

No Rival King

Text: 2 Samuel 2

Introduction: David's life is a fascinating story. From shepherd boy to king. He grew up in the small city of Bethlehem. He was the unlikeliest of his brothers to be chosen when God instructed Samuel to anoint a new king from among Jesse's sons. He defeated the Philistine giant Goliath with just a sling and a stone. He went on to serve as a leader in Saul's army.

As his profile in Israel grew, Saul became jealous and sought his life. David had to spend the next years of his life as a fugitive, fleeing for his life. Amidst all of this, David still maintained respect for Israel's king, the Lord's anointed. But now Saul has died, and the time has come for David to ascend to the throne. And as you might expect, it turns out to be a lot more complicated than that.

As we look at David's life, I think we could very easily enjoy the narrative for the engaging story that it is. One commentator calls it "a rich mixture of dramatic action, personal conflict, corrupt behavior, and exemplary conduct with complex, intriguing characters and enthralling, page-turning plots" (Woodhouse, 69). David is one of the most interesting characters in world literature. He's brilliant but also submissive to God. He's ruthless but also merciful and kind. He's capable of costly integrity but also (as we will see) of astonishingly self-serving wickedness (Woodhouse, 69).

If 2 Samuel were merely a historical record of the rise and reign of King David, we would be interested. But 2 Samuel is more than that. David's story is more than that. David's story is God's story. David's story is our story. "David became king of the nation of Israel as part of God's unfolding purpose for the world he has made" (Woodhouse, 69). That purpose is to bring all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

I trust you'll see that as we make our way through the sermon this morning. We're in 2 Samuel 2. This is the second sermon in our journey through 2 Samuel. 2 Samuel begins on page 237 in the black pew Bible in front of you. If you don't yet have a 1-2 Samuel Scripture journal for note taking and personal study, I encourage you to pick one up when

you leave. You can find them in the foyer or the main hallway. If you don't own a Bible, we encourage you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave.

(Read 2 Samuel 2...Pray)

2 Samuel 2 shows us that **people may resist God's purposes, but God's anointed will reign as He has determined.**

Last week we saw that the death of Saul was reported to David. Though he had already been anointed by God to be the next king of Israel, David did not immediately take steps to assume the throne. First, he mourned. Israel's king was dead, and such a tragedy should cause mourning.

Now, as we continue the narrative in chapter 2, we see that...

I. God's anointed obeys God's purposes (2 Samuel 2:1-7).

A. The text says, "After this David inquired of the Lord" (vs. 1a).

1. **After what? After David's lament in chapter 1. He finds out that Saul is dead. He mourns. And now, he inquires of the Lord.**
2. **Commentators note that there may be a little bit of irony in the text here. You'll remember that Saul was the one "asked for" by the people, and "Asked For" was his name. Now the time has come for David to ascend to the throne, and he begins by "asking" the Lord.**
3. **This is a good place for all of us to begin in our lives, isn't it? Asking the Lord. Inquiring of the Lord.**
4. **David knew that God had anointed him as king over Israel. He knew that Saul was dead, and it was time for him to lead. But he didn't know exactly what that should look like. So, he asked God.**
5. **Commentators have provided various possibilities for the means by which David inquired of the Lord. Perhaps it was by casting lots. We know that in the past David had received words from the Lord by means of a prophet. Perhaps David inquired of the Lord by means of Abiathar and the ephod as he had done before.**

6. We don't know exactly HOW David inquired of the Lord, but we do know that he DID inquire of the Lord. We also know that we can inquire of the Lord today. And we know HOW we can inquire of the Lord today. We inquire of the Lord through His Word, through prayer, and through the Spirit.

- a. The Bible doesn't give us specific information about who we should marry, what job we should accept, or where we should live. But it does give us principles that we should apply in making these decisions.
- b. We also can inquire of the Lord through prayer. The Bible is God talking to us. Prayer is us talking back to God. Have a question? Ask God. Need wisdom? Ask God. Confused? Ask God. Feel lost? Ask God. Because Jesus died to pay for our sin and broke down the dividing wall of hostility between us and God, we can boldly approach God's throne and receive help in our time of need.
- c. But not only has God given us His Word. And not only has God given us the gift of prayer. He has also given us His Spirit. The Bible says that if you are a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit of God living inside of you. Friends, that's better than what David had. The Holy Spirit did not indwell OT saints the same way He indwells us today. Through prayer, and in accord with God's Word, as followers of Jesus, we have to learn to rely upon the Holy Spirit in our lives. He will lead us in His ways. If we will follow.

B. Notice the question that David asked God (vs. 1).

1. David asked, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" To which the Lord responded, "Go up." And David said, "To which shall I go up?" The Lord responded, "To Hebron."
2. There's actually quite a bit to unpack here.

3. The first thing I want you to notice is the repetition of "go up" in verses 1-3. See, we're not just talking about David "going up" geographically. We're talking about his ascent to the throne as king.
4. Notice also that David was to go up to one of the "cities of Judah." This reminds us that David is of the tribe of Judah. Jacob blessed Judah in Genesis 49 and said, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (Gen. 49:10). And we know David's Son, the Lord Jesus, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah.
5. But not only is it significant that David was to go to Judah, but it's also significant the particular city in Judah to which he was to go. God said, "To Hebron." Hebron was an important city located on a mountain ridge in Judah, about nineteen miles south-southeast of Jerusalem (Woodhouse, 72). It was also the city of Abraham. Abraham settled "by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron" and built an altar there to the Lord (Gen. 13:18). One commentator says that "Hebron...is where Israel's life in the land of God's promise began" (Woodhouse, 73).
6. And here's why this is significant. "David's going up "to Hebron" (in accordance with the word of the Lord) links David's story to Abraham. It suggests that David's rise is the continuation of the story that began there with Abraham. In other words, David's move to Hebron connects him with the promises that God made to Abraham" (Woodhouse, 73).
7. And that is significant because Matthew's Gospel begins, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). The story of Abraham continues with the story of David, which continues with the story of Jesus. Do you see how what I often say is true? The Bible is one story. God's story. God's story of His work in the world to establish a people for Himself from every tribe and tongue and nation.

8. David's story is significant because of the part it plays in the larger story of the Bible.

C. We've seen the direction God provided to David. Now, notice what David does in response to God's direction (vs. 2-3).

1. (Read vs. 2-3)
2. David obeyed. He did what God said.
3. This reminds us of Abraham's obedience to God many years before. God said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). So, "Abram went, as the LORD had told him" (Gen. 12:4). Abraham obeyed God.
4. I'm also reminded of the Lord Jesus and His obedience to God the Father. Philippians 2, which we pointed out last week, talks about Jesus emptying Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. He was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:7-8).
5. Goshen, isn't this what the Lord requires of all of us? Obedience. We talked about seeking God's will by inquiring of the Lord. That's certainly important. But what about those who know what God requires, yet refuse to do it? God requires obedience. It's great that you're here this morning. That's a step of obedience. It's great that you sang songs of praise to God this morning. That's a step of obedience. It's great that you gave an offering to the Lord just a bit ago. That's another step of obedience. But what about your life the rest of the week? Are you walking in obedience to God and ALL of His commands? That's what God requires of you.

D. David obeyed God and went up to Hebron. And look at what happened in verse 4. (Read vs. 4a)

1. It's interesting that there is an already/not yet aspect to David's reign as king.

2. The men of Judah came and anointed David as king. The narrative of Samuel has been building to this point since at least chapter 13 of 1 Samuel when Samuel said to Saul, "Your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you" (1 Sam. 13:14). God's purpose for David became clear in chapter 16 of 1 Samuel when he was anointed by Samuel as Israel's next king. And now he is king!
3. But notice that he is king only over "the house of Judah." David was to be king over all Israel. And he will become king over all Israel. But for now, he is only king over the house of Judah.
4. Perhaps there is some parallel here to the rule and reign of King Jesus today. Like David and the people of Israel did then, we live now in a time of already/not yet. Jesus is King! He is seated even now at the right hand of God the Father. God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name. But not every knee bows to Him yet. Not every tongue confesses that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!
5. But there is coming a day when King Jesus will reign fully over all the heavens and the earth. He will reign in power and glory. Just as God has always intended. David's kingdom in 2 Samuel prefigures that future kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

E. As David began to reign in Judah, we ought to take note of how he treated those in Jabesh-gilead who remained loyal to Saul (vs. 4b-7).

1. The text says that it was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul (vs. 4).
2. Some may expect David to clear the way of any potential rivals who were loyal to Saul.
3. But instead, David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead saying, "May you be blessed by the

LORD, because you showed this loyalty to Saul your lord and buried him. Now may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you. And I will do good to you because you have done this thing. Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant, for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them” (vs. 5-7).

- 4. We’ve already seen that David was very different from Saul, but he continues to show it here in his treatment of the men of Jabesh-gilead. Rather than attacking them or feeling threatened by them or viewing them as his enemies, David blesses them.**
- 5. Woodhouse writes, “David’s message to the people of Jabesh-gilead was wonderfully like the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in which the grace of God is offered to his enemies (Romans 5:10) because the one who once held their allegiance is defeated (Hebrews 2:14) and Jesus has begun to reign (Acts 2:36).” God’s grace is evident in David’s treatment of the men of Jabesh-gilead.**

So, consider where we are in the narrative. David has been anointed king in Judah. God’s anointed (David) is walking in obedience to God’s purposes for him and the nation. But now, as we keep reading, we see that...

II. God’s enemy resists God’s purposes (2 Samuel 2:8-11).

A. We’re reintroduced to Abner the son of Ner.

- 1. He is mentioned numerous times in 1 Samuel because of his role as the commander of Saul’s army.**
- 2. But now, Saul is dead, and Abner has a choice to make. What is he going to do?**
- 3. It’s important to note that Abner and David knew each other quite well. In fact, they had interacted back in 1 Samuel 26 when David challenged Abner for not sufficiently protecting the king. In all of Saul’s efforts to kill David, Abner was right there by Saul’s side.**

- 4. Abner knows that David is supposed to be Israel’s king. He was there when Saul said to David, “Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them” (1 Sam. 26:25). He was also there on the earlier occasion when Saul said to David, “And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand” (1 Sam. 24:20).**
- 5. Because of his relationship to Saul, there was perhaps no one in Israel better positioned to aid in David’s elevation to the throne in Israel and the coalescing of God’s people under his rule and reign.**
- 6. This was a vulnerable time for Israel. She had lost her king. The Philistines had overcome them. The threat of further conquest by the Philistines was very real. God’s people really needed to be able to put forward a united front. They needed someone to rally the nation together and ensure her defense against her enemies. That person was supposed to be David.**
- 7. Abner could have served David as he had done Saul. And God would have been honored by that. He knew God’s purpose for David and the nation. Abner could have accepted that and pursued it.**

B. But instead, we see that Abner resisted God’s purposes.

- 1. And he did so for his own benefit.**
- 2. Look at verses 8-9. (Read vs. 8-9)**
- 3. Abner took Saul’s son Ish-bosheth and installed him as king over Israel. Remember that Saul’s other three sons died along with Saul on Mount Gilboa. We don’t know why Ish-bosheth wasn’t there. He was certainly of fighting age. Perhaps he was not there because he was the designated survivor. He was the one set aside so that if something were to happen in battle to Saul and all three of his other sons, Ish-bosheth would still be alive to reign as king.**

4. If that's true, it means that Saul too would have been in on this rebellion against God's purpose in making one of Saul's sons king, despite what God had said to Saul very explicitly regarding the end of his kingdom.
5. There's some question concerning the chronology of all of this. We see in verse 10 that Ish-bosheth reigned for two years. Then we see in verse 11 that David was king in Judah for 7 years and 6 months. It seems likely that Ish-bosheth's installation as king took place well into the reign of David in Judah.
6. What is clear is that Abner is the one calling the shots here. He is the one in charge. Ish-bosheth is merely along for the ride. We might say that Ish-bosheth was Abner's puppet.
7. The truth is that there will always be people like Abner who resist and oppose God's purposes. I think of the Pharisees in Jesus' day. They heard the truth concerning who Jesus was, yet they resisted and opposed Him. Ultimately, they killed Him. The same is true in our day. There are many who resist and oppose God's purposes. Sometimes in very blatant ways with very outward rebellion against God and His Word. But other times it's in more subtle ways like in our hearts. We know what God desires. We know what His purposes are. We know what He requires of us. But we want to go our own way. We want to do our own thing. And so, like Abner, we resist God's purposes. For what we consider to be our own gain and benefit.
8. We ought not miss the fact that Abner made himself an enemy of God by resisting God's purposes. We must be careful not to place ourselves in the same position. We should walk in obedience to God's purposes rather than resist Him.

We've seen that God's anointed obeys God's purposes. We've seen that God's enemy resists God's purposes. Now I want to show you that...

III. God's anointed advances God's purposes (2 Samuel 2:12-32).

- A. There's a lot that goes on in verse 12 through the end of the chapter.
 1. First you have Abner, who is Ish-bosheth's puppet master, facing off against Joab, who is the commander of David's army. And they are facing off at the pool of Gibeon (vs. 12-13).
 2. Abner proposes to Joab, and Joab accepts, some kind of competition where some of Abner's men would face off against some of Joab's men, and perhaps this would settle things between the two sides (vs. 14).
 3. They each send out 12 of their men, and somehow all 24 end up dead. It's hard to imagine how this could have happened, and we're not given a lot of details in the text. Because the main point that we are supposed to take away is that Abner and Joab's solution to the conflict did not work. It was a draw. God would not establish His king according to their purposes or plans. He would do so according to His own purposes and plans.
 4. The result was a fierce battle between Abner and his men and Joab and his men. We're given a summary of the results of the battle in verse 17. (Read vs. 17)
 5. Then in verses 18-23, we read of one of the events of the day where Joab's brother Asahel died by being struck by Abner with the butt of his spear.
 6. This had the predictable outcome of Joab and Abishai going after Abner. They wanted revenge for the death of their brother (vs. 24).
 7. Ultimately though, the battle ended in a truce. Abner called out to Joab, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you tell your people to turn from the pursuit of their brothers?" (vs. 26).
 8. Joab responded, "As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely the men would not have given up the pursuit of their brothers until the morning" (vs. 27).
 9. Joab then blew his trumpet and called off his troops (vs. 28).

10. Both sides went their separate ways. And the text tells us in verses 30-31 the results of the day's battle. Joab's army lost 19 men plus Asahel. Abner's army lost 360 men.
11. Things seem pretty bleak. The nation is not united. David still only reigns in Judah. What will become of all of this? Will God's anointed ever reign over all Israel as God intends?

B. We don't want to get too far into what happens next this morning, but look at verse 1 of chapter 3. (Read 3:1)

1. The house of Saul acted as God's enemies and resisted God's purposes.
2. But David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker.
3. God was still at work. Accomplishing His purposes. Through His anointed. We'll see that as the narrative continues.

I said in the beginning of the sermon that David became king of the nation of Israel as part of God's unfolding purpose for the world he has made. And we know that purpose is to bring all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

So, as we think about David's obedience to God's purposes and the way that his life and eventual reign as king of all Israel advance God's purposes, we're reminded that...

IV. God's anointed Son fulfills God's purposes.

A. See, David points us forward to Jesus.

1. David is a remarkable figure in God's story. We're going to spend a lot of time talking about David in the weeks to come. There's so much to see and consider. But David is not ultimate. Jesus is ultimate.
2. The mention of Bethlehem at the end of the chapter reminds us that David was from Bethlehem. It also reminds us that Israel would have another king who would come from Bethlehem. A king who was of the house and lineage of David.

3. David would advance God's purposes. But this King would show Himself to be the ultimate fulfillment of God's purposes.
4. And He has no rival.

B. Sadly, like with David, there are many who resist and oppose the rule and reign of this King.

1. But like with David, those who resist and oppose the rule and reign of King Jesus will not be successful. They ultimately must come under the rule and reign of King Jesus.
2. His kingdom is sure. It will continue forever. No weapon formed against Him shall prosper.
3. He will reign for all of eternity as King of kings and Lord of lords.
4. Which means you have to decide whether you will willingly submit yourself to His rule and reign. You can try to resist and oppose Him. But understand that you will not be successful.

Conclusion: There is no rival king. You may resist Him, like Abner resisted David, but you cannot overthrow Him. You may delay submission, but you cannot escape His reign.

And this is good news for us! The world around us may rage. The nations may plot. But they plot in vain. Because Jesus reigns. His purposes will stand. His promises will hold. And you can trust Him, dear Christian.

The question is not if you will bow to King Jesus, but when. Philippians 2 says every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The invitation today is to bow willingly. In repentance and faith. And find King Jesus to be a gracious and perfect Savior.

We all must bow our knee to King Jesus as Savior and Lord. The only question is whether we will bow now in faith or later in judgment. There is no rival King. Will you submit to Him today?