

# 14. Reigning in Zion

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now we're coming to our Bible reading, which you can find on page 257 in the Bibles, continuing the story of David and reaching a very significant point in that story where he is anointed king over all of Israel.

Page 257, 2 Samuel chapter 5, and we'll read the whole chapter. 2 Samuel 5, verse 1.

Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, Behold, we are your bone and flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel.

And the Lord said to you, You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron.

And King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. David was 30 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 40 years.

[ 1 : 08 ] At Hebron, he reigned over Judah seven years and six months. At Jerusalem, he reigned over all Israel and Judah 33 years. And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off, thinking David cannot come in here.

Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David. And David said on that day, Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul.

Therefore, it is said, the blind and the lame shall not come into the house. And David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built the city all around from the millow inward. Supporting terraces, probably meant by that word millow. When David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him. And Hiram, king of Tyre, sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, also carpenters and masons, who built David a house.

And David knew that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

[ 2 : 31 ] And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem after he came from Hebron, and more sons and daughters were born to David. These are the names who were born to him in Jerusalem.

Shamua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhaz, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishamah, Eliadah, and Eliphelet. When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David.

But David heard of it and went down to the stronghold. Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the valley of Rephaim, and David inquired of the Lord, Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand? The Lord said to David, Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand. David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there.

And he said, The Lord has burst through my enemies before me like a bursting flood. Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim. And the Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away.

[ 3 : 42 ] The Philistines came up yet again and spread out in the valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the Lord, he said, You shall not go up. Go around to their rear, and come against them opposite the balsam trees.

When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for the Lord has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines. And David did, as the Lord commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer.

Amen. And that is the word of the Lord. May he bless it to our hearts. Now, if we could have our Bibles open, please, at 2 Samuel 5, on page 257.

We'll ask the Lord's help as we come to his word. Let's pray. God, our Father, we believe that you have things to say to us, things that we need to hear, things from your words spoken long ago, but not confined to long ago, but spoken to your people now.

So we pray that as we draw near to you, that you will most graciously draw near to us, that you will open your word to our hearts and minds, that you will open our hearts and minds to your word.

[ 5 : 04 ] In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. So to 2 Samuel 5.

If you travel by train from one of the Glasgow stations to Edinburgh, just as you're coming into Waverly Station, one of the most impressive sites is the massive rock on which the castle stands. And if you're immediately underneath that rock, it looks tremendously overpowering, this huge, huge mass of granite stretching right up into the sky.

It looks unclimbable. It looks as if no one could actually climb up this. But during the time of the Wars of Independence, one of Robert Bruce's generals, Sir Thomas Randolph, managed to climb that path on a winter night with a little group of men with him, kind of path on which a mountain goat might have been nervous in daylight.

So he climbed up here, managed to get into the castle in a little, in a gate which was undefended because no one imagined that anyone could possibly get into the castle that way and managed to capture it.

[ 6 : 24 ] Now it's such a situation that lies behind 2 Samuel chapter 5. David looking up at the citadel of Jerusalem on its mountain.

Impressive, imposing, and unconquerable. Indeed, if you look at verse 6, the Jebusites said to David, you will not come in here.

Even the blind and the lame can stop you, thinking David cannot come in here. Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion. That is the city of David. And probably by his men managing to climb up a water shaft, perhaps the Gihon Spring, and get inside the citadel.

Once again, a badly defended gate. And 1 Chronicles 11 tells us it was Joab, actually, who led the party. Joab, as we've seen, is not a godly man, but obviously a very powerful and very spirited warrior.

So that's the incident that lies behind this chapter. But we're not here for a lecture on ancient history, are we? We're here to listen to what the living word of God is saying to us.

[ 7 : 37 ] These are the events centering around David becoming king in Zion. This incidentally is the first mention of Zion in the Old Testament. But Zion is going to become, right through scripture, not just about the literal citadel of Jerusalem, the hill of Zion.

It's going to become a figure of speech, a metaphor for the people of God. Glorious things of you are spoken. Zion, city of our God. And in the New Testament as well, the author of Hebrews says, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.

So as we look at this chapter about reigning in Zion, we're not simply looking, as I say, at an incident that once happened in the reign of David. This is about the reign of King Jesus, David's greater son.

That reign which is already, already at work in people's hearts and lives. If you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, his kingdom is already reigning in your heart, but it's still to come.

So David captures Zion. And what we have in this chapter is a series of snapshots centering around David and Zion. Possibly not in chronological order, because Hiram, the king of Tyre, verse 11, we know this came later in David's reign when he sent messengers to David.

[ 9 : 11 ] It may well have been the Philistines attacked before the capture of Jerusalem. That doesn't particularly matter. The point is, it's a series of snapshots. What does it look like when David is reigning in Zion?

What does it look like when Jesus Christ is reigning in our hearts and lives? And in anticipation, what will it look like when he reigns from, reigns all over the earth?

Jesus shall reign where e'er the sun. One time, during Luther's very stormy life, he wanted to go to the city of Augsburg. His wife said, Martin, you can't possibly go there.

Satan is established in Augsburg. And Luther replied, in Augsburg, Jesus reigns. Wherever we are at the moment, and whatever is happening, whatever the obstacles, however many of the problems, however formidable the enemies, Jesus reigns.

And the other thing, introductory point, is this shows David's great patience. David's a very patient man. After all, he had reigned at Hebron for seven years and more.

[10:23] He was the king of Israel. God had promised that to him. But he waits, leaving room for God to work. This is the patience that comes from the Lord himself.

As Peter says in his second letter, the patience of the Lord waits to bring people to repentance, not wanting anybody to perish. I've said so often, the Bible is God's story about God.

David is the main human actor here, but it's God's story. So let's look at three things in that story, in the story. First of all, at God's covenant in verses one to five.

The key to these verses is verse three. So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron. Notice the phrase, before the Lord.

In other words, this is an initiative of the Lord. David's reign is going to reflect God's own reign, God's own covenant. In other words, David's reign is going to depend on God's promises.

[11:31] What is covenant after all? In covenant, God unilaterally pledges Himself to us. God gives us His grace. We depend on that.

The assurance that God is with us. And notice the reasons they gave you, our blood brother.

Behold, we are bone and flesh. They had been led into battle by David.

And above all, the Lord had said to you. So, the importance of covenant. David is committing himself not just to reign, but to reign in a godly way.

Indeed, David is committing himself to forgive. After all, you are our bone and flesh. Time's passed. You led us out. Now, many of these guys have been persistent thorns in David's flesh.

Over many years, they had supported, they had been David's enemies. They had been David's opponents. This is a gospel passage, isn't it? While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

[12:38] Once again, David is showing he's fit to be king, isn't he? The forgiving grace that God had shown to him, now he shows to his enemies. Amazing grace. How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

So often, indeed always, everywhere, this is gospel. Gospel grace. And that's shown further by the word in verse 2. You shall be shepherd of my people Israel and you shall be prince.

In other words, David is not just going to rule by brute force. David is not just going to rule because he is the strongest warrior. David is going to be a shepherd.

Now, a shepherd in Scripture has two main tasks. First of all, to feed the sheep and secondly, to fight the wolf. It's not the Lord Jesus Christ himself says in John chapter 10, I am the good shepherd and he contrasts himself with the hired shepherds.

You see, the hired hand will feed the sheep if the pay is good enough. But the one thing the hired hand will never do is fight the wolf. The true shepherd always fights the wolf.

[13:51] My goodness me, there's plenty of wolves around us today and David is going to have the care of the shepherd which of course is going to be embodied in that great, great psalm which we all love, Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd.

He leads me, he guards me. We are not David but we are linked in covenant with the Lord and particularly in any position of leadership among the Lord's people, we need to be shepherds, shepherds who care for the flock but also shepherds who fight the wolf.

This is so, so important in those days in which we live. God's covenant. How do we know the kingdom will come? Not just come to David but come for Jesus Christ because of God's covenant. God has committed himself to his people by promises that he cannot and will not break. Now the second thing in verses 6 to 16 is God's city.

Once again, this carries on the idea of covenant because this is the fulfillment actually of an ancient promise in Genesis 15. In Genesis 15, God said to Abraham, I'm going to bring your people into a land with seven nations in it and the seventh nation mentioned is the Jebjahites.

[15:14] This is getting rid of the last remnants of Canaanite opposition. Fulfilling, as I say, that ancient promise. Interesting to see how these ancient promises are fulfilled.

Probably about 800, 900 years later, after all, David's early capital had been Hebron and in Hebron, Abraham and Sarah and others of the patriarchal family had been buried.

Promises made and promises kept. And also, the first mention of Zion, as I said. 800, 900 years has not made any difference to Yahweh's promises.

They make no difference now. Zion is the mountain of God's promise. We read and we sang the version of Isaiah chapter 2. Isaiah, particularly, perhaps more than any of the other prophets,

focuses the promises on God's capital, Zion, city of our God.

So you see, once again, on earth, around about 1000 BC, there is a visual aid of the Lord reigning. In a very real sense, the Old Testament is a series of visual aids, of active parables of the coming of God's kingdom.

[16:36] And here's another one. On that mountain citadel of Zion, as David, the Lord's anointed, begins his reign. He is showing something of the reign of the Lord.

Now, it is important to say something about verse 8. This is often misunderstood. And David said on that day, whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind who are hated by David's soul.

Now, at a first reading, that could sound as if David is being extremely vindictive, extremely unpleasant. But I don't think that's what's being said at all. The essence is that David is using their words back and saying, even the blind and the lame will keep you out.

David is saying, essentially, the Lord has promised me this city, so stop playing silly games. I think that's essentially what he's saying. David was never vindictive.

David committed terrible sins, particularly Ryan Bathsheba, as we'll see in due course. But the essence of David is that he is large-hearted and generous-hearted.

[17:49] So he answers them in their own terms and says, look, the Lord has promised me this, so stop playing games. I think we should remember that, actually, because the work of God, the kingdom, is so despised in our own day, isn't it?

People mock, people despise it, people talk about us being old-fashioned, out of date, nothing happening. We've got to rest on God's promises for his city, for his people.

You see, the increase of his kingdom, verse 9, David lived in the stronghold, called it the city of David. David built the city all around, from the millow onwards, probably as a supporting terraces. He, in other words, fortified the basic citadel, and worked outwards from it, and he became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him.

Now, he is bringing the kingdom. It is the Lord of hosts. This is one of two things here. First of all, the nations asked for his friendship, and Hiram, king of Tyre, sent messengers to David, verse 11, and cedar trees, also carpenters and masons, who built David a house, David's palace.

[19:05] Then later on, of course, there is going to be the temple, the house, which Solomon is going to build. If you read the latter part of 1 Chronicles, you will discover that although David was not allowed to build the temple, he was very much involved in the preparations for it.

And later on, we will look at that great chapter where God makes a covenant with David, 2 Samuel chapter 7. Now, this is pointing to something greater. Later on, we are going to sing, I cannot tell how all the lands will worship.

You see, that's what's beginning to happen here. All the lands are beginning to worship. Not worship David, of course, but worship David's God.

Look what he says, verse 12, David knew that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

Notice David doesn't say, look, I've really made it, haven't I? I'm a great warrior, a great diplomat, a great politician. Look how famous I am. It is God who has established the kingdom.

[20:13] This is a great message for us, isn't it? So often in the work of the kingdom, we get terribly tied up with our little empires, don't we? Little parts of the kingdom, which we are privileged by grace to have part in.

We draw attention to ourselves. Remember the great words of John Wesley as to sum up his ministry, I offered Christ to them. These are wonderful.

Is that what we offer to people? When we talk about the work of God, when we talk about the kingdom of God, can we say with Wesley, I offer Christ to them?

But after all, there's nothing else to offer them. Any institution can offer friendship, any institution can give cups of coffee, any institution can do all sorts of things for people.

As Philip Yancey says in one of his books, the one thing the church can offer that no one else can is grace. And that's what we have to offer. It is grace which anticipates the kingdom.

[21:15] So the increase of the kingdom, the nations ask for his friendship. And of course, after this, we would wish that verses 13 to 16 weren't there.

I don't mean because they've got awkward long names in them. I always say to the Cornhill guys, when you're reading these verses in public, read them confidently because no one else knows how

to pronounce them either.

True. And our dear friend Terry, who's reading, used to say, hang me if he didn't actually know what the word was. Many of you will remember that with affection.

Now, the point is, this is another little passage similar to what we had in chapter 3, verses 2 to 5.

The list of the concubines and wives that David took to himself and a reminder of the weakness of God's servants. The kingdom does not come through the greatness of God's servants, but through the greatness of God himself.

[ 22 : 20 ] You see, as I said last week, you could make excuses for David. You could say, like Abraham long before him, he married to make sure he had to have children to carry on the line of promise.

But he didn't need to because God had already guaranteed that. And surely, this needs to curb our tendency to evangelical celebrity culture and hero worship.

If you admire some servant of God, then thank God for them. Thank God for the gifts he's given to them. But don't idolize them. Don't make them into some kind of guru.

We need to, and ourselves, don't think we are stronger than we are. We need to walk humbly and prayerfully to the end of our days. The kingdom will come.

The kingdom will triumph. Christ will reign. It won't happen because of us. But we, because we, David, inherited the kingdom by grace.

[ 23 : 25 ] We have a place in the kingdom by grace. So we have God's covenant, God's city. Finally, in verses 17 to 25, we have God's champion.

Now, often, as we've gone through the life of David, we're reminded of that early story which in many ways defines David. 1 Samuel 17, the victory over Goliath and the Philistines.

Over and over again, we'll see this when we come actually to the very end of his story. Over and over again, that same enemy comes up again and again.

David heard of it, verse 17, and went down to the stronghold, possibly the caves of Adullam, where in his days of rejection he had gone and fought guerrilla campaign.

Now, it's not that David was afraid of the Philistines. Probably, he is using the tactics which has served him so well in the early days. But once again, remember, this is God's story.

[ 24 : 31 ] Not David did this, so we do this, but rather, this is how God used David. And there are two things here. First of all, there is God's guidance. Verse 19, David inquired of the Lord, shall I go up against the Philistines?

Verse 23, David inquired of the Lord the second time. And God tells him one time to advance and the next time to delay.

One time, he says, David, go ahead. Another time, he says, David, delay. God's enemies need to be fought. God's enemies sometimes need to be fought in different ways.

That's why we need to have our ears open to what God is saying. Now, in David's case, probably the priest Abiathar was with him and he was the main way in earlier days in which God had given his mind.

Now, we, of course, don't have a priest with an effort. What we do have are the scriptures. The scriptures which guide us, the scriptures which urge us sometimes to action and sometimes to delay.

[ 25 : 39 ] The important thing is that we hear the voice of God. Remember, this whole story begins way back in 1 Samuel 3, at a time when we are told that the word of God was rare.

There was no vision. Two things go together. When the word of God is not being preached, God's people lose their vision. And the whole, the story that God begins to move things in the right direction when he lays his hand on the young prophet Samuel and Samuel hears the master's voice.

And that's the, that's the message from here as well. Once we are certain what God's word is, and we mustn't waste time delaying and saying, I wonder we should do something else.

We need to go ahead. Once God has spoken to us clearly, once God has spoken to us specifically through scripture, we need to go ahead.

And that's what David does here. But the second thing is God's power. It is the Lord who overwhelms the enemy. Verse 19, the Lord said to David, I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand.

