

Lesson 14: The Awarding of Crowns

King David's Return, 2 Samuel 19:15-39

The significance of crossing the Jordan at Gilgal:

- 1) It is the place where Israel first entered the kingdom under Joshua (alternately referred to as "on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho). Once Israel crossed over at this place, Joshua took the memorial stones from the Jordan and built the memorial at Gilgal.

Joshua 5:9 *"Then the LORD said to Joshua, 'This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.' Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day."*

The name, Gilgal, means "rolling," like a wheel or a stone being rolled away, except the rolling away in this case is the rolling away of reproach.

- 2) It is the same place where Saul came into his kingdom, after he defeated Nahash, king of the Ammonites, and removed Israel's reproach.

1 Samuel 11:14-15 *"Then Samuel said to the people, 'Come, let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there.' So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly."*

- 3) In Jesus' day, this ford at the Jordan is called Bethabara (John 1:28). It is where John the Baptist baptized Israel, calling them to repent for the kingdom was at hand. The king was coming.

A series of characters come out to renew their acquaintance with King David: **Shimei, Ziba, Mephibosheth, and Barzillai**. A reward is determined for each of these.

The Determination for the Reward, 2 Samuel 19:15-39

The Hierarchy for Judging Rewards. The reward is determined based on these values:

- 1) Recognizing and submitting to authority. Fear God. Honor the king. Obey commands.
- 2) Loving the brotherhood.
- 3) Loving an enemy. Not glorying when an antagonist falls but lamenting their loss.
- 4) Pursuing kingdom goals above personal agendas.
- 5) Valuing mercy.
- 6) Valuing righteous justice, not seeking lawless vengeance.
- 7) Valuing compassion and generosity, rewarding loyalty, and sharing the spoil.

Shimei (and Abishai): Shimei cursed David and tormented him and his men in his suffering. Now that the king has returned, he begs pardon. He only there to curry favor with the king to save his skin. The king doesn't execute Shimei because the only grievance he has at this point is over the humiliation. To execute Shimei would be taking vengeance against him for nothing more than a personal slight, but on the other hand, there is a respect that must be paid to authority. As Solomon proves, Shimei gave lip service only. Abishai is the counterpoint to Shimei in the picture. He is also self-serving in desiring vengeance, though he cloaks it behind honoring the king.

Shimei's reward: a stay of execution.

Abishai's reward: a rebuke for being an adversary of the king

Ziba and Mephibosheth. Ziba is in company with Shimei as a self-serving servant. The difference is that where Shimei cursed and abused David, Ziba curried favor by bringing David and his men provisions. But, had Ziba been truly compassionate, he would have shown mercy to his own master Mephibosheth instead of leaving him in such a wretched condition and then slandering him to the king. So, there is a discordant note in that he served the great but despised the lowly. Mephibosheth is the counterpoint to Ziba in the picture. He reveals Ziba's falsehood, but instead of returning evil for evil, he returns good for evil by giving up the kingdom to Ziba.

Ziba's reward: an earthly inheritance of the house of Saul (nothing of eternal value)

Mephibosheth's reward: an eternal place in David's house and at the king's table

Barzillai: Barzillai is a man from an unknown nation without ties to David, but who represents the compassionate men who brought David provisions, not to curry favor but simply because they saw that the people were hungry, weary, and thirsty. Like Mephibosheth, Barzillai declines the earthly reward personally but instead asks that it be granted to his servant, Chimham, and David agrees.

Barzillai's reward: An open-ended offer from the king. David said to him, *"I will take your servant with me and do for him what seems good to you. Whatever you request of me, I will do for you."* David makes a covenant with the house of Barzillai and later charges Solomon to keep this covenant. **1 Kings 2:7** *"But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for so they came to me when I fled from Absalom your brother."*

Chimham gets a place in the king's kingdom. Chimham, the man, disappears from the narrative, but Jeremiah 41:17 records a place called Geruth Chimham, meaning the lodging place of Chimham, a wayside inn on the outskirts of Bethlehem. It seems that David gave Chimham a small allotment in his own hometown.

Judgment of the Nations: Separating the Sheep from the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

Matthew 25:31-33 *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.”*

As the analogy plays out, we find that the determining factor in being a sheep or a goat revolves around the giving of compassionate help, and not just to the king, but to the least of those in his kingdom. The sheep on His right hand will inherit a kingdom as a blessing; the goats on His left hand He will send into everlasting punishment.

Matthew 25:35-36, 40 *“For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me . . . Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”*

- **Barzillai** is in the sheep category.
- **Shimei** most certainly stands out as being goat-like. He was a hindrance and not a help to David, and indeed, his fate is sealed even now.
- **Ziba?**

The Sheba Rebellion, 2 Samuel 19:40 – 20:22

The “third day” significance: Throughout Scripture, three days represent a period of time in which judgment over an issue hangs in the balance, and on the third day, a decision is made that often changes the course of events significantly. Amasa is given three days, but he doesn’t return on the third day, and the delay put the kingdom in jeopardy. And so, on the third day, David makes a new decision and it had a cascading effect. It changed the course of the war against Sheba. It led to Amasa’s death at the hands of Joab, who carried out his own coup that day, but then Joab himself incurred judgment for that as well. Even as Joab executed Amasa, he signed his own execution.

Sheba’s Reward: Immediate execution

Joab’s Reward: a stay of execution under David. David says nothing here, nor does he avenge himself on Joab but tasks Solomon with doing it. (1 Kings 2)

End of Part 2: David’s Administration, 2 Samuel 20:23-26

Part 2 Wrap-up:

Thematically, Part 2 of Second Samuel works through the interplay of repaying people—rewarding people—with evil or kindness. When evil was repaid with evil (David’s vengeance against Rabbah), we saw the cascading sin and judgment that flowed from that act as David’s arrogance bled into other areas of his life. That is a warning to us.

Humility and submission to the Great King and not taking vengeance were the lessons that the earthly king learned the hard way. They were lessons he should have learned way back in First Samuel during his initial exile and dealings with Saul. He has now had to endure the loss of his kingdom and a second exile of sorts to relearn the lesson.

Joab’s Model

Throughout all this, David has tried repeatedly to bring his men into the lesson of submission with him, but Joab and Abishai in particular resist. Of the two, Joab is the stronger lesson. From the beginning, Joab has only ever reacted to humiliation with vengeance and pursued his own agenda. We saw it with Abner, Absalom, and now Amasa.

2 Timothy 2:3-5 *“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”*

We see how Joab’s misplaced priorities entangled him in the affairs of life, put him afoul of the king’s favor, and cost him his kingdom and legacy in the end. Joab thinks he is fighting a good fight, but he isn’t. Even in warfare, there are rules, and respect for the Great King, the king, and the king’s agenda for the kingdom ranks at the top and in that order. Joab has been working at cross-purposes with God and his own commander, David, because the kingdom he is pursuing isn’t really for the king as much as himself and his own agenda, regardless of how he argues that what he is doing is for the greater good. People can do a lot of things for the greater good and end up doing more harm than good.

The earthly kingdom is a reward, but one that can be lost and ultimately is lost when we die, which is why we are not called to pursue it as the ultimate goal. For as much as Joab gained in regard to an earthly kingdom, he lost everything that was of eternal value. His house is cursed for generations to come, just as the high priest Eli’s house was, and he will lose his earthly kingdom, and he will forfeit his own life when he throws in his lot with the wrong king.

- There are right and wrong kings from whom to seek the reward.
- There are right and wrong rewards to pursue.
- There are right and wrong ways of pursuing the reward, and right and wrong reasons for doing so.

Joab is the perfect example of how to do it wrong.