

PROPHETS & JUDGES

IN THE PROMISED LAND

“There is danger, great danger, that the supposed wise men of today will repeat the experience of the Jewish teachers. They falsely interpret the divine oracles, and souls are brought into perplexity and shrouded in darkness because of their misconception of divine truth. . . . This is the work of many in our day. Many churches are guilty of this sin.” (Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 110–111)

WEEK 26 - DAVID BECOMES KING

I. The Coronation of David

1. Why did Abner continue to persecute David, even after the death of Saul?

2. Why could success be a terrible disaster?

3. In what way will we have trials similar to David's?

II. David's Throne Established at Jerusalem

1. What did David do when the Philistines came to attack?

2. What did God do?

3. Israel had recently suffered a terrible defeat by the Philistines, and King Saul had been killed. Now David was head of the very same army. Why did David succeed when Saul had failed?

4. There are many ideas we could follow that appear to be wise. Why must God's principles (in particular) govern our minds?

5. What is the difference between the way we view success and the way God views it?

6. What mistakes do many make when they are rebuked?

The Coronation of David**June 15, 1888**

When David was assured of the death of Saul and Jonathan, he mourned with sincere sorrow for the king and prince of Israel. When the days of mourning were ended, after calm and earnest reflection he decided that he ought to take some immediate action in behalf of the imperiled and defeated nation. By divine appointment he had been anointed as the king of Israel, and it was fitting that he should take measures for the prosperity of the kingdom. He inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron."

[1.1]

Hebron was twenty miles south of Jerusalem. It was originally called Kirjath-arba, the city of Arba, the father of Anak. Later it was called Mamre, and here was the burial-place of the patriarchs, "the cave of Machpelah." The city lies in a deep valley surrounded by fertile hill country and fruitful lands. The most beautiful vineyards of Palestine we found on its borders, together with numerous plantations of olive and other fruit trees, and excellent pasturage. [1.2]

David consulted with his faithful followers, and told them what the Lord, who was mighty in counsel, had revealed to him. In accordance with the instruction of the Lord, they prepared to follow the directions given, and were soon in marching order. The armed men came first, then their wives and children, and in the rear followed the flocks and herds. As the caravan approached the city, the men of Judah were waiting to welcome David as the future leader and king of Israel. On his arrival they made immediate preparations for his coronation. [1.3]

The Philistines did not oppose the action of Judah in making David king, for they thought it would work for their own interest in the end, if they quietly accepted the situation. They expected that David's power would extend, and that he would become a mighty sovereign. But although the nations around him did not interfere with his plans, David's throne and kingly reign were not to be secure from trouble. His coronation by the men of Judah was scarcely accomplished before Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, through the influence of Abner was proclaimed king, and set upon a rival throne in Israel. The dark work of conspiracy had begun. Abner had been commander-in-chief of Saul's army, and he was well qualified for the position. He was the most distinguished man in the ranks of the people of Israel. He knew that David was appointed by the Lord as the successor of Saul to the throne, but he who had marshaled every army, who had hunted and pursued David while Saul was still living, was not willing that the anointed of the Lord should be established in the kingdom over which Saul had reigned. [1.4]

The circumstances under which Abner was placed, served to develop his real character, and he revealed himself as a man who was controlled by ambition, unprincipled at heart, and only desirous of exaltation to a high position before men. He acted against David without the least reverence for God's expressed command, or the slightest regard for the dictates of an enlightened conscience. Abner had a decided hatred of David. He had been intimately associated with Saul, and had been influenced by the spirit of the king to despise the man whom

God had chosen to reign on the throne of Israel. Once having placed himself on the wrong side, he brought all his power and influence to bear against the servant of God. His hatred had been increased by the cutting rebuke that David had given him at the time when the cruse of water and the spear of the king had been taken from the side of Saul, as he slept in the cave. He remembered how David had reminded him of his fault before the king and the people of Israel, and had cried in their hearing, "Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster." This reproof had rankled in his breast, and he determined to carry out his revengeful purposes, and create division in Israel, whereby he himself might be exalted. To this end he employed the representative of departed royalty to advance his own selfish ambitions and purposes. He knew that the people loved Jonathan. His memory was cherished, and Saul's first successful campaigns were not forgotten by the army. With determination worthy a better cause, the rebel chieftain went forward to carry out his plans. At Mahanaim he secured the coronation of Ishbosheth, and the tribes of Israel proclaimed him their king, but Judah still acknowledged David as their sovereign. For two years the son of Saul enjoyed his honors in his secluded capital. ^[1.5]

"There was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David," for Abner was determined to gain his desire at any cost. The question may be asked, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Success, in such a case, is a terrible disaster. Far better is humility, and the loss of high-sounding titles, than to run any risk of the loss of the soul. Better far the cross and the disappointment, better far shattered hopes, and the world's neglect, than to sit with princes and forfeit Heaven. Abner had desired honor, and he was determined to have it at any cost. David had rebuked him before Israel, and his proud spirit chafed under the words of reproof. His malice and hate were directed toward him who had discovered and pointed out the weakness of his character; and those whom God leads and guides in these last days will experience trials of a similar nature to those that came upon David, the servant of God. There is a decided hatred of reproof in the hearts of men. Cautions and warnings are not thankfully received, and, as with Abner, so those who cherish pride, will manifest a spirit of malice toward those who administer reproof. Satan seems to take possession of those who wish to rank among the highest, and yet have not those true principles that would place them in positions of trust and responsibility. They would rather be exalted by the enemies of the truth, and be poor and miserable and wretched in the high estimate of Heaven, than to submit to humiliation in the ranks of the servants of God. Such men go out from the body of the believers, denying the faith they once proclaimed; they deliberately set aside one of the simplest and most unequivocal commandments of God, that

they may exalt themselves, and follow the way of the world; but those who humbly wait on the Lord, fulfilling his requirements, will be exalted in due time. {1.6}

The Scriptures declare that the house of "David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker." And the time came that the enemies of David were slain. After the death of Ishbosheth, there was a general desire among the leading men of Israel that David should be proclaimed as the king of all the tribes of Israel. "Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh." There seemed to be an awakening among the people to acknowledge God's ways, and to yield up their own ways. They understood the purpose of the Lord concerning David, but they had worked contrary to their light and knowledge. They dare not longer hold themselves as enemies to the Lord's appointed ruler. They acknowledged now what they would have acknowledged long before if they had followed the convictions of their own hearts, and had not yielded their reason to deception and delusion. They declare of David, "Thou wast he that ledest out and broughtest in Israel; and the Lord said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel." When they were leavened with the spirit of Saul and Abner, they did not care to be the friend of David. They regarded him as an enemy, and treated him as such, thus acting the part of traitors, because they were deceived and blinded, and were working in darkness, contrary to the will of God. Now as their eyes begin to be opened to the real nature of the course which they have pursued, they desire to be at peace with David. {1.7}

"So all the elders of Israel came to the King to Hebron; and King David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord." They assured the king that they recognized his divine appointment to the kingdom of Israel, and David was greatly pleased, for he knew that their hearts had been touched by the Spirit of the Lord, and their eyes had been enlightened to see light in God's light. He knew that the promises of God to him and to Israel would be fulfilled if they walked according to the counsel of the Lord. It was evident to his mind that the dealings of the Lord with him had prepared him for the duties and responsibilities of his office. Through the providence of God, the way had been opened for him to come to the throne of Israel. He had no personal ambition to gratify, for he had not sought the honor to which he had been brought. {1.8}

More than eight thousand of the descendants of Aaron, and of the Levites, waited upon David. The great change in the sentiments of the people was marked and decisive. The revolution was quiet and dignified, befitting the great work they were doing. Nearly half a million souls, the former subjects of Saul, thronged Hebron. The very hills and valleys were alive with the multitudes. The hour for the coronation was appointed, and the man who had been expelled from the courts of Saul, who had fled to preserve his life to the mountains and hills, and to the caves of the earth, was about to receive the highest honor that can be conferred upon man by his brother man. David, the hero of the hour, was arrayed in the royal robe, while around him was a most imposing company. Priests and elders clothed in the garments of their sacred office, officers and soldiers with glittering spear and helmet, and strangers from long distances, stood to wit-

ness the coronation of the chosen king. The sacred oil was put upon the brow of David by the high priest, for the anointing by Samuel was a prophetic ceremony of what would take place at the inauguration of the king. The time had come, and David, by solemn rite, is consecrated by the nation to his office as God's appointed vicegerent. The scepter, a signal of royalty and power, is placed in his hands. The covenant is written of his righteous sovereignty, and the people give their pledges of loyalty. The diadem is placed upon his brow, and the coronation ceremony is over. Israel has a king by the appointment of God. {1.9}

Saul had been after the heart of Israel, but David is a man after God's own heart. And now the procession moves toward the gate of the city with the highest enthusiasm, crying, "Long live king David." The musicians express the gladness of the hour by notes of joy with voice and instrument. When David is seated upon his throne, his subjects congratulate him that God has established him as the ruler of Israel, and they declare their joy in having such a king to reign over them. The ceremonies of the day were over, and he who had waited patiently on the Lord beheld the promise of God fulfilled. "And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him." {1.10}

David's Throne Established at Jerusalem

June 22, 1888

As soon as David was established on the throne of Israel, he began to plan for a more appropriate position for the capital of his realm. Twenty miles from Hebron a place was selected as the future metropolis of the kingdom. Before Joshua had led the armies of Israel over Jordan to the promised possession, it had been called Salem. Near this place Abraham had proved his loyalty to God. He had prepared an altar, and had laid upon it his only son Isaac, in obedience to the command of the Lord. Here had been the home of Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, nearly nine hundred years before the coronation of David. It held a central and elevated position in the country, and it was barricaded by an environment of hills. On the north rose Lebanon, with its snow-crowned summits. {2.1}

Away to the south stretched the Arabian desert, with its moving sands. To the west were the waters of the Mediterranean, and to the east were the Dead Sea and the river Jordan. {2.2}

In order to secure this much-desired location, the Hebrews must dispossess a remnant of the old Canaanites. King David called for men to besiege and take the city of Jebus from their heathen enemies. A large force gathered at the command of the King, and David left his throne, and his armies surrounded and took the city, and the capital of Israel was moved to Jebus. This heathen name was changed to the City of David, and it was afterward called Jerusalem, and Mount Zion. "And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him." {2.3}

Tyre was a rich city on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, and Hiram, king of Tyre, sought the friendship of Israel, and rendered them assistance in various undertakings. Hiram "sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons; and they built David a house. And David perceived

that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake." [2.4]

When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all the tribes of Israel, they "came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the [strong]hold." The Philistines marshaled an immense force, hoping again to bring Israel into subjection. They spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. "David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into my hand?" And the Lord bade David go up, and promised to deliver the Philistines into his hand. [2.5]

King David asked counsel of the Lord in his extremity, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and answered his servant, and Israel was victorious. But the Philistines made a more decided display, that they might intimidate Israel. Their numbers were very great. Again David sought the Lord, and the great I AM became the general of the armies of Israel. God himself laid the plan of the attack. He instructed David, saying, "Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the top of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself; for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines." [2.6]

If David had chosen his own way, as did Saul, success would not have attended his warfare. But David did as the Lord had commanded, and he "smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer." Saul had been honored of God to occupy a high position of trust. He was tested and proven of the Lord, but he did not obey the voice of God. He had become tired of his simplicity, and he chose to follow his own finite judgment, and departed from the Lord. Saul had been a man of striking personal attractions, and at the beginning of his reign the Spirit of the Lord had been upon him. After his coronation he had been a changed man; but pride came into his heart, and he became lifted up in his own estimation. He thought, as some success had attended his plans and his generalship, that his prosperity was due to the wise movements he had made. The people praised him, and gave glory to him, and did not acknowledge the Lord as the prime mover in all their successes. Through his appointed agents, God had given definite instruction; but those who were self-sufficient, and puffed up with pride—the poor, finite beings whom God had given position, and endowed with honor—had concluded that they understood the situation of things far better than did the Lord, and they determined to follow their own way, and have their own will carried out, and unite with the goddess. [2.7]

The Maker of mind possesses in himself alone the principles of life and action that must regulate and govern inferior minds. The natural, selfish mind, as it exists in its carnal state, acts without reference to God, and is evil, and only evil, continually. The soul cannot be in a state of peace or safety unless it is waiting upon God and receiving instruction from him. Saul's heart was estranged from God; and when he was reproved by Samuel, he stubbornly refused to admit that he had disobeyed God, although the lowing of the oxen, and the bleating of the sheep, sounded in the ears of the king and the prophet, and the king of

the Amalekites, who, with all his nation and their possessions, was devoted to utter destruction, was preserved alive in the camp of Israel. While Saul persisted in self-justification, he knew in his heart that he had decidedly transgressed the commandment of the Lord. He was displeased that the Lord did not recognize his judgment, and approve of the victory he had gained, which was the most brilliant of his successes. But the Lord does not look upon successes as men do. Obedience to his word is counted as of more value than the most brilliant conquest that is gained in opposition to his will. In heart and act, Saul was decidedly opposed to the will of God. He flattered himself that in sparing Agag he was manifesting more mercy than the Judge of all the earth. And he told the prophet that the sheep and oxen, which God had ordered to be slain, were to be presented before him as sacrifices in Gilgal. ^[2.8]

We have often been grieved to meet this same spirit of self-justification in those who profess in this day to be doing the will of God, while they are living in transgression of his holy law. Those who depart from God's way to follow their own way, refuse to acknowledge their perversity and sin when reproved by the servants of God. As did Saul, so do these stubbornly fortify themselves in their rebellion, that they may hold fast to their errors and defects. God's voice is heard, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" but they have wandered on forbidden ground, and in place of making full and free confession they do everything that is possible to make it appear that they are rebuked without cause, and are innocent of the charges brought against them. In this way they make God out a liar. The displeasure of the Lord is kindled against them; and unless they repent, and turn to him, his wrath will certainly fall upon them. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." ^[2.9]

Those whose deeds are evil, will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved and their real characters revealed. If they continue in the path of transgression, and sever themselves entirely from the Redeemer, stubbornness, and sullenness, and a spirit of revenge will take possession of them, and they will say to their own souls, Peace, peace, when there is every reason that they should be alarmed, for their steps are directed toward destruction. As Saul resisted the reproofs of the servant of the Lord, this spirit took possession of him. He defied the Lord, he defied his servant, and his enmity toward David was the outworking of the murderous spirit that comes into the heart of those who justify themselves in the face of their guilt. ^[2.10]

David had sought and obtained divine instruction, and he obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gave the glory of his success to the Lord, who had delivered the enemies of Israel into his hands. Oh that the people of God, at all times and in every extremity, would seek the Lord, who is the sovereign ruler of all worlds, and the general of all the armies of those who honor and serve him. We need to pray more, and to trust less in our own power. When sincere prayer is offered, and our souls are humbled in deep contrition before God, and are not lifted up in self-importance, the Lord will bless his people. The promise is given, that those who commit their way unto the Lord, shall be directed in the path of righteousness. Those who truly seek and obtain God's favor and help, and preserve

their union with Heaven, will not glorify themselves, but they will glorify God for his great power and majesty that has wrought in their behalf. [2.11]

Answer Hints

Section 1: | 1) 1.5 | 2) 1.6 | 3) 1.6 |

Section 2: | 1) 2.5, 2.6 | 2) 2.6 | 3) 2.7 | 4) 2.8 | 5) 2.8 | 6) 2.9, 2.10 |

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