**David becomes king of all Israel** 23/4/23 dkm

Read: 2Samuel 5, John 10:1-18

Text: 2Samuel 5

Psalms: 23old, 95, 127, 117

Jerusalem was in the news again recently, and again because of violent communal clashes. This so called ‘holy city’ is today a place of much unholiness. There was unrest in Jerusalem because the Jews were celebrating Passover, the Muslims were celebrating Ramadan, and the Christians Easter. These celebrations are the focus of these religions, although true Christians do not get caught up in pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Sure, our Saviour and Lord died on a cross outside this city, and was buried in a tomb nearby, but Jesus is no longer in either place; he is risen and ascended to heaven. His presence is now in the hearts of believers by his Spirit, and ‘where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them’ (Mat 18:20).

Here in 2Samuel we read of the establishment of Jerusalem as the city from which David ruled, and which later housed the Ark of the Covenant. It was the presence of the ark that made it the holy city of Jerusalem. Some five centuries later, the city and its temple were destroyed by the Babylonian’s.

Jerusalem was occupied the Jebusites. Joshua was not able to dislodge these people when he conquered Canaan (Josh 15:63). They remained there until the day that David was made king of Israel. David was made king after all the bloodshed of the previous chapters. His nemesis, King Saul, was killed by the Lord (1Chron 10:14). The Lord in his sovereignty had Abner remove, and also Saul’s son who had been set up as king of Israel. David had been made king of Judah in Hebron, but with Abner and Saul’s son dead the way was open for him to become king over all Israel. Yet David did not rush in and grab this power for himself; he waited upon the Lord, as always. We see the Lord establish David as king over Israel, establish Jerusalem as the capital city, and then establish Israel’s power over the Philistines.

**1. Establish the throne of David**

‘All the nations of Israel came to David at Hebron’ (5:1). It was probably representatives from all the tribes because in verse 3 we read that, ‘All the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron’. David did not go north to establish his rule over all Israel but waited until the people came to him. He would be a shepherd leader, not a driver of the flock. Abner had already come to David at Hebron to make an agreement with him, but the terms of that agreement would not have been the same as the terms of the agreement David makes with them (5:3), although we are not told the terms of either covenant.

People from all the tribes came to David at Hebron wanting David to be their king. They gave him three reasons in making this request. Firstly, David was their own flesh and blood, or flesh and bone (5:1). They had witnessed a bloody civil war, a war between brothers. They were all one people when Moses led them out of Egypt and when Joshua brought them into Canaan. The Lord gave them Saul as their king, but then rejected him to anoint David. Saul became very ‘tribal’, as earthly kings do, relying on men from his own tribe of Benjamin for security. David, on the other hand, was supported by his own family from Judah but was married to Saul’s daughter and his best friend was Saul’s son. The people of Israel overlooked their differences and looked to the things they had in common with David and the people of Judah. Too often we focus on differences we have with other people or other churches instead of focusing on the things we have in common. Tribe or culture or language should not divide Christians when all worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

The second reason given for having David as their king was the fact that he had proven himself as an effective leader when he served in Saul’s army (5:2). They had seen David’s courage and his trust in the Lord since the day he killed Goliath and delivered them from the Philistines.

The third reason put to David by the tribes of Israel was that the Lord had anointed him as their king. Everyone, it seems, knew that Samuel had anointed David even while Saul was king- Saul certainly did (1Sam 24:20). The people refer to the Lord calling David to ‘shepherd my people Israel, and be ruler over Israel’ (5:2). We know that David was shepherd of his father’s sheep when he was anointed by Samuel, but this is the first time this title is given to him as ruler over the people of God.

David refers to the Lord as his shepherd in Psalm 23, and saw himself as an under-shepherd. This is a most appropriate title for a king as it points to his duties in protecting and providing for those he leads. Too many leaders become more like wolves than shepherds, men who use and abuse the flock given into their care. David’s greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, adopted the title ‘Shepherd’: ‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep’ (John 10:11).

Jesus is referred to as the good shepherd, the great shepherd, and the chief shepherd (Heb 13:20, 1Peter 5:4). The apostle Paul tells the elders of the church to ‘shepherd the church of God (Acts 20:28). Let us remember Jesus as our shepherd, our great shepherd. As chief shepherd he has under shepherds, of which you may be one. The family needs a shepherd as its head, and the church needs shepherds as leaders. Remember, a shepherd feeds and leads the flock, and pays heed to their cries.

David responded to the ‘cry’ of the elders of Israel, their cry for him to become their king, by making a covenant with them (5:3). This time it was David making a covenant, not Abner (cf.3:21), and this time it was, ‘before the Lord’. We are not told the details of this covenant but it would have laid down the responsibilities of both parties, the king and the people. The king had a covenant or constitution to adhere to, unlike the kings of other nations. Note that this was the initiative of David, and again, that this covenant was signed in the presence of the Lord.

One writer makes the interesting comment that, ‘Our lives are given meaning by the covenants we make, and keep’- a comment worth reflecting on. Few in our society want to make or keep any covenant. The marriage covenant is disregarded by many- with obvious outcomes. This covenant, and the resulting family, gives meaning to life for most people- when they adhere to it! Our covenant with the Lord, or his covenant with us, gives ultimate meaning to life. God makes a covenant with us in the blood of Jesus Christ, a promise to forgive our sins and make us his people: ‘I will be your God and you shall be my people’. What more do you need to give meaning to your life? ‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep’.

With a covenant in place, the people of Israel anointed David king over Israel (5:3). They affirmed the Lord’s anointing through his prophet Samuel all those years ago. David was just thirty years old when he began to reign. It is amazing that the President of the USA is thinking to continue in this role when he is over eighty. David’s reign began in Hebron, where he reigned for seven and a half years, and continued in Jerusalem from where he reigned over all Israel for another thirty-three years (5:5).

**2. Establish the city of David**

Jerusalem was a strategic city for David for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it was on the border between north and south Israel, between Benjamin and Judah. Saul, remember, was from the tribe of Benjamin which was allocated a small strip of land from the Jordan west towards Philistine territory. Secondly, Jerusalem was a fortress city atop cliffs at the junction of two valleys or ravines. The Jebusites built and occupied this ‘city of Jebus’, and could not be dislodged by the Israelites- until now! David saw this city as the ideal place from which to rule Israel; besides, he did not want this pocket of Canaanites left in the land.

David took his men to capture this stronghold or fortress city, but the Jebusites stood there and mocked him saying, ‘Even the blind and the lame will repel you’ (5:6). David was not deterred; he offered to reward the man who climbed the water shaft to enter the city and take it (5:8). We have no further details, but clearly David saw this as a way to enter the city. Joab achieved this feat (1Chron 11:6) and David turned their mocking words back on the Jebusites. David destroyed the Jebusites, presumably, and made this strategic city his own, calling it the city of David. He built it up even stronger from a site called ‘the Millo’ inwards (5:9). This fortress or stronghold was also called Zion, a word which may point to it being ‘a fortress located on a ridge’. Zion became another name for Jerusalem, which itself was referred to as Salem in the days of Abraham. In fact, Mt Moriah is thought to be at the same site.

‘So David went on and became great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him’ (5:10). Here is the key to David’s success, not only in taking Jerusalem but in all his life from the time he killed Goliath to the present and into the future, David knew it was the Lord who established him as king over Israel, and he knew he was responsible to the Lord for shepherding His people (5:12). We have seen David consulting the Lord in all the decisions he made, listening to the Lord, and being victorious in the strength of the Lord. This is the key to you and me having success in what we do, and to leading a blessed life; success and blessing measured in more than material terms of course. ‘When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way…’ When we walk in the ways of the world, the glory of the Lord will not be seen in our life.

When the Lord established David on the throne of Israel, neighbouring nations took note. Hiram, king of Tyre, sent cedar wood, along with carpenters and masons, to build a palace in the city of David (5:11). David later planned to build a house for the Lord but the Lord said, ‘No’. The Lord would build David’s house, not the other way around. Many Christians want to build something for the Lord but too often they take glory to themselves, attaching their own name to the building or organisation they have established.

Settling into his palace in Jerusalem, David took more wives and concubines, and had lots of children (5:13). Children are a blessing from the Lord (Ps 127), but too many wives are not. The Lord warned the king not to multiply wives (Deut 17:17).

**3. Established Israel’s power over the Philistines**

The Philistines had been a thorn in the side of Israel all during David’s life. They had a huge, well-equipped army, and often came up and raided the cities of Israel. When David was on the run from Saul, they saw him as an ally, but now he was king of Israel things were different. It was time to test the new king! The Philistines came up the valley of Rephaim or ‘Valley of Giants’ to the southwest of Jerusalem (5:18). David, as was his custom, inquired of the Lord, and was told attack them and the Lord would drive them out. David said, ‘The Lord has broken through my enemies like a breakthrough of water’ (5:20), a sentiment expressed in the name ‘Baal Perazim’. As the Philistines fled, they left their idols or ‘gods’ behind. David and his men carried these away and burned them (5:21, 1Chron 14:12).

The Philistines regrouped and attacked again by the same route. This time the Lord told David to take a different approach; he was to circle around behind the Philistines in a place marked by mulberry/balsam/poplar trees. A sound of marching coming from the tops of these trees was the trigger for David to move upon the Philistines, ‘For then the Lord will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines’ (5:24). It seems the sound of marching sent panic into the Philistine camp, and David chased them all the way back to their own cities.

This decisive victory over the Philistines made David famous across the region, and other nations came to fear him and the nation of Israel (1Chron 14:17). This reminds us of Moses as he led the people of Israel out of Egypt. It reminds us of the church when its members fear God and listen to his word, and boldly declare his praises in all the world (e.g. Acts 5:13)