abner’s spear thrust into Asahel’s stomach and it came out through his back. He fell there and died on the spot. Every man stopped where Asahel had fallen, but Joab and Abishai pursued Abner until the sun was setting. At that time, the men of Benjamin rallied behind Abner and formed themselves into a group and took their stand on the top of a hill. The casualties from the battle were great. “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” (30b-31). Nearly 400 people lost their lives in one day of fighting. Abner proposed a cease-fire as a means of avoiding the awful consequences of the civil war. Joab accepted it. Asahel was buried in his father’s tomb at Bethlehem. Each side returned to their own territory overnight.

The civil war between Israel and Judah was a fight between rivals to gain power and strengthen their country. It is interesting to see how the battle turned out and how the Bible comments on two kingdoms recorded. “Abner and the Israelites were defeated by David’s men” (2:17b). “David grew stronger and stronger while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker” (3:1b). The transition of the kingdom from Saul’s leadership to David’s leadership was emphasized in this way. The Bible shows the important fact that God has worked in and through people, especially through the military figures in David’s case. We also see that David didn’t force himself to gain power, but followed God’s leading. God was fulfilling his promise. You may know what God had said to Saul through Samuel, “You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!” (1Sa 15:26) After this, God sent Samuel to Jesse’s family and anointed David (1Sa 16:13). When the time came, God moved the kingdom from Saul’s to David’s reign.

What was the difference between the house of Saul and the house of David? Why did Saul’s family become weaker and David’s family become stronger? It was obvious that the house of Saul took a king whom God abandoned, but the house of David took a king whom God had chosen. When we look at 1 Chronicles, while the war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time, mighty warriors gathered to David, but the house of Saul became less. It was because God was with David. God made David a stronger king. In the course of establishing David’s kingdom that God established, we learn the fundamental element of kingdom work. It is the internal battle between the flesh and the spirit. The world is founded on flesh based forces, which are full of corruption. Spirit based forces, on the other hand, carry holiness. Where we live shows this reality; we are in a fierce battle between flesh and spirit. They are against each other. The people and nations fight each other at all times to gain power and prosperity. These days, with the ease of technology and many voices all around us, people are very vulnerable to being influenced by others, often those without the basis of truth. Anyone can be a victim unless they are able to stand on the right foundation. We should be able to see the world more precisely and live in God’s truth. We can see the fruit of this life with God clearly contrasted to a life without God in the lives of Saul and of David. Saul belonged to flesh and corruption while David belonged to spirit and holiness. The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted many years. Eventually David’s kingdom won.

Through today’s passage, the transition of the kingdom from Saul to David teaches that God raised David’s kingdom. We learn godly characters through David’s life choices. First of all, David was with God in every affair and God led him step by step to the ultimate victory. We should also aim to live our lives out in this manner. May God help us to fight the spiritual battle based on the promises of God moment by moment and throughout our journey. The Spirit of truth and godly life may come into our lives and lead us. May we be ready to follow Him. Amen.