

## 24. When the King returns

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, we're going to turn to our reading now, and we're looking forward to Bob taking up his studies in 2 Samuel, the second book of Samuel. You'll find that if you have one of our church Bibles on page 271.

If not, then you'll find it about a third of the way into the Old Testament, after 1 Samuel and before the books of Kings and Chronicles. We're going to read chapter 19, and from the new section beginning halfway through verse 8, you'll see the title in our Bibles anyway, David Returns to Jerusalem.

And you'll remember some weeks ago when Bob was last in this, we read of the triumphant but terribly sad story of the revolt of Absalom.

Absalom and his army's defeat and his own death and the weeping of King David, but nevertheless his victory as God's king.

So chapter 19 then at verse 8, now Israel had fled every man to his own home. And all the people were arguing throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies and saved us from the hands of the Philistines, and now he has fled out of the land from Absalom.

[ 1 : 2 7 ] But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore, why do you say nothing about bringing the king back? King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.

Say to the elders of Judah, Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his house, when the word of all Israel has come to the king? You are my brothers, you are my bone and my flesh.

Why then should you be the last to bring back the king? And say to Amasa, Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do to me, and more also, if you are not commander of my army from now on in place of Joab.

And he swayed the heart of all the men of Judah as one man, so that they sent word to the king, Return both you and all your servants. So the king came back to the Jordan, and Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king, and to bring the king over the Jordan.

And Shimei, the son of Gera the Benjamite from Behurim, hurried to come down with the men of Judah to meet king David.

[ 2 : 3 9 ] And with him were a thousand men from Benjamin. And Zeba, the servant of the house of Saul, with his fifteen sons and his twenty servants, rushed down to the Jordan before the king, and they crossed the ford to bring over the king's household and to do his pleasure.

And Shimei, the son of Gera, fell down before the king as he was about to cross the Jordan. And he said to the king, Let not my lord hold me guilty, or remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem.

Do not let the king take it to heart, for your servant knows that I have sinned. Therefore, behold, I have come this day, the first of all of the house of Joseph, to come down to meet my lord the king.

Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, answered, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this? Because he cursed the Lord's anointed. But David said, What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be as an adversary to me?

Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel? And the king said to Shimei, You shall not die.

[ 3 : 55 ] And the king gave him his oath. And Mephibosheth, the son of Saul, came down to meet the king. He had neither taken care of his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed, until the day he came back in safety.

When he came to Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him, Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth? He answered, My lord the king, my servant deceived me.

For your servant said to him, I'll saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go with the king. For your servant is lame. He has slandered your servant to my lord the king.

But my lord the king is like the angel of God. Do therefore what seems good to you. For all my father's house were but men doomed to death before my lord the king.

But you set your servant among those who eat at your table. What further right have I then to cry to the king? And the king said to him, Why speak any more of your affairs?

[ 5 : 01 ] I have decided. You and Seba shall divide the land. And Mephibosheth said to the king, Oh, let him take it all. Since my lord the king has come safely home.

Now Barzillai, the Gileadite, had come down from Rogelim. And he went on with the king to the Jordan to escort him over the Jordan. Barzillai was a very aged man, 80 years old.

He had provided the king with food while he stayed at Machinaim, for he was a very wealthy man. And the king said to Barzillai, Come over with me. And I will provide for you with me in Jerusalem.

But Barzillai said to the king, How many years have I still got to live that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am this day 80 years old. Can I discern what is pleasant and what is not?

Can your servant taste what he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen to the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king?

[ 6 : 09 ] Your servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king. Why should the king repay me with such a reward? Please let your servant return that I may die in my own city near the grave of my father and my mother.

But here is your servant Chimham. Let him go over with my lord the king and do for him whatever seems good to you. And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me and I will do for him whatever seems good to you and all that you desire of me I will do for you.

Then all the people went over the Jordan and the king went over and the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him and he returned to his own home.

The king went on to Gilgal and Chimham went on with him. All the people of Judah and also half the people of Israel brought the king on his way. Then all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king Why have our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away and brought the king and his household over the Jordan and all David's men with him?

All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel Because the king is our close relative. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king's expense?

[ 7 : 29 ] Or has he given us any gift? The men of Israel answered the men of Judah We have ten shares in the king and in David also We have more than you Why then did you despise us?

Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king? But the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

Amen. May God bless to us this his word. I wonder please if you could turn once again to the passage that was read that's on page 271 and as we do so let's have a moment of prayer.

God our Father 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.

This is our prayer in the name of Christ Jesus the living word. Amen. Now I imagine you would have to have been living on another planet not to hear the news dominated by the Olympics in the last week or so and possibly many of you rejoice this afternoon at Andy Murray's gold medal and at the excitement and drama that surrounded that event.

[ 9 : 09 ] But of course we know that these events the winning of gold medals the presentation of them and so on are the tip of the iceberg. What we don't see on our screens are the many many days months and years of training.

We don't see the discipline the self-denial all the kind of things that these athletes and sports people have to do in order to win the medal in order to win the prize on the day of reckoning.

Because the Olympics are in a sense a prize giving they are a day of reckoning. And that is exactly what we have here in chapter 19 of 2 Samuel.

The day of reckoning has arrived. The king is returning to Jerusalem and he is returning to deal with the people according to how they have behaved towards him or rather in fact not according how they behave towards him because he is very gracious to his enemies.

The rebellion is over. Absalom has been defeated. Absalom has died. David is still across the Jordan in the place called Mahanaim where Jacob of course I think you were looking at this morning the place where Jacob went as he wrestled with God.

[ 10 : 32 ] But David is still not back in Jerusalem. And I think the key to understanding this passage is to look at verses 8 to 10 and get the setting.

three times in these short verses appears the phrase the king. The king arose. The king sat on his seat.

The king has delivered us. Now we've noticed this in our earlier studies in Samuel. Throughout the difficulties, throughout the dangers, throughout the traumas David has regularly been referred to as the king.

He is the Lord's anointed. Nothing can prevent the coming of the kingdom. So he is about to return. And this is a mirror image. If you read back later on at chapter 15 and 16 when he left various people were associated with that leaving.

And now as he returns there are various people associated with that return. People who had been involved in the earlier story. That's the first thing. It's a kind of mirror image here as the king returns.

[ 11 : 38 ] But if that were the only thing all it would be is a good story and it is a good story. Probably the story of David is the most exciting continuous piece of narrative in scripture.

I recommend you sit down and read it through sometime all the way from 1 Samuel 16 to 2 Samuel 24. And if you find it hard going then try it in Eugene Peterson's translation or paraphrase the message and get the flow of this great story.

But this is not just a great story. This is a mirror into a deeper reality. David flawed and imperfect yet he is a genuine picture of the king who will return to set up his kingdom.

Now there are still problems and at the end we are going to look briefly at the problems at the end of chapter 19 and into chapter 20. Nevertheless this is a genuine picture of the day when the king will return.

When the king will return to set up his kingdom and when we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That's what Paul says in 2 Corinthians. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

[ 12 : 53 ] The final verdict the final assessment which will set aside all previous provisional assessments late William still used to say the prize giving is upstairs.

And when that prize giving comes then everyone's work will be seen in its true light. Now we are going to look at this chapter in two parts there are really two main themes in the chapter.

First of all the king is gracious to his enemies and secondly the king is generous to his friends. The king is gracious to his enemies and he is generous his friends and then a kind of third point really a kind of footnote talking about the problems that remain at the end of the chapter.

As I said the whole chapter is governed or the whole incident is governed by verses 8 to 10 and we are reminded of who the true king is and what the true king has done.

Verse 9 all the people were arguing throughout all the tribes of Israel remember many of them had gone after Absalom many of them had rebelled against David many of them had turned their back on the king look what they are saying now the king delivered us from the hand of our enemies and saved us from the hand of the Philistines way back beginning in chapter in 1 Samuel 17 when he defeated the Philistine giant and much of the rest of 1 Samuel and into 2 Samuel this is the king who has won the battle against our enemies this is this is one of the things that marks the true king the true king has rescued us from our enemies and the other thing is this is the one who has outlasted the usurper Absalom verse 10 who he anointed over us is dead in battle Absalom could not stand the pace Absalom is not the true king this is the one who is asking for loyalty and he is and this is the one to whom he is this is the king who sends the message king David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar now Zadok and Abiathar had remained in Jerusalem while David was in exile not because they were loyal to Absalom but to act as David's eyes and ears to act as information for him and now they are calling people back to their true loyalty the loyalty to the true kingdom which has been battered almost out of recognition how would the kingdom of God survive unless it was the true kingdom how would it survive the apathy the pride the conceit the jealousies the backbiting and so on only the kingdom of God could survive that and we'll see this again briefly at the end of the chapter so Zadok and Abiathar are saying look this is who the true king is and recalling them to true commitment now if we're tempted in our day to follow any other king then we've got to ask ourselves some questions do we know a better Christ than the one who saved us do we know a better Lord than the one who saved us from our enemies who keeps us in this life and has promised us a life beyond do we have a better Bible which points to a better saviour than the one we have this is the this is the question that was the question then and it's the question now who is the king how do we recognize him this is the one who delivered us from our enemies this is the one who cares for us this is our shepherd now David's generosity as I say to his his graciousness to his enemies some of the commentators say this is simply shrewd policy he acted very shrewdly now this is this is a common thing among super spiritual people that you cannot both be spiritual and practical obviously

[ 17 : 05 ] David is acting shrewdly he is determined to bind old enemies to his to his service and to his loyalty but that doesn't mean that David that doesn't mean that David is being unscrupulous there is policy there there is far more than policy there is grace isn't this a picture of something bigger while we were enemies Christ died for us now that's a phrase so familiar to us we forget it don't we we forget that we had nothing except our enmity and hostility so look at these people first of all Amasa in verse 13 say to Amasa are you not my bone and my flesh God do so to me and more also if you are not commander of my army from now on in place of Joab now if you read back in chapter 17 you'll find that Amasa had been one of Absalom's commanders

Amasa had led the rebel army what's David saying Amasa I know you were my enemy but I want you to be my friend I want you to use your gifts your talents your power in my service that is grace now in the in the world of the time in the world of politics Amasa is not going to last long he's going to be killed in the next chapter by Joab but that's not the point the point is that David David looks at this enemy and says you I'm going to use you in my service that is the gospel isn't it then we have two men Shimei and Ziba who played a very inglorious part earlier in the story when David had to leave Jerusalem remember I said at the time David does not flee from Jerusalem because he's a coward he fled from Jerusalem in order to save the citizens of Jerusalem from being massacred by Absalom's hordes that was the point now as he left

Jerusalem this man Shimei threw stones and uttered curses at him from a safe distance across the ravine verse 16 Shimei son of Gerai the Benjamite from Behurim hurried to come down with the men of Judah to meet King David and verse 18 and Shimei fell down before the king and said to the king let not my lord hold me guilty or remember how your servant did wrong on the day the king left Jerusalem he wants to be on the winning side but his repentance is insincere isn't it look first I have sinned now when David sinned and sinned dreadfully some chapters earlier David immediately sought to put right notice Shimei says I have sinned don't hold me guilty for your servant knows verse 20 and then immediately he neutralizes that therefore behold I have come this day with the first of all the house of Joseph look David

I've brought some of the northern tribes Joseph is a phrase often used in the Old Testament between the northern the northern tribes the northern part of the kingdom David you need me oh I know I got it wrong now that is never the way to put things right to half apologize and then and then pretend really that you're genuine this is playing politics this is not genuine repentance and yet the king is gracious notice how Abishai verse 21 Abishai was Joab's brother Abishai the son of Zeruiah and said shall not Shimei be put to death for this because he cursed the Lord's anointed but David said what I have to do with you you sons of Zeruiah you should this day be as an adversary as a Satan that's the Hebrew word to me shall anyone be put to death this day in Israel or do I not know that I am this day king over Israel I don't need to settle scores in order to prove that I am king over Israel

David is the shepherd who wants to save his sheep back in chapter 7 the great covenant with David the Lord says you are the shepherd of my people who wants everyone to repent and no one to perish so Shimei even the even the the slimy and devious Shimei is accepted into the king's into the king's circle he does not he does not really really live that way because later on in one king's two Solomon has to get rid of him but the point that's not the point the point is the king's graciousness to his enemies Abishai does not believe in forgiveness the sons of Zeruiah Job Abishai they do not believe in forgiveness they do not believe in repentance and then comes another figure the devious and unscrupulous

[ 22 : 25 ] Ziba and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul back again in verse 17 with his 15 sons 20 servants rushed down to the Jordan before the king now the point is this Ziba had earlier come to David and slandered Mephibosheth remember Mephibosheth Saul's grandson Jonathan's son who had been accepted by David into his family and given a place at his table at the beginning of the exile Ziba came with gifts with presents and said Mephibosheth turned against you he's staying in Jerusalem and now here once again he comes with bribes now a man like that does not understand grace does he a man like that thinks you can buy grace you always get these people don't you anything that seems to be succeeding they want to be part of it always want to be associated with success we know the celebrities we know the churches the real church you have to go to and so on we know all these things what a denial of grace that is isn't it the beauty of grace is that we have nothing to prove to God think about that think about that when you feel that you don't deserve of course you don't deserve it that is the point we don't deserve it we have nothing to prove to God the gospel is not about getting what we deserve the gospel is about

God who gives to the undeserving that is what the gospel is but you see David's sheer graciousness here these men whom of course had proved totally untrustworthy these men who did not deserve anything they are welcomed into David's circle that's the first thing the king is gracious to his enemies but the second thing is the king is generous to his friends now once again we've got to remember the kingdom has not come by 2 Samuel 19 there are weaknesses there are flaws here but once again the generosity of the king is illustrated by his reaction to two of his friends first of all Mephibosheth verse 24 Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king he had neither taken care of his feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes from the day the king departed until the day he came back in safety this man had been dreadfully missing the king this man had longed for the king's return when he came to

Jerusalem the king said to him why did you not go with me Mephibosheth he answered my lord oh king my servant deceived me for your servant said to him I'll saddle a donkey for myself so Mephibosheth comes and put things right you see Ziba had pretended that Mephibosheth was a traitor instead Ziba Mephibosheth had loved and longed for him now David's reaction to Mephibosheth can seem a bit grudging this is this is in verse 29 the king said to him why speak any more of your affairs I have decided you and Ziba shall divide the land the point is as I say the kingdom has not yet fully come a king needs both of these men but the point is Mephibosheth does not lose his place I want you to look at verse 28 this is pure gospel all of us could say this verse 20 all my father's house were but men doomed to death before my lord the king but you set your servant among those who eat at your table what further right have

I then to cry to the king this is a man who has appreciated grace this is a man who realizes that the only thing that matters is the graciousness and generosity of the king because that is what the gospel is and there this verse which is not particularly well known the gospel shines brilliantly and clearly and powerfully from this verse what about us we were all doomed to death eternal death weren't we but we have been set among those who eat at the king's table the king said well why do any more speak of your affairs if the king has accepted us at his table why then do we need to be concerned that he will not continue to care for us so

Mephibosheth remain seated at the king's table Mephibosheth of the wrong family if you like the family of Saul we are all from the wrong family aren't we we are all born in sin we all come from Adam and yet we are accepted into the king's home and welcomed at his table then we have this very attractive character Barzillai the Gileadite now if you read back a few chapters you will find that when David was hunted and harried and people were turning against him this wealthy man had taken David into his home and along with some of his other friends had welcomed David's people tired exhausted and hungry he had provided them with food indeed provided a veritable feast and remember at that time Barzillai did not know whether Absalom would succeed or not it was possible that David might not succeed in other words this man vowed to David the king at the time of his rejection when it did not look as if David was king surely this is the gospel again isn't it this may well be reflected in Psalm 23 as we all know

[ 29 : 00 ] Psalm 23 it's a psalm of David but not dated to a specific period in his life what do we read there you have prepared for me a table in the presence of my enemies here is an incident then this man Barzillai who shows by his warmth and hospitality and generosity to David that he's truly understood who the true king is and notice as well his unselfishness verse 37 please let your servant return that I may die in my own city near the grave of my father and my mother but here is your servant Chimham let him go over Chimham may well have been Barzillai's son but anyway this is this is a man who as Eugene Peterson says in his commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel this is a rare example of friendship without self interest

Barzillai feels well I've nothing to gain from the king's return personally except of course that I'm rejoicing the king has returned of course a man who feels like that is a man who can experience grace isn't it verse 39 then all people went over the Jordan and the king went over and the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him and he returned to his own home Barzillai can die content because he knows that God's king has triumphed he didn't know of course the revelation that we have of the new testament of the coming kingdom and so on can we doubt that he would realize that beyond this there was going to be another realm another accounting where he would once again receive the king's blessing he would receive the well done good and faithful servant ultimately the only well done that matters because we don't think that way do we we love well done we love commendation and we love praise and yet ultimately that's going to be the only well done that matters but as I said this is not the kingdom yet and just a quick word on the last verses of chapter 41 a quick word on chapter 20 verse 41 all the men of

Israel came to the king and said to the king why have your brothers the men of Judah stolen you away the men of Judah answered the men of Israel because the king is our close relative you can see here the tensions that are going to spill into the open after David's death and after Solomon's death when the kingdom is divided into two the tensions are already there the rivalry of north and south and indeed in chapter 20 there is another abortive attempt at rebellion chapter 20 verse 1 there happened to be a worthless man whose name was Shebalas and of Bichri he blew the trumpet and said we have no portion in David we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse that's exactly what is going to happen again at the close of the reign of Solomon when his income proof of a son Rehoboam succeeds in tearing apart the fragile unity problems remain divisions remain Amasa the man appointed as commander is soon to be killed indeed he's killed by Job

I want you just to look at the last verses of the chapter verses 23 to 26 I'll read them and I suspect these verses will not fill your hearts with wonder love and praise but they have an importance so let's read them verse 23 of chapter 20 now Joab was in command of all the army of Israel and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was in command of the Cherethites and the Pelethites and Adoram was in charge of the forced labor and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahelid was the recorder and Sheba was secretary and Zadok and Abith were priests and Ira the Jairite was also David's priest what's the point of that rather dull details surely it's seen the kingdom is still intact the war is over the king has returned and the life can continue so as I say this is not the kingdom yet we are after all still waiting for that kingdom nonetheless this is a genuine picture we've got to remember that all the way through

God's king and God's kingdom even flawed is still a genuine picture of what will be and in particular here the fact that the king will return the king will review his servants and the king will give graciously and generously to those who have stood with him in his time of exile who can doubt this is his time of exile when we sing the words Jesus is Lord these are words of faith aren't they we can't look around and prove it Absalom or the equivalent of Absalom is still raging very much but we believe that the king will return but at the moment we're not yet at the Olympic ceremony we're in the training period aren't we we're in the period of the costly disciplines and lonely agonies the hard graft of the work of the kingdom but surely when the king returns when the king returns in grace and in glory then nothing else will can ever surpass the well done good and faithful servant may that be a truth that burns brightly in our hearts and lives the king will return and the king will bring gracious and generous rewards amen let's pray father how we praise you for your grace we are unprofitable and limited servants we are incapable of doing anything so often it seems without self-interest but we pray lord that we may luxuriate in that grace rejoicing that although we came from the family of the fallen that we have been rescued and not only rescued but brought to the king's house able to eat at his table in the anticipation of the day when he will return again in power and great glory help us lord to live faithfully looking to that day we ask this in the name of the risen lord the returning king the lord Jesus Christ amen