

## **David the Shepherd who became King Volume 7**

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### **Preface**

We come now to the closing years of David's life and the seventh Sound Words study booklet covering his 70 years on earth. The section of David's life covered begins with a sad episode which resulted in a considerable loss of life because of a sinful choice David made. Then as we see him by God's grace brought out of the pit he had fallen into, we see him putting the Lord first again, not only in his own life but also by his encouragement in the lives of the people of Israel as a whole. This leads to his very last days when he directed his son Solomon to put the Lord first in his own life. It is a wonderful and godly example that he sets before us and one which we all need to follow, to love God and to serve God with all our hearts.

As we work through these portions of the Bible we will inevitably see Christ again and again, because as we have said so often he was great David's Greater Son.

May God teach you as you read this book with your Bible open before you and as you prayerfully seek his help.

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June 2009

## **Chapter 1: David Counts His Fighting Men: 2 Samuel 24:1-17**

### **Introduction**

We come now to what is both a sad and an unusual incident in the life of David, and one where we need to take some care in how we understand it. The chapter deals with an incident when David took a census of all his fighting men, and the result of it was that 70,000 people died (v15). Truly a sad occasion indeed! This incident is particularly unusual because by comparing this chapter with its parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 21 we see that God, Satan and David are all involved in what took place. This is the reason why we must take great care in understanding the passage.

We shall consider first of all the apparent problem that arises because of the fact that God, Satan and David are involved in this.

## 1) The Anger of God, the Attack of Satan and the Sin of David, verse 1

To understand this we need to compare the opening verses of 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21.

*“Again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, ‘Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.’”* (2 Sam 24:1)

*“Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.”* (1 Chronicles 21:1)

We are told first of all that *‘Again the anger of God burned against Israel...’* The precise reason for God’s anger on this occasion is not given to us, but evidently Israel had done something that grieved God immensely. We do know that God is slow to anger and swift to bless, and this is recorded numerous times for us in Scripture. For example Psalm 103:8:

*“The Lord is compassionate and gracious; slow to anger, abounding in love.”*

We also know that God is just (e.g. see Psalm 33:5, 2 Thessalonians 1:6) so he never acts without a good reason. Therefore we have to conclude that the people of Israel had done something very provocative. Some have suggested this refers back to the rebellion under David’s son Absalom when they rejected David as God’s anointed king. This

would indeed be sufficient cause for the Lord’s anger and they certainly had not been punished for this previously. Others have suggested a serious period of backsliding may have been the cause because over its history Israel had done this on numerous occasions. However, we have to say we really do not know why God was angry with Israel, the passage simply does not tell us, and we have to accept that. And this leads us to another difficulty. How do we reconcile the fact that 2 Samuel 24 states that it was God who incited David to call for the census, whereas 1 Chronicles 21 states that Satan rose up against Israel and incited David? Added to that, how do we also reconcile the fact that God is not responsible for sin and is holy and pure and yet he incited David to do something which both he and later Joab and David himself considered as sinful?

We must say to start with that these are deep mysteries and we do not have all the answers. There are issues here beyond our full understanding and we simply have to trust that God is good and holy and sovereign. Having said that, there are some things we can say. The Bible nowhere teaches that God is responsible for our sinful behaviour, we are. But the Bible does show us on a number of occasions that God does use the sinfulness of man to accomplish his purposes without becoming sinful himself. There are numerous examples of this. For instance, Joseph in the book of Genesis was treated despicably by his brothers and sold as a slave into Egypt. Clearly they were responsible for that wicked act. But later, when they were reconciled to Joseph who was then in a position of great power in

Egypt, Joseph made a remarkable and helpful statement (Genesis 50:20):

*“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”*

The supreme example of God using the sinful actions of men to fulfil his purposes without him becoming guilty of sin himself is the crucifixion of Jesus. As we read the Gospels and see how wicked men treated Jesus with such injustice and cruelty we are left to no other conclusion than to say they were responsible. Indeed, Peter spells this out for us in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:23):

*“This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”*

In that worst of all sinful acts ever committed God was at work to accomplish the salvation of a vast number of lost sinners, but the people who called out for Jesus’ death were responsible. Well, we see the same thing here in the life of David. The full picture seems to be this. God was angry with Israel for their sinfulness and so he was going to justly punish them. To accomplish this God used both the sinful actions of David and the wickedness and malice of Satan to bring this about and yet in it all David was the one who was the guilty one. We have to say this is as far as we are

able to go, because these things are beyond our understanding. The Bible does not give us a full answer, and to us it will remain a mystery, and we must be content to leave it there. A Bible teacher of a former generation wrote this:

*“God is able to draw a straight line while using a crooked stick.”*

In other words, God is able to produce his wise and good purposes even though the instruments he may use to accomplish these are themselves corrupt and sinful, or crooked.

## **2) David’s census, verses 2-9**

### **a. David’s instruction to count his fighting men, verse 2**

*“So the king said to Joab and the army commanders with him, ‘Go throughout the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba and enrol the fighting men, so that I may know how many there are.’” (v2)*

On the face of it this seems a fairly harmless thing to do. After all, Moses had done something similar on at least two occasions without any censure by the Lord (see Exodus 30:11-16, Numbers 1:2ff & 26:1ff). But having said that, there are a number of things in this chapter which indicate it was far from innocent. First of all in verse 1 we are told that David was incited against Israel and Judah so this was

something which was going to harm them. Then as we shall see in verse 3 Joab tried to persuade the king against this course of action. But most of all is the testimony about David after he made this count in verse 10 where we are told he was ‘*conscience-stricken*’ and declared openly that he had ‘*sinned greatly*’. The question these raise for us to consider is why was this sinful?

Now again we need to be careful because the passage itself does not spell it out for us. Having said that, there are two suggestions which have been made which certainly fit the circumstances. Because David wanted to know how many fighting men he had, it has been suggested first David may have been acting out of pride and glorying in the greatness of his army. Scripture teaches us that God resists the proud (1 Peter 5:5; Proverbs 3:34). Linked with that, the second suggestion is that David was shifting his focus away from the Lord to protect him and the nation, and was relying more on the strength of his men. Again Scripture urges us to trust in the Lord and not in men (Proverbs 3:5-6, contrast with Psalm 147:10). So it may well be a combination of both of these things, pride and lack of trust, and possibly other reasons as well. Although the passage does not tell us exactly what his sin was, these suggestions seem to be the most likely reasons

### **b. Joab’s protest, verse 3**

As soon as David had issued his order to count his fighting men, Joab courageously urged David to reconsider his

actions. Clearly Joab knew that this was a sinful approach on David’s behalf (v3).

*“But Joab replied to the king, ‘May the Lord your God multiply the troops a hundred times over, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king want to do such a thing?’”*

We must say that Joab was remarkably courageous to take this stand against the king’s wishes, and it is all the more remarkable when we consider he was not a man renowned for his godly attitude. He certainly considered it as a sinful course of action. In addition the next verse links the rest of the army commanders with Joab in urging the king not to proceed in this sinful path. So David was being warned quite bluntly, and that made his behaviour even more guilty.

### **c. David’s persistence, verses 4-9**

In spite of Joab’s protest David persists in his sinful choice (v4):

*“The king’s word, however, overruled Joab and the army commanders; so they left the presence of the king to enrol the fighting men of Israel.”*

So David’s men carried out his orders, even though it was under much protest. They travelled far and wide and the task took over nine months in total, such was their

thoroughness (v5-8). Eventually Joab came back to David with the total (v9):

*“Joab reported the number of the fighting men to the king: in Israel there were eight hundred thousand able-bodied men who could handle a sword, and in Judah five hundred thousand.”*

Well over 1 million warriors made up the vast army at David’s disposal, and this is where the great danger lay. David was putting emphasis on numbers of people. Over the centuries numbers have been a huge snare to God’s people. Men have falsely assumed that greater numbers indicate greater blessing, but such thinking can be so wrong at times. Quantity not quality has become the measure of success. In modern Church life it is very easy to slip from that error into thinking we have so many people we do not need to evangelise any more. A kind of spiritual lethargy can so easily come over God’s people when their church grows. We must always remember that the test of spiritual fruit is not the number of people but their godliness, their Christ likeness. We always need to check ourselves and proceed cautiously when we enquire about how a work of God is proceeding. I say this because it is right for us to look for the Lord’s blessing and to pray for it. Surely we all want more people to become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is good. **BUT** we need to take great care that we do not become proud if we have many attending our Church, and casually fall into thinking all is well for many years to come because of such

increase. There are numerous examples of how this can so easily happen. One Church had considerable growth in its membership and so the building was altered to take the larger congregations. However, sadly within less than twenty years that Church closed for several months because there were not enough people to keep it going! While it is good to see the Lord at work in many lives, we must never rest on those numbers nor be sinfully proud over them, but always walk humbly before the Lord and trust only in him. And if your Church has a very small membership then how good it is to remember that Jesus promised even when only two or three meet in his name he is there in the midst (Matthew 18:20).

### **3) David’s response, verse 10**

No sooner had David’s desire been fulfilled and he was told the number of his fighting men that he came under a crushing conviction of his sinfulness (v10):

*“David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the Lord, ‘I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, O Lord, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing.’”*

For over nine months while the census was being conducted David had lived without any sense of the wrongfulness of his actions. The protest of his army commanders had no effect on him at all. Indeed, the

passing of time may have even lulled him into a false sense of security that all was well. But the moment he was told the number of men he was *'conscience-stricken'*. The enormity of his guilt came crushing down on him and he was devastated. He was suddenly aware not only that he had sinned, but that he had sinned greatly, and his response was that of a man who had been humbled under the mighty hand of God. He took full responsibility and openly confessed his guilt before God. He turned to the Lord and pleaded for mercy asking God to take away his guilt. If it had been pride which had governed him prior to the counting, it was humility which crushed him afterwards. His own assessment of his behaviour was that it had been foolish in the extreme, and David does not blame anyone else but himself.

*"I have done a very foolish thing."*

This was obviously a painful time for David, but he had only himself to blame. He had been warned, but ignored that, and now his heart was stricken with guilt. This reminds us of Paul's words (1 Corinthians 7:12):

*"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"*

How we need to guard our hearts and to watch diligently lest we fall into temptation. Here David knew he had dishonoured God, and was truly repentant before him, so he turned to him for mercy.

#### **4) God sends Gad to David, verses 11-14**

The next morning before David awoke; the Lord spoke to the prophet Gad about the situation and instructed him to take God's message to the king. In complete obedience Gad went and declared God's message which was both extremely hard to tell and just as hard to receive (v11-12):

*"Before David got up the next morning, the word of the Lord had come to Gad the prophet, David's seer: 'Go and tell David, "This is what the Lord says: I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you."'"*

Gad was a most faithful servant of the Lord who feared God far more than he feared the king. He had to tell David that God was going to bring punishment and chastisement because of his and Israel's sinfulness and he gave David three choices (v13):

*"So Gad went to David and said to him, 'Shall there come upon you three years of famine in your land? Or three months of fleeing from your enemies while they pursue you? Or three days of plague in your land? Now then, think it over and decide how I should answer the one who sent me.'"*

Each of the three things indicate that the sin God was going to punish was very serious indeed. It must have shaken David to the very core to hear these words. What is

significant is there is no protest from David, no excusing himself, no accusing God of being unfair or unjust, but a simple submission and commitment into the hands of God (v14):

*“David said to Gad, ‘I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men.’”*

David’s guilt and its solemn consequences brought him into considerable distress. David was learning something we can so easily forget and so often do forget that sin in the lives of God’s children is very serious indeed. Sin is far, far worse than most of us ever appreciate. The one thing that should teach us this above all else is that it took the death of Christ at Calvary to deal with it, that is how bad sin always is. And as David considered these three options he placed himself and his people into the hands of God, who even in his wrath remembers mercy. The great lesson we are being taught here is that all our actions have consequences and that we are responsible for what we do, and that applies to believers as well as unbelievers! An essential part of being truly repentant is the willingness to bear the penalty which our sinful actions have earned. We are also reminded here that being truly repentant for our sin does not earn us exemption from all discipline. Hebrews 12 teaches us those the Lord loves he also disciplines. And we must also remember that the whole purpose of God’s discipline and chastisement is that we might share in his holiness (Hebrews 12:10). It is designed ultimately to

strengthen us so that we will produce a harvest of righteousness. We are also solemnly reminded that if this is the judgement that fell upon believers, what will it be like at the last day when God’s judgement falls on unbelievers? Peter takes this up in his first epistle (1 Peter 4:17):

*“For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”*

How that should drive us to fervent prayer for the lost and compel us to take every opportunity to bring the gospel of Christ to our needy world.

### **5) The chastisement that came, verses 15-17**

The Lord who in verse one had been angry with Israel and now was also displeased with David sent a terrifying plague on the land. It lasted for the three days promised and we read 70,000 people died as a result. People from Dan to Beersheba were affected and many homes would have been in deep distress. The angel who had been God’s instrument of death then turned to Jerusalem, but the Lord intervened (v16):

*“When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, “Enough! Withdraw your hand.” The angel of*

*the Lord was then at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.”*

As mentioned previously, in wrath God remembered mercy and stopped the angel from taking any more lives. He had compassion on his people. The Bible commentator Gordon Keddie has written:

*“Pride in numbers and self-generated glory would be answered with proof of God’s sovereignty, the nation’s helplessness before him and a reduction in their much vaunted statistics through the visitation of death.”*

David’s response to it all was that he was distraught, and he took the guilt of the entire situation to himself (v17):

*“When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the Lord, ‘I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall upon me and my family.’”*

He blamed himself for everything and pleaded with God for mercy on the rest of the people whom he lovingly calls ‘sheep’. They were of course the Lord’s sheep and he was their Shepherd. But also, under God, David as their king was also their shepherd and David was grief stricken at the thought that they should suffer for his sins. He makes much of his own sins and little of theirs when he cries for God to punish him and his family. In this we see an echo

of the Lord Jesus Christ the great Shepherd of his sheep who did lay down his life for us on the cross that we his wayward sheep might be spared. David’s response was that of one who had godly sorrow – the kind of sorrow that characterises true repentance. But we do need to say that although David was guilty and responsible he was not the only one who was guilty. This chapter began with the statement that the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, so they were also guilty of sin against the Lord.

To modern thinking this loss of 70,000 lives might appear to have been too severe, but we must always remember that in many ways this was a mercy from God. Had God ignored their sinfulness and let them continue in that course of action, then the ultimate loss of life would have been much greater as his judgement would have been much more stringent. The Lord did this to bring the people back to himself and to revive their devotion to him.

## **Chapter 2: David Builds An Altar: 2 Samuel 24:18-25**

### **Introduction**

We come now to the closing verses of 2 Samuel 24. The earlier part of the chapter recorded David’s and the people of Israel’s sinfulness, emphasising David’s guilt in ordering a census to be made of all his fighting men. We saw that not only was David convicted of his sin and humbled before the mighty hand of God, but also that he

and the people had to endure the Lord's chastisement. There were three days during which the angel of the Lord went through the land and 70,000 people died as a result. Just as the angel was about to strike Jerusalem the Lord intervened and stopped him (v16):

*“When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, ‘Enough! Withdraw your hand.’ The angel of the Lord was then at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.”*

The next verse tells us that David saw the angel of the Lord at that threshing floor. The remaining verses of 2 Samuel deal with David's purchase of that threshing floor and the building of an altar and his sacrificing to God there. The whole theme of these verses is the need for atonement to be made for sin, and we shall see that as we work through them.

### **1) The Prophet Gad delivers God's message, verse 18**

We met Gad in the earlier verses of this chapter when the message the Lord gave him to deliver was one of judgement, which was a far from easy task to be called to do, but Gad faithfully delivered it. The message in this section was much more positive and again Gad faithfully delivered it.

Before going any further we need to pause at this point and reflect on Gad's diligence in his service for the Lord. Whatever God told him to say he delivered. He did not change the message. He did not add to or subtract from the message. Even when it was hard he remained true to the Lord. And his conduct makes him a real challenge to us today. We are often called by God to share the message of the gospel of Christ with others, and when we do so we must be faithful to speak of all that God has revealed to us in holy Scriptures. That means we will speak of the easy parts of the gospel and the difficult parts also. We will need to tell others about sin and judgement and righteousness, as well as about repentance, faith and forgiveness. We will need to remind them both of heaven and of hell, because both are part of God's Word. We will need to speak of redemption and its cost to Christ through his death on the cross, and we will need to speak of repentance and how sinners need to confess their guilt to God and turn from their sinful ways to him. If we are to be faithful then this is what is required of us. Now we may feel quite nervous about that, but it is through the message of the gospel that God has chosen to save those who believe, so we must be careful to tell all of God's Word.

Returning to Gad his task this time was quite simple. The Lord told him to tell David that he was to go and build an altar at the very place where he had seen the angel standing, the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (v18). This message indicated that God was granting his forgiving and healing mercy and was reconciling his wayward people

to himself once more. The Lord was ready to accept the worship of his people again.

**Lesson:** If there is one thing that makes us unacceptable to God it is when we harbour unconfessed and unrepented sin in our hearts

## 2) David's responses, verses 19-25

### a. His first response, verse 19

Unlike his disobedient response to his army commander Joab earlier in the chapter when he urged him not to take the census of his fighting men, this time David obeyed. He knew he had been guilty of great sin against God and felt responsible for the deaths of so many in Israel. He had learned the lesson well, and he immediately did as the Lord had instructed (v19):

*“So David went up, as the Lord had commanded through Gad.”*

Again this is a lovely and positive response. There was no hesitation, nor excusing himself, nor delaying the matter. There was simple obedience. David was completely submissive to the Lord's Word, and that is a mark of the true child of God. True believers want to please the God who has loved them so much. Indeed, Jesus said just that to his disciples (John 14:15):

*“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”*

It was disobedience and obstinacy that brought the trouble David and the people had been made to endure. Simple obedience marks out those who walk in the ways of God (Psalm 1:1-2):

*“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”*

In order to obey the Lord we must know what he requires of us and this is discovered in his Word to us, the Bible. Therefore we must give time to reading it and understanding it and accepting it and praying over it and applying it to our own lives. We will do this when alone each day with the Lord, when we meet with other Christians to hear God's Word taught, and we will do so when we discuss God's Word with our fellow believers. Like David, we must submit to the authority of the Word of God, because when we do we show that we truly do love God. The question is, are you doing that now? Or are there areas where you know you are not doing what God wants from you? David had learned by his mistake and it is recorded for us here so that we can learn from him.

### b. His second response, verses 20-21

When he arrived at the threshing floor which belonged to Araunah the Jebusite he was greeted with great respect (v20):

*“When Araunah looked and saw the king and his men coming towards him, he went out and bowed down before the king with his face to the ground.”*

This was the normal way of greeting those in high position and must not be misunderstood as worshipping David. Araunah was simply showing David the honour due to his position as the respected and well loved king of all Israel. Araunah then enquired of David why he had come, and David told him the reason. (v21):

*“Araunah said, ‘Why has my lord the king come to his servant?’ ‘To buy your threshing-floor,’ David answered, ‘so that I can build an altar to the Lord, that the plague on the people may be stopped.’”*

Again David responded in obedience to the Lord as he told Araunah his purpose. In order to build the altar to the Lord he needed to purchase the ground. It is worth noting that David did not come and misappropriate the threshing floor simply because he was the king. Sadly all over the world and in almost every age rulers have done such underhanded things and taken what was not rightly theirs and for this they will all have to answer to the Lord. But David was not going to follow that approach; he was going to pay the price for the threshing floor. David also told Araunah why he was doing this, so that the plague could be stopped. David knew the cause of the plague which had already taken 70,000 lives was sin, and this needed to be atoned for through sacrifice. As we read in Hebrews 9:22:

*“...without shedding of blood is no remission.”*

### **c. His third response, verses 22-25**

Araunah made a most generous offer to the king (v22-23):

*“Araunah said to David, ‘Let my lord the king take whatever pleases him and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing-sledges and ox yokes for the wood. O king, Araunah gives all this to the king.’ Araunah also said to him, ‘May the Lord your God accept you.’”*

This was quite remarkable kindness, but we must also say it was a subtle temptation for David even if Araunah had not realised it was so. It was offering David atonement on the cheap! In fact atonement that cost him absolutely nothing. It also meant that had he accepted Araunah’s offer, he was in fact disobeying what God had told him to do. But David recognised what his responsibility was and so he responded accordingly (v24):

*“But the king replied to Araunah, ‘No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.’ So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.”*

In humble thankfulness to God David was not going to worship him at anyone else’s expense but his own. He was not going to offer to God the dregs of his life but his best.

The Lord deserves nothing less from any of us and this includes our talents, our possessions, our time, our prayers and in short, our lives. We who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ owe God everything; therefore let us sacrifice to him out of deep gratitude our praise and everything else. May all that we are and all that we have be dedicated to the Lord and his service (see Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 13:15).

We need to remember that this site was also to be the place for the temple which Solomon eventually built, also known as Mount Moriah (see 1 Chronicles 22:1 & 2 Chronicles 3:1). Therefore for the honour of the Lord it was land that had belonged to his people and not that which was taken from another.

Returning to David, he then built the altar and offered the sacrifices on it and the Lord responded in wonderful mercy (v25)

*“David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the Lord answered prayer on behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.”*

God’s wrath needed to be propitiated and these sacrifices did just that or else God’s anger would have broken out again. And the plague was stopped. God in mercy restrained his wrath in verse 16 when he spoke to the angel, and God in his mercy provided the way for the removal of

his wrath through the atoning sacrifice which David offered (v25). David’s sacrifice, as with all those offered during the Old Testament period, were types of the one great perfect sacrifice for sin of the Lord Jesus Christ. All those sacrifices pointed to him, because it is by his sacrifice alone that God’s holy wrath is satisfied, and the plague of sin is stopped in its tracks and is cleansed away by his precious blood. In Christ God provided the altar, the cross of Calvary. In Christ God provided the sacrifice, Jesus himself, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In Christ he provided full atonement as his wrath was poured on Jesus in full and his life was given for his people’s sin. As the prophet Micah has so helpfully explained it (Micah 7:18):

*“Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry for ever but delight to show mercy.”*

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## **Chapter 3: David Appoints His Successor: 1 Kings 1:1-53**

### **Introduction**

We come now to the closing days of David’s life. He was old and frail and did not have long to live. This mighty warrior king who had accomplished so much for the Lord and his people, was now suffering from the effects of age

and its corresponding weaknesses. While we will see in this passage that he is still loved very much by those around him, we will also see that someone saw his frailty as an opportunity to try and usurp his power. However, the Lord overruled and cared for his aged servant and helped him to appoint the right successor to his throne.

### 1) A kindness for their elderly King, verses 1-4

By looking back to 2 Samuel 5:4 we discover that David was aged 70 when he died, so we are in the time immediately before then. There is a lovely scene presented to us as this chapter begins which shows the great love and respect the people had for him. First we are shown his considerable frailty (v1):

*“When King David was old and well advanced in years, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him.”*

This is a graphic description of the effect advancing years can have on the human body. When we remember how David had exerted himself physically in the cause of God over many years it is not surprising to see him now running out of energy and reduced, compared with the man he used to be. It may be he was suffering from a mild form of hypothermia to which the elderly frequently succumb. The usual means of keeping someone warm were obviously ineffective. Therefore his servants thought of a solution, which perhaps to our thinking was a little unusual, but we

need to remember this was done out of great love and respect for their aging king (v2):

*“So his servants said to him, ‘Let us look for a young virgin to attend the king and take care of him. She can lie beside him so that our lord the king may keep warm.’”*

There were none of the modern means of helping someone keep warm such as a hot water bottle or an electric blanket to plug in, so the chosen woman would supply warmth for David. We need to be quite clear that there was no immorality intended here and that is specifically stated in the details about the lady they chose for this task of helping the king (v3-4):

*“Then they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful girl and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. The girl was very beautiful; she took care of the king and waited on him, but the king had no intimate relations with her.”*

Shunem was situated near the plain of Jezreel in the tribal territory of Issachar (Joshua 19:18). There was a loving tenderness in the heart of David’s servants which helps us to see how much they respected him, even in old age. This is something we need to encourage in younger people, that they have a due regard for those who have served the Lord well and have reached advancing years. In many parts of

our world the elderly are often neglected, and that should never be so amongst the Lord's people.

## 2) A usurper to Israel's throne, verses 5-10

As David was now old and frail Israel would soon need a new king. We need to remember that up to this time the eldest child of a king in Israel was not automatically chosen as his successor to the throne. Reading from later verses in the chapter it is clear that David had already declared that Solomon was to succeed him and no one else (see v11ff). It seems that this had not been made known to the nation at large, but certainly David's household was aware of the matter. Further, when David was making preparations to build a temple for the Lord earlier, the Lord had declared to him that Solomon would succeed him as king (see 1 Chronicles 22:9). Therefore the event we are now about to consider was a complete contradiction and disregard for David's promise and God's purpose, and therefore was an act of wickedness. Adonijah, David's fourth son (2 Samuel 3:4), and who was probably David's oldest surviving son decided unilaterally that he would take the throne for himself (v5).

*“Now Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, put himself forward and said, ‘I will be king.’ So he got chariots and horses ready, with fifty men to run ahead of him.”*

Disregarding his father's express wishes and completely neglecting God's will and purpose, for he was not

consulted at all, Adonijah out of selfish ambition with the sole purpose of furthering himself promoted himself as the next king. He acted just like his older brother Absalom had done (2 Samuel 15:1) and had 50 men run ahead of him. How slow he was to learn from his brother's mistaken attempt to gain the throne.

We are then given a little biographical note which in part helps us to see why Adonijah considered he was a law unto himself (v6):

*“(His father had never interfered with him by asking, ‘Why do you behave as you do?’ He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom.)”*

David had obviously failed in disciplining his children as well as he should have done and so his son thought he could do whatever he pleased. This is a lesson for all fathers to take their responsibilities of showing all their children loving discipline, checking them when they have erred, encouraging them when they have been right. Failure to instil discipline into the heart of a child will only reap a disastrous harvest later in their lives. The book of Proverbs gives some very helpful advice here (Proverbs 22:6):

*“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”*

But sadly in David's case he seems to have neglected this area of his life, and that is a reminder to us that even the most prominent of God's servants are imperfect, and our trust is not to be in them but in the Lord.

Going back to Adonijah we are told he was a handsome man, something which was true of their first king Saul. And often people are beguiled by the outward appearance when what really matters is what is in the heart. The other thing we note is that Adonijah managed to get the support of Joab and of Abiathar one of the priests (v7):

*“Adonijah conferred with Joab son of Zeruah and with Abiathar the priest and they gave him their support.”*

Joab was a very mixed up character and may well have been seeking to secure his future rather than doing what was the right thing to do. That he was a leader in the army was most probably the reason why Adonijah approached him, rather than because of his good qualities. Why Abiathar sided with him is difficult to see, and one would expect that he would have at the very least sought the Lord's guidance over the matter, but there is complete silence. But we are also told of another group of significant men in the cause of God who did not side with Adonijah (v8):

*“But Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei and Rei and David's special guard did not join Adonijah.”*

These were known as godly men and faithful servants of both the Lord and David, and their absence speaks volumes that Adonijah knew he was acting improperly. Then he sacrificed sheep and calves just south of Jerusalem near the spring of Rogel, and invited his brothers and other royal officials to share in the occasions. Again we are told of some significant absentees (v10):

*“but he did not invite Nathan the prophet or Benaiah or the special guard or his brother Solomon.”*

Nathan was God's prophet, Benaiah was one of the best of David's mighty men, and Solomon was Adonijah's brother, the one David had said was to succeed him. These men are a real encouragement in what was a very dangerous situation for the elderly David. When others were being led astray they remained faithful to God and their king, and we need men of similar calibre in the Church of Christ today. Men who remain loyal to the Saviour, who will proclaim his Word fearlessly, and who will not give in to those who want to change the gospel message or the teaching of the Bible. Adonijah's conduct was despicable and would not be honoured by the Lord, as we shall see. But how his bad example challenges us to ensure we are not simply following our own selfish

ambitions, but instead are humbly accepting and furthering the Lord's will.

### 3) Nathan's intervention, verses 11-27

Whenever someone usurps power like Adonijah did, then lives are at great risk. By that we mean those who were not on his side, in particular here, the life of Solomon. Nathan the prophet realised the issues at stake and took action to prevent the situation deteriorating. First he approached Solomon's mother Bathsheba to see if she was aware of the developments, and he gave her his wise advice for he could see the dangers (v11-14):

*“Then Nathan asked Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, ‘Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith, has become king without our lord David's knowing it? Now then, let me advise you how you can save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. Go in to King David and say to him, “My lord the king, did you not swear to me your servant: ‘Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne’? Why then has Adonijah become king?” While you are still there talking to the king, I will come in and confirm what you have said.’”*

This was done, and done in a most gracious way. David was told of Adonijah's scheme and the great danger this posed to Solomon and Bathsheba once David had died (v15-19):

*“So Bathsheba went to see the aged king in his room, where Abishag the Shunammite was attending him. Bathsheba bowed low and knelt before the king. ‘What is it you want?’ the king asked. She said to him, ‘My lord, you yourself swore to me your servant by the Lord your God: “Solomon your son shall become king after me, and he will sit on my throne.” But now Adonijah has become king, and you, my lord the king, do not know about it. He has sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep, and has invited all the king's sons, Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of the army, but he has not invited Solomon your servant.’”*

Then she pleaded for David to intervene and her intercession is most moving (v20-21)

*“My lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to learn from you who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. Otherwise, as soon as my lord the king is laid to rest with his fathers, I and my son Solomon will be treated as criminals.”*

It was a simple straightforward request that came straight to the point seeking the king's intervention. Then, just as promised, Nathan the prophet arrived and David was informed of his presence. Nathan acted with great respect and humility by bowing his face to the ground before David. With great wisdom and tact Nathan asked the king

if he had sanctioned Adonijah's enthronement, telling him all that had happened (v24-27):

*“Nathan said, ‘Have you, my lord the king, declared that Adonijah shall be king after you, and that he will sit on your throne? Today he has gone down and sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep. He has invited all the king’s sons, the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest. At this very moment they are eating and drinking with him and saying, “Long live King Adonijah!” But me your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon he did not invite. Is this something my lord the king has done without letting his servants know who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?’”*

Nathan's approach helped David see the treachery that Adonijah was guilty of, for David had not sanctioned his actions and had not broken his promise regarding Solomon.

#### **4) Solomon anointed King, verses 28-53**

As old and frail as he was, David realised immediately the danger of the situation and the treason that was being committed by Adonijah. He took action immediately, his mind being as sharp as it had ever been. Solomon's mother Bathsheba was called to him and he promised on oath that Solomon would be his successor (v29-30):

*“Then King David said, ‘Call in Bathsheba.’ So she came into the king’s presence and stood before him. The king then took an oath: ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, I will surely carry out today what I swore to you by the Lord, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place.’”*

David could see the cause of God was at stake here and he needed to act swiftly to stop the rebellion. We are told in verse 31 that in gratitude and with deep respect Bathsheba bowed to the ground while kneeling before David and her words emphasised this:

*“May my Lord the king live for ever.”*

This was the typical language of royal courts during Biblical days. David realised however that making the promise on oath as he had done was not sufficient. Time was of the essence and he had to act immediately and Solomon had to be installed to the throne (v32-35):

*“King David said, ‘Call in Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah son of Jehoiada.’ When they came before the king, he said to them: ‘Take your lord’s servants with you and set Solomon my son on my own mule and take him down to Gihon. There shall Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, “Long live King Solomon!” Then you are to go up with him,*

*and he is to come and sit on my throne and reign in my place. I have appointed him ruler over Israel and Judah.’”*

David’s instructions were very explicit and there was an urgency in his words because the cause of God was under great threat. The response to this instruction by Benaiah was truly noteworthy (v36-37):

*“Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king, ‘Amen! May the Lord, the God of my lord the king, so declare it. As the Lord was with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon to make his throne even greater than the throne of my lord King David!’”*

Although he was a mighty warrior, one of David’s best fighting men, he was also a man of great spiritual depth and could not help but express his desire for the Lord’s work through Solomon to prosper. We must say this took considerable courage to utter these words, but they must have greatly gladdened David’s heart. Without any delay, Zadok, Nathan and Benaiah obeyed the king’s instructions, and many others joined them also (v38-40):

*“So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerethites and the Pelethites went down and put Solomon on King David’s mule and escorted him to Gihon. Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted,*

*‘Long live King Solomon!’ And all the people went up after him, playing flutes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound.”*

It was a resounding celebration and soon the sound reached the ears of those who were celebrating with Adonijah as they were finishing their feast, and Joab asked what the meaning of all the noise was. Even as he was speaking Jonathan the son of Abiathar, the priest who had wrongly anointed Adonijah, arrived and Adonijah spoke with him (v41-47):

*“Adonijah said, ‘Come in. A worthy man like you must be bringing good news.’ ‘Not at all!’ Jonathan answered. ‘Our lord King David has made Solomon king. The king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerethites and the Pelethites, and they have put him on the king’s mule, and Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon. From there they have gone up cheering, and the city resounds with it. That’s the noise you hear. Moreover, Solomon has taken his seat on the royal throne. Also, the royal officials have come to congratulate our lord King David, saying, “May your God make Solomon’s name more famous than yours and his throne greater than yours!”’”*

In no uncertain terms Adonijah was informed that his illicit behaviour was not going to succeed, and that there were

many more with David and Solomon than were with him. The most important thing of all that Abiathar reported was how David himself had responded to these events (v47-48):

*“And the king bowed in worship on his bed and said, ‘Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has allowed my eyes to see a successor on my throne today.’”*

In Solomon’s enthronement David saw the fulfilment of the Lord’s promise made years earlier in 2 Samuel 7:12 & 16:

*“When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom...Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.”*

Adonijah’s supporters fled in panic, while he fled to the altar of God and took hold of its horns (v50-51):

*“But Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, went and took hold of the horns of the altar. Then Solomon was told, ‘Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon and is clinging to the horns of the altar. He says, “Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.”’”*

In fear of his life he fled to the altar and sought its protection (Exodus 21:13-14 give the background) placing his whole future under the protection of God. Solomon pronounced wise counsel (v52):

*“Solomon replied, ‘If he shows himself to be a worthy man, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground; but if evil is found in him, he will die.’”*

Solomon then sent men to fetch Adonijah and sent him home.

**Lesson:** The great purpose of God which seemed so under threat by an over ambitious and sidelined son proved as it always does to be an irresistible cause. Oh that all men would grasp and understand that all their rebellion against God and against Jesus and against his people will not be able to succeed, and any appearance to the contrary is only temporary. Jesus has said he will build his church, and no one, however influential or popular, will be able to overturn his sovereign purposes. Therefore how good to be able to say as Paul does in Romans 8, that *“if God is for us who can be against us?”* To belong to the Lord is to be on the victory side, whatever others may say or think or do.

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## **Chapter 4: David Secures The Future Worship Of God: 1 Chronicles 22ff**

### **Introduction**

We turn now to some chapters in 1 Chronicles which give us details not included in 2 Samuel or 1 Kings. They concern David's provision and instructions that would ensure the building of the temple was undertaken and that the worship of the Lord was secured.

### 1) David's gifts, 1 Chronicles 22:1-5

David was conscious of two things. First, that he was prohibited from building the temple himself by the Lord and it was a task Solomon was to undertake. Second, his own life was rapidly coming to its conclusion so his time on earth was fast running out. Instead of complaining that he was not going to be allowed to build the temple for God, and instead of simply wasting the last days he had left on earth, he did all he could to secure the worship of God. It is summarised by a comment in 1 Chronicles 22:5:

*“So David made extensive preparations before his death.”*

Though the honour and privilege of building the temple for the Lord was not given to him, he would do all in his power to help the one who did have this great task entrusted to him, namely Solomon. David was very aware of Solomon's youth and inexperience (1 Chronicles 22:5):

*“David said, ‘My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house to be built for the Lord should be of great magnificence and fame and*

*splendour in the sight of all the nations. Therefore I will make preparations for it.’”*

Instead of harbouring a grudge in his heart against the Lord, he sought to do all he could to help his son. 1 Chronicles 22 details for us that he appointed a large number of stone cutters and skilled craftsmen to prepare the materials for the structure. Indeed, he also gave such huge amounts of cedar wood, iron and nails and bronze and gold that it could not be counted (see v2-4 & v14-15). David gave with enormous generosity.

### 2) David's instruction to Solomon, 1 Chronicles 22:6-16

Then he gave careful instruction to Solomon on whose shoulders the responsibility for this great task was placed. His words are the words of a spiritually minded servant of God, because they concentrate on the honour and glory of the Lord. He began by reminding Solomon of the past and took him back to 2 Samuel 7 and his words are found in 1 Chronicles 22:6-10:

*“Then he called for his son Solomon and charged him to build a house for the Lord, the God of Israel. David said to Solomon: ‘My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the Lord my God. But this word of the Lord came to me: “You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. But you will have a son*

*who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign. He is the one who will build a house for my Name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.”””*

He carefully told Solomon all that God expected of him, of how he had been chosen by the Lord to engage in this huge task which was for the praise and glory of God. He showed Solomon what God had said about the matter to encourage him. Then he commended him to the Lord (1 Chronicles 22:11-13):

*“Now, my son, the Lord be with you, and may you have success and build the house of the Lord your God, as he said you would. May the Lord give you discretion and understanding when he puts you in command over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the Lord your God. Then you will have success if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the Lord gave to Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged.”*

Although this instruction was specifically applicable to Solomon’s own faithfulness to the Lord in building the temple and his reign, it is very similar to Paul’s instructions to Christian parents and their children in Ephesians 6:4:

*“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; **instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.**”*

David urged Solomon to follow the Lord with all his heart, by obeying his Word, the reason being that David knew the Lord always honours those who honour him, and he longed for Solomon to know the Lord’s blessing on his life.

### **3) David’s instruction to the Israelite leaders, verses 17-19**

Then David rounded his words off with a strong challenge (1 Chronicles 22:16):

*“Now begin the work, and the Lord be with you.”*

What a godly influence David was on his son! But he did not stop there, for he urged all the leaders of Israel to do likewise and help Solomon in this task (1 Chronicles 22:17-19):

*“Then David ordered all the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon. He said to them, ‘Is not the Lord your God with you? And has he not granted you rest on every side? For he has handed the inhabitants of the land over to me, and the land is subject to the Lord and to his people. Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the Lord your God. Begin to build the sanctuary of the Lord God, so that you may bring the*

*ark of the covenant of the Lord and the sacred articles belonging to God into the temple that will be built for the Name of the Lord.’”*

David knew that they were to put the Lord first: to ‘...devote their heart and soul to seeking the Lord your God...’ They were to love God more than anyone else. They were to serve God with delight and diligence. They were to obey God with care and gladness. They were to be thoroughly committed to honouring the Lord in their lives. They were never to allow anything to substitute the Lord’s place at the centre of their lives and nation. They were to engage with all their energy in furthering the cause of God in the land.

#### **4) David’s instructions to those serving in the Temple, 1 Chronicles 23 - 29**

The next group of chapters in 2 Chronicles show us how with great care David left instruction for those who would be responsible for the Temple and its worship when it was completed. There are instructions for the Levites, the priests, those responsible for the singing, and even those who kept the gates to the temple. There were a vast number of people employed in the day to day running of the worship of God, and what is clear is that this was to be done decently and in order because the Lord is holy and to be honoured. This is only a summary of the instructions David left and you must read the details for yourself, but he

wanted all that took place in the temple to be to the praise and honour of the Lord.

We do not have a temple any more nor do we need such a building. The Individual Christian believer is now the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20):

*“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honour God with your body.”*

And collectively when we meet together to worship God in our Church, that company of people is also described in the New Testament as the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17):

*“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.”*

The significance of this in this context is that we are to be a people who are careful in our worship of God when on our own with the Lord, and particularly when we meet together to praise him. This should be done thoughtfully and reverently and with holy joy and a sense of the awe and majesty and the wonder and mercy of our God as revealed to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. It should be our delight to meet together to magnify the name of the Lord, by praising

him accordingly, by praying to him earnestly, and by listening to his Word the Bible with eagerness and submission.

Again David summoned all the officials in Israel and Solomon to assemble in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 28 & 29) giving them all further instruction to serve the Lord faithfully. He reminded them of God's promises to bless them as a people, and then he challenged them again (1 Chronicles 28:8-10):

*“So now I charge you in the sight of all Israel and of the assembly of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God: Be careful to follow all the commands of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land and pass it on as an inheritance to your descendants for ever. And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you for ever. Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a temple as a sanctuary. Be strong and do the work.”*

David could not have given them any better instruction, and what a marvellous end we see to his life. He was as fervent for the cause of God at the end as he had been at the beginning. This godly king, who like us was far from

perfect, had learned through his life that God should be loved and adored and served every single moment. These are among the closing words of his life and what a godly way to end his earthly pilgrimage by urging others to serve the Lord. How wonderful it would be if we could all do something similar as our days on earth draw to a close. The difficulty for us is that we do not know when our days may end, so we need to be doing this all the time, directing men and women to Christ. The hymn writer Charles Wesley put it like this in his lovely hymn ‘Jesus! the name high over all’:

*Happy, if with my latest breath  
I might but gasp his name;  
preach him to all, and cry in death:  
behold, behold the Lamb.*

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## **Chapter 5: David's Very Last Days. : 1 Kings 2:1-11 & 1 Chronicles 29:26-28**

### **Introduction**

We have in these verses a description of David's very last words, and this probably took place on the very day he died. Conscious his end was near David gave a number of careful instructions to his son Solomon who had been crowned as his successor as king of Israel (v1):

*“When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son.”*

We will consider this charge in two parts.

### **1) Concerning Solomon’s own walk with God, verses 2-4**

David’s opening words tell of the sad effect of sin on human life (v2a):

*“I am about to go the way of all the earth...”*

Ever since sin entered the world through Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, death has come upon the entire human race. But David’s mention of it teaches us something of his wisdom. He did not pretend that death would never come to him, but faced it honestly, and we must also say, with great calm. Millions of people fall into the trap and never prepare for death. They think they are going to live for ever, but the Bible is clear that it is appointed unto man once to die (Hebrews 9:27), so being prepared for death is vital. For David that matter had been settled many years earlier when he first came to trust in the Lord for his mercy and saving grace. Therefore as a child of God he could talk about his own death with calm and confidence, and as a result was able to give Solomon some very wise instruction. It is important to remind ourselves that the Bible makes it very clear that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised to life again on the

third day (see 1 Corinthians 15:3-5). He has conquered death for all who turn to him for forgiveness and salvation. David could only look forward to Christ’s coming and even then with limited appreciation, but Peter on the day of Pentecost declared that David foretold the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:23-36):

*“This man (i.e. Jesus) was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him: ‘I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’ Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has*

*poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."' Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

Returning to 1 Kings 2, David, realising his time was short, used it as wisely as he could by addressing his son Solomon with great earnestness. David had learned the importance of a consistent life of faithfulness and dedication to God, and he wanted Solomon to take this on board in his own life. David also knew that there would be many pressures that would try to divert him from this godly way of life so he addressed the issue accordingly. He urged Solomon to be a man of spiritual courage (v2-3):

*"So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires..."*

These words clearly contradict the claim that unbelievers make at times that it is only the weak who see the need to follow God. To obey God consistently takes great strength of character. David was aware that our own selfish hearts will sometimes try to get us to forsake the Lord, and that takes strength to resist and overcome. David also knew there is much pressure from the unbelieving world we live in that constantly tries to force us into its ungodly mould and to conform to its sinful standards, again something that requires great courage and determination to resist. David

also knew that we have an arch enemy in the devil who will use all his cunning and guile to lead us astray, and therefore to resist him will require diligence and fortitude from us. So he challenged Solomon directly to be strong and to follow the Lord all his days. He did not leave Solomon to his own devices here for he told him specifically what this would mean for him if he was to keep a good relationship with the Lord (v3-4):

*"Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, and that the Lord may keep his promise to me: 'If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'"*

Solomon was to live his life by the instructions of the Lord. He was to follow the Lord's commands and not his own ideas, nor the suggestions of anyone else. He was constantly to submit his entire conduct to the directions of the Lord. This would mean cultivating a good and careful relationship with the Lord on a daily basis and spending much time with him in prayer. And it is the same for us. God has given us his instructions in his Word, the Bible, and so we are to be men and women of that book. We are to prayerfully read the Scriptures and seek the Lord's help to obey them in our lives. Recently I attended a wedding and the preacher was an unmarried man, and he mentioned

this at the beginning of his message and raised the question as to the appropriateness of a single man giving instruction to a married couple. He answered any doubts some may have had by saying this, *‘Although I am not married I do know who invented marriage and I have his instructions.’* He was referring to Almighty God and to the Bible of course, and proceeded to share what God had declared about marriage in the Scriptures. Well David was doing the same to Solomon and urged him carefully to study, understand and apply the Word of God to his own life. Roger Ellsworth has written:

*“Nothing was more important to the old saint than that the blessing of God should attend his son and his nation, and nothing was clearer to him than the pathway to God’s blessing. It lay in glad-hearted, ready obedience to God’s holy law.”*

To encourage him in this task he assured him that the Lord would honour him if he honoured the Lord and a member of David’s line would always sit on the throne of Israel. The sad thing about this is that so many of the kings of Israel failed to do what David urged Solomon to do and eventually the nation was overthrown and taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar. However, the Lord has graciously sent into the world one King who did keep God’s commands and decrees perfectly, the Lord Jesus Christ, and as mentioned earlier he now reigns eternally as the great King of his people. One day he will return and all the world will recognise him, some with great joy will

welcome him as their Saviour, while others who have rejected him will meet him with great dread and terror as their judge. With this in mind we need to remember two things. First, the encouraging words of Paul in Romans 10:11:

*“As the Scripture says, ‘Anyone who trusts in him (i.e. the Lord) will never be put to shame.’”*

Second, the words of warning from Jesus himself in Mark 8:38:

*“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”*

Therefore we need to ensure that we acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives now and begin to live for him before it is too late. None who follow him will be ashamed.

## **2) Concerning Joab, the sons of Barzillai and Shimei, verses 5-9**

We have stated several times during this series that David had not always dealt with people as he should have, with true justice. The result of this was that some people went unpunished and their survival would therefore be a threat to Solomon’s reign and the stability of the kingdom. In

this section we see David's charge to Solomon about some particular individuals.

#### **a. Joab, verses 5-6**

First was Joab, who had been a very stubborn man and who had murdered Abner in 2 Samuel 3:27 and Amasa in 2 Samuel 20:9-10. Both of these crimes was punishable by death according to the law of God (see Genesis 9:6, Exodus 21:12ff etc.). In addition Joab had sided with Adonijah in his attempt to usurp the throne which was really an act of treason. Whereas David knew that he had been rather weak in applying the justice that he should have, he charged Solomon to do what he had failed to do (2 Kings 2:5-6):

*“Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me— what he did to the two commanders of Israel’s armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood stained the belt round his waist and the sandals on his feet. Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his grey head go down to the grave in peace.”*

This solemn action was necessary to safeguard the well-being of the kingdom, and would send out the message loud and clear that the shedding of innocent blood would not be tolerated.

#### **b. The sons of Barzillai, verse 7**

In contrast to the way Joab was to be dealt with, the sons of Barzillai were to be treated with great kindness. We met Barzillai earlier in David's life and this wealthy farmer had used his wealth to bring supplies and help David during his times of great need. Indeed, Barzillai's sons were of great help to him during the troubled time of Absalom who attempted to wrest the throne from his father David (2 Kings 2:7):

*“But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai of Gilead and let them be among those who eat at your table. They stood by me when I fled from your brother Absalom.”*

These two unnamed men were not to be overlooked but suitably rewarded. In addition they would be two very useful individuals for Solomon to have near him, as would be the case for all who ate at his table. Such good faithful servants of the Lord do not escape the Lord's notice, and that is as true today as it was in the days of David. Remember, the Lord knows those who are his (2 Timothy 2:19).

#### **c. Shimei, verses 8-9**

Shimei was the man who had hurled stones and curses at David when he was forced to leave Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 16:5-8). When David returned he was among the first to meet David and plead with him not to take his life, and David promised he would

not do that. We noted at the time that there was a question mark over the genuineness of Shimei's repentance, and these closing words of David seem to indicate that was correct and that Shimei was only out to save his life. No doubt the passing of time proved Shimei's apology to have been false. Further, like Joab, he would remain a threat to Solomon so had to be dealt with. However, David had given his word that he would not kill him but justice still needed to be done and therefore he urged Solomon to attend to that (v8-9):

*“And remember, you have with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, who called down bitter curses on me the day I went to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord: ‘I will not put you to death by the sword.’ But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do to him. Bring his grey head down to the grave in blood.”*

### **3) David dies. 1 Kings 2:10-11 & 1 Chronicles 29:26-28**

And so it was that the life and reign of David came to its conclusion. David breathed his last and died. His death and his entire reign are described in the briefest of ways (1 Kings 2:10-11):

*“Then David rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. He had reigned for forty years over*

*Israel—seven years in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem.”*

There is an additional detail in the record in 1 Chronicles 29:26-28:

*“David son of Jesse was king over all Israel. He ruled over Israel for forty years—seven in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. He died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honour. His son Solomon succeeded him as king.”*

He had known the Lord's help in a remarkable way. From coming on the scene in 1 Samuel 16 as an obscure, relatively unknown shepherd boy, with the Lord's help he had become the greatest king Israel ever knew. The nation had flourished under his hand. Through David's leadership they had seen their enemies defeated again and again, particularly the Philistines. He had secured the central place of the worship of God amongst his people and had written many Psalms to help them in their worship and adoration of the Lord their God. And the cause of God in the world was seen to be what it is, an irresistible work because although human instruments are used, the real cause for its growth is the Lord himself.

But to end with that would be to fail to complete the story. David died. This great man was just that, a man and no more, and that fact itself has a number of lessons for us. Here are two.

First, the God who worked so remarkably in the life of David is the same today as he was then. The encouragement from that fact is that the Lord is able to help us also to fulfil the calling he has given us. If we look to ourselves we will see much to disappoint and discourage us for we are just frail men, but if we look to the Lord for his help then like Paul we will be able to say we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength (see Philippians 4:13).

Second, David came, lived, and then died. Therefore we see the folly of those whose trust is just in men, even in great men, for even the greatest die. But those who trust in the Lord are trusting in the everlasting God who can help us not only through life, but also through death, because he has defeated death through great David's Greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the very Son of God. Then let us learn from David the many lessons his life teaches us, but let our trust and confidence be in David's God, the Lord of all.

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