

How Should Leaders Rule?

2 Samuel 23:1-4

What is wrong with the American political scene? Why is there so much corruption and confusion? Why do our leaders seem to be so blind to the very real problems that we are facing? About the time that you think it couldn't get any worse, our society descends to a new level of depravity. Where should we turn? How can we find leaders who will use their authority to help our people rather than harm them? We can find an important clue about the right kind of leadership in 2 Samuel 23:1-4

“Now these *be* the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man *who was* raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word *was* in my tongue. The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me, He that rules over men *must be* just, Ruling in the fear of God. And *he shall be* as the light of the morning, *when* the sun rises, *Even* a morning without clouds; *as* the tender grass *springing* out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” (2 Samuel 23:1-4)

David's Conclusion: The Main Point

“Now these *be* the last words of David.” These are the words that David wanted to be remembered by. These were not that last words that he uttered on his deathbed, nor were they the the last words that he spoke publicly. In short, these words were not written in the order of time (or chronological); they were written for emphasis. These first 4 verses are part of a concluding statement. They are included to make a very important point that King David wanted to emphasize. This would be a great emphasis for each one of us to think through. What are your “last words” that you would want your children and grandchildren to remember? Consider writing these down in some form, or even making an audio or video for posterity.

David's Credentials

“David the son of Jesse said, and the man *who was* raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, “The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word *was* in my tongue.”

A. David, the son of Jesse

The name “David” means “beloved.” He was the son of Jesse, who, by all accounts, was not a notable figure in the local community in and around Bethlehem. To say that David was a son of Jesse is to speak of his humble beginnings. At times, David's enemies would use the phrase “son of Jesse” to disparage David; it was as if they were saying, “son of a nobody.” King Saul, during his decline, often denounced “the son of Jesse” (instead of using David's name); Saul's spy, Doeg the Edomite did the same.ⁱⁱ Nabal (whose name means “foolish”) said this in 1 Samuel 25:10. Sheba, “a worthless man” repeated it in 2 Samuel 20:1. God frequently works through those who come from humble beginnings. This helps us to understand the reference to the Messiah as “a rod out of the stem of Jesse” in Isaiah 11:1.

B. The man whom God raised up to a high position

From those humble beginnings, the Lord elevated David to be the King of Israel and the ancestor of the Messiah. According to 2 Samuel chapter 7, the Lord took David, a humble shepherd, and made his **“a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth”** (2 Samuel 7:9b). According to that chapter, God made a covenant with David, making him an ancestor of the Messiah!

C. The one whom the God of Jacob anointed

It's important to note the way that David identified the Lord in verse 1: **“The God of Jacob.”** Speaking of God this way emphasizes the eternal promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As David wrote this, he probably thought back to the day that he had been anointed as the new king of Israel. 1 Samuel 16:1-13 describes the way that God guided the prophet, Samuel, to anoint David. **“But the LORD said to Samuel,**

‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart’” (1 Samuel 16:7). David probably had those words in mind as he thought about leadership. It’s good counsel for us today. How do we choose leaders? Is it by their appearance? Or their commanding voice? When it comes to leadership, remember that, though man may look on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart. This statement reminds every leader of his accountability before God: **“God looks on the heart.”** And the Lord looks on our hearts as we prepare to vote in the next elections.

D. The sweet psalmist of Israel

David was not only a mighty military leader, he was also the sweet psalmist of Israel. The psalms were the hymnbook – the songs of praise – in the Old Testament; the psalms were regularly sung in the temple worship. There are 150 psalms, and David is specifically identified as the author of 73 of them. But in addition to these, the New Testament identifies David as the author of 2 more. These are Psalm 2 (according to Acts 4:25) and Psalm 95 (according to Hebrews 4:7).

Shortly after David was anointed by the prophet, Samuel, he was recognized as a gifted individual. When King Saul was troubled by an evil spirit, one of his servants recommended David. According to 1 Samuel 16:18, **“One of the young men answered, “Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the LORD is with him.”** Indeed, David became a musical assistant to King Saul and learned the ways of the king’s court.

E. The one by whom the Spirit of the Lord has spoken to give us God’s inspired Word

When it comes to David’s credentials, this one is the most important: **“The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue.”** All of David’s other characteristics are important. But to give us the wisdom of God, this one is the most important. Across the generations, many teachers and professors have taught 2 Samuel 23:2 to their students to show the verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. The apostle Peter taught that **“holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”** (2 Peter 1:21). And David testified that he was aware of the way that God’s Spirit moved through him.

This is very important to each one of us as we seek answers to the problems in our society. Whom do we trust? Where do we place our confidence? In what source of authority do we place our faith? David testified about the Lord, **“His Word was in my tongue.”** This is the message of the infinite, transcendent God in human words. We may not share in the fame of David, but we can share in the faith of David. His faith was in God’s Word. And ultimately, God’s Word guides us to place our faith in David’s greater Son – the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice what the Spirit of the Lord said through the tongue and pen of David:

Context: David’s Son – the Messiah

“The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me, He that rules over men must be just, Ruling in the fear of God.” To emphasize the nature of God’s authoritative Word, David stated that it came from **“The God of Israel, the Rock of Israel.”** What was this crucial message about leadership?

1. Those who rule over others must act righteously. 2. Those who rule over others must do so in the fear of God. David, as the instrument of God’s Spirit, spoke of one particular coming leader, the Messiah: **“And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”** This is the standard for leadership. As one author wrote, **“Jesus also seems to have understood this passage as messianic; his comparison of himself to “light” (John 8:12; 9:5; cf. v. 4) and his prophetic parable comparing the wicked to weeds to be burned (Matt 13:30, 40; cf. v. 7) suggests that he was drawing upon images derived from this passage.”**ⁱⁱⁱ Of course, no one can be righteous without the righteousness of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. On the cross of Calvary, He offered Himself – the Just One for unjust sinners – that He might bring us to God. By rising

again from the dead and ascending to Heaven, He showed us that trusting Him alone will take us to Heaven.

Righteous rulers, guided by the fear of God

How does this passage apply to the leaders of our day? Psalm 36 describes the wicked by saying, “... **there is no fear of God before their eyes.**” In that psalm, you can see that a proper fear of God would restrain wickedness. It would hinder the wicked from flattering themselves – thinking that their deceit will never be revealed. He would stop plotting evil as he lies on his bed to set himself on an evil path. In his summary statement about all Jews and all Gentiles (in other words, all of humanity), the Apostle Paul wrote:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher [grave]; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. (Romans 3:10-18)

Yes, this is true of depraved humanity; it is the very real plight of all the societies on earth, including our own. Many of our leaders are governed by the fear of man. Proverbs 29:25 states that the fear of man is a snare. But the person who abides in the fear of the Lord has strong confidence (Proverbs 14:26). Which current issues would show us that leaders are making righteous decisions in the fear of God?

➤ **Protection for the helpless, including those in their mother’s wombs**

How do justice and the fear of God apply to the protection of the helpless? Political leaders in the United States had legalized turning wombs into tombs. But we thank God that 66 clinics have stopped performing abortions since the Supreme Court handed down the Dobbs decision. 26 of those clinics closed altogether.^{iv} A majority of the Supreme Court justices ruled in favor of righteousness and the fear of the Lord by upholding Mississippi’s law restricting abortions. The matter is now in the hands of state legislatures, and we need to pray for and vote for those who will uphold righteousness in the fear of God. The recent debate between Senate candidates in Georgia was instructive. Sen. Warnock, who is pro-abortion, insisted that the patient room is too crowded for the patient, her doctor and politicians. Herschel Walker pointed out that the senator forgot to mention another person in the room – the baby!

In 2006, the U.S. Senate conducted hearings concerning U.S. Supreme Court nominee, Samuel Alito. The senators questioned the judge about the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision which, in retrospect, has allowed more than 60 million abortions. The judge was asked about the principle of *stare decisis*, a Latin phrase used in law to mean, “Let the decision stand.” Would it surprise you to hear the name of one of the senators who told the judge to ignore *stare decisis* in the case of Roe v. Wade? He was a senator from Delaware named Joe Biden!^v Of course, this is the same Joe Biden who is now the president of our country – and expressed his outrage at the overturning Roe v. Wade. He has indicated that he wants the U.S. Congress to pass a law that would eliminate restrictions on abortions! This is what happens when “every man does that which is right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6, 21:25). Where are the leaders who will govern with unchanging righteousness and lead us in the fear of God?

➤ **Protection from those who do evil in an attempt to bring anarchy**

The “smash and grab robbery” is now one of the most common scenes on video from stores in our largest cities. This past week, gunmen in Chicago were hanging out of cars, shooting at ambulance attendants! A movement known as “Antifa” (which is supposed to be “anti-fascists” but acts exactly like fascists) has produced anarchy throughout the country. Recently, a teacher in California was recorded as he tried to recruit his students to be “revolutionaries!”^{vi}

➤ **Protection from invaders, terrorists and drug lords**

In massive proportions, the drug, fentanyl, is being shipped across our open southern border by the Mexican drug cartels. Parts of Ohio lead the nation in overdose deaths from illegal opioids.^{vii} Where are the leaders who will lead us in righteousness and the fear of God to put a stop to this? As we meet together tonight for a season of concerted prayer, we should beg the Lord to deliver our nation from this plague. A recent report from the Heritage foundation stated that “Biden’s open border is an open invitation to terrorist attacks.”^{viii} Where are the leaders who will stand against this? As you educate yourself about how to vote, please look for leaders who will advocate for doing right in the fear of God.

➤ **Protection from those who try to break down God-given identities, including gender**

Liberal politicians and liberal media now commonly refer to the abuse of minors as “health care.” Here in Ohio, a representative has put forward a bill prohibiting doctors from giving hormone blockers to children who want to change their God-given gender. The bill also prohibits gender transition surgery on minors. How do liberals respond to this? They call us “homophobes” and “transphobes” (meaning that we are afraid of homosexuals and transgender people). Let us declare the truth. We are not “homophobes” or “transphobes,” we are “theophobes” meaning “we fear God!”

➤ **Protection from those who try to twist the laws for their own purposes**

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak to three candidates for the Ohio Supreme Court. I asked them about the recent (liberal) majority opinion in the case of *Dubose v. McGuffey*.^{ix} “DuBose was indicted on two counts of murder, one count of aggravated robbery, and one count of aggravated burglary in case No. B 2005815-B. He was arrested in Las Vegas, Nevada, and returned to Ohio after waiving extradition.”^x The judge in Hamilton County carefully weighed all the factors in the case – including the fact that the defendant would probably try to flee the area. The defendant’s own grandmother begged the judge to set the bail high because they were all afraid of the accused murderer. The judge set bail at \$1.5 million on two charges. But the present liberal majority in the Ohio Supreme Court reduced that bail because they didn’t think the accused murderer could pay it. They ignored the careful work of the Hamilton County judge in order to govern according to their own values. This is one of the most significant public safety cases that we face in Ohio. And you can make a difference when you go to the polls to vote. Choose justices who will uphold righteousness in the fear of God.

May God give us leaders who will make just decisions, acting in the fear of the Lord.

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ⁱ You can see this by reading the next chapter, see 24:2, 10-11, 14, 17, 24

ⁱⁱ See, for instance, 1 Samuel 22:8-9

ⁱⁱⁱ Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 464.

^{iv} Julianne McShane, “At least 66 clinics in 15 states have stopped providing abortions since Dobbs, analysis finds” October 9, 2022 <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/least-66-clinics-15-states-stopped-providing-abortion-dobbs-analysis-rcna51399>

^v Julie Carr, “Biden Tells Alito He Can Ignore Stare Decisis, Overturn Roe in 2006 Exchange – If He Has the Votes” the Star News Network, May 9, 2022, video available, accessed here [Biden Tells Alito He Can Ignore Stare Decisis, Overturn Roe in 2006 Exchange - If He Has the Votes - The Star News Network](#)

^{vi} See Brittany Johnson, KCRA <https://www.kcra.com/article/sacramento-teacher-recorded-pledging-to-antifa-payout/40852992>

^{vii} See <https://www.ohiohospitalforpsychiatry.com/about/columbus-community-resources/opioid-overdose-state-takes-action/>

^{viii} Erin Dwinell, <https://www.heritage.org/immigration/commentary/bidens-open-border-open-invitation-terrorist-attacks>

^{ix} See <https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/rod/docs/pdf/0/2022/2022-Ohio-8.pdf>

^x *Ibid.*