

## **Introduction**

The coronation of King Charles III took place a week ago yesterday. It was a long anticipated event. Charles acceded to the throne on September 8 of last year when Queen Elizabeth died. There was a formal proclamation two days later. It was the first such ceremony to be live streamed and televised. But the really big deal was last weekend. The coronation was an ostentatious affair complete with crowns and robes and long royal trains and historic portraits. There was even an official website to help those interested prepare for the big event. The king processed along a parade route from Buckingham Palace to and from Westminster Abbey. An official concert followed the day after. More than 20 million people watched the event in the United Kingdom and many more throughout the world. It was a fabulous affair. Quite in contrast we turn this morning to an ascent to the throne of greater importance but which occurred with far less fanfare.

[Read text and Pray]

Saul and Jonathan are dead. Tribute to them has been paid. Now, what is the anointed one to do? In this text, at the Lord's directive, David takes initial steps toward fulfilling the purpose of God that he reign as king over Israel. These steps fly under the radar of glamour and ostentation. The description of the event is quite matter-of-fact. But we mustn't let the tone in which these steps are presented diminish the significance of what is going on here. In so many instances God accomplishes marvelous things from heaven's perspective in unexpectedly plain ways from earth's perspective. I want you to consider six facets of David's ascent to the throne of the tribe of Judah.

In the first instance, there is . . .

### **I. A Question.**

After the death of Saul and an appropriate time of grief, David begins looking ahead. Samuel the prophet had anointed him to be king. By this time the knowledge of that act was widely known. Saul himself had admitted it back in 1 Samuel 24. So what is David to do? Note carefully what he does NOT do. He does not behave impetuously. He does not drop everything and head up to Gibeah and announce that he is Israel's new king.

The United States Constitution is clear. For whatever reason, if the President leaves office, he is to be succeeded by the Vice-President. In more recent history this nation has witnessed such an occurrence twice—when John F. Kennedy was shot and when Richard Nixon resigned.

No such Constitution governed Israel. It was a theocracy. The king was to be selected by God. God had selected David. But how was David to accede to the throne? David is not filled with selfish-ambition, so he does not pursue the path of a take-over. He consults with God. And he does not come before the Lord to tell him what to do. He goes to the Lord to get direction. Verse 1 says, "After this David inquired of the Lord."

David may have been anointed king by the LORD, but the LORD was his king. David therefore went to the Lord to learn what steps he should now take. He had an inkling that he should go from Ziklag in Philistia up into Judah, but he sought verification from the Lord.

In this way, David exemplifies how every follower of Christ should go about life and especially the making of important decisions. Always first, let us inquire of the Lord. The first step to hearing from

God is to inquire of God. We are told to pray without ceasing. We are told to ask, seek, and knock. James says if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God. Let us live with an expression of the determination of our wills to do the will of God. Such an expression is an inquiring heart as to what is the direction of God.

This was the way of Jesus. He lived with that kind of spirit towards the Father. Recorded in John 5, Jesus explained that "the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise." An inquiring mind is where the path of obedience and exaltation begins. Lord, what is it you want me to do? We should ask that question in regard to the everyday things of life and certainly of the big decisions as well. So, first, David's accession to the throne was marked by a question.

Second, it was marked by . . .

## **II. An Instruction.**

The Lord honored David's question and provided an answer. God delights to give answers to those who truly seek them. He is glad to show the way to those who want to follow what he tells them. When you inquire of God as to what you shall do, always be sure you are not an unstable and double-minded person. Let not that person think he will receive anything from the Lord. But let the one who is determined to obey the instruction of the Lord be convinced that the Lord WILL answer. Keep asking. Keep knocking. Keep seeking.

The instruction that the Lord provided was, "Yes, go up." An obvious question that will be on our minds is, "HOW did the Lord communicate with David?" Most likely it was through Abiathar the priest in whose possession were the urim and the thumim by which inquiry of the Lord was to be made. But the question of "HOW" is not the main thing here. The main thing is the fact of what God said. We need to take a moment to remind ourselves who live in the wonderful day and time in which God has made his will and wisdom known in the fullness of the scriptures that what we have there, is all we need for life and godliness. By and large, we will be instructed by the Lord through the wealth of wisdom and godly principles given to us in his word. We need to seek first his kingdom and righteousness and all these things will be added to us.

We need to consider for a moment, though, the instruction that the Lord gave to David. David's question was "Shall I go up." And the Lord's instruction was "Go up." David was in the Philistine town of Ziklag as he had sought refuge from Saul by living among God's enemies. Philistia lies low on the coastal plain, the lowlands of Palestine. From the plain, the land rises steeply upward to a range of mountains which runs from north to south. So from a topographical standpoint, for David to leave Philistia and move into the territory of Judah, he would be moving eastward. An eastward move would be an upward move in elevation. God was leading David to move upward geographically into Judah but also politically to be enthroned. David had humbled himself under the mighty hand of God and the Lord was exalting him, lifting him up on high.

The path from humble obscurity to exaltation is also the one our Savior trod. Christ Jesus humbled himself in the lowlands of earth. He humbled himself to live among us in the midst of creation and was obedient unto death on a cross, and God has highly exalted him. This is also the call of every follower of Christ. We cannot humble ourselves too much. Do not begrudge being humbled. But know this, those who are humble before the Lord in the lowlands of life, he will lift up. Peter (1 Peter 5:6) says, "humble yourselves . . . under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you." For Paul as he wrote the Philippians, it was in counting as rubbish everything that

was gain to him that he would press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Let us remember that we sojourn down in the lowlands. This time in our lives is not the time of reward. It is the time for sacrifice and diligence and pursuing the upward call that will be ours when we join our Savior who like David went up to be exalted.

The third highlight of David’s ascendance to the throne is . . .

### **III. A Destination.**

The LORD’s instruction to go up was followed by a second question from David, “To which of the cities of Judah should I go?” And the Lord answered again, “To Hebron.” At the time Hebron was the most important town in Judah. There are reasons for this. Most significantly, Hebron is of great importance from the standpoint of covenant. This is the place to which Abraham came when he parted ways with Lot. It was here that the Lord first showed Abraham the land his descendants would inherit. Abraham bought a burial cave here when Sarah died. He was later buried in that same cave as were Isaac and Rebekah and Jacob and Leah.

For David to come to Hebron was to come to the most important city in Judah, but it was also to come to the place where the patriarchs were buried. Hence God is visibly and unmistakably connecting David to the covenant promises he made with Abraham and continuing to point forward to the one descendant who would be the fulfillment of the promises he made to both. One of the specific promises made to Abraham was that kings would come forth from the child Sarah would bear to him. This promise was repeated to Jacob when he was renamed Israel. The LORD told him that kings would from his own body and the land he gave to Abraham and Isaac he would give to his offspring. So it is that Matthew opens his gospel with these words, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

It gives us pause to marvel at the plan and purpose of God. When we read in the scripture all the names of towns and people, a lack of familiarity can feed a failure to recognize the wonder of the working of God. There is a message that rings out even in the places and even in the geography of the land where God eventually sent his Son to live and breathe, to teach and to heal, and to die and rise from the dead. The location is not incidental.

It brings us to a fourth aspect of David’s ascent to the throne . . .

### **IV. A Coronation.**

Actually it is an anointing but it is this anointing by which David wore a crown of authority. David departed with his household and his men and all of their households from the burned up city of Ziklag in Philistia. They moved in to Judah to the environs of Hebron and lived there. And then it came to pass that the men of Judah came. This was some sort of official group not simply SOME men of Judah, but THE men of Judah. They came to David and they anointed him king over the house of Judah. For clarity, let’s remind ourselves that Israel consisted of twelve tribes each inhabiting specific territory with the Levites spread throughout the territories. David, the son of Jesse, was from the tribe of Judah.

You may remember that when David defeated the Amalekite band of raiders who burned Ziklag and kidnaped his people, he sent some of the spoil to his friends. They were elders throughout Judah. These men of Judah who came were probably among the elders and perhaps many of the men who were not elders came as well. As far as they were concerned, God had anointed David and they came to own him as their king.

The text says that they anointed him. This anointing would not replace the anointing of Samuel. It would add to it. The anointing of Samuel was the declaration of the Lord that David was his king. The anointing of these men from Judah was their recognition and affirmation of what God had already indicated. This was not an election by men of a man who got the most votes. It was an act by men which acknowledged and submitted to what God had already decreed. It is this way with offices in the church. When elders or deacons are installed in the local church, we are not simply looking for someone to put in an office. It is God who marks out particular men for these roles. He does so by the Spirit of God who gifts and qualifies men for service. Paul drew attention to this very point when he was bidding adieu to the elders from Ephesus. He urged them: "Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). Gifts and qualifications are spelled out in Timothy. Here is how we recognize those the Holy Spirit has indicated are to lead in the church. Officeholders in the church are not something we decide. It is something God decides. We simply recognize what God has already decided.

The same is true when a person comes to faith in Christ. We stress something we call lordship salvation. The true follower of Jesus is one who submits to Christ as lord over our lives. Some people use the unfortunate phrase, "make Jesus Lord of your life." Listen, neither you nor I can make Jesus lord. He IS Lord. We cannot not make him lord, but what we can do is submit to him who is Lord. This is the call of Christ's kingdom—to submit to its king. Jesus said as much when he stated, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow." Every true follower of Christ is a subject of Christ as king.

Now, what stands out to us or what should stand out to us when it comes to David is the fact that this anointing is so nondescript. There is nothing outwardly to suggest it to have been an impressive event. It almost seems insignificant. When kings are crowned and accede to thrones it generally involves great pomp and flamboyance, with trumpets and speech and regalia. But this text says simply that "they anointed David king over the house of Judah." There was no television or radio coverage. There were no newspapers to report it.

But it is recorded in the scriptures. And what we know through the scripture is that the anointing of David as king is in fact an event of major historical profundity, an event which far surpasses the accession even of the likes of Queen Elizabeth II or King Charles III. At this place and time the chosen king of God's own people, of in essence the kingdom of God, the man after God's own heart commences his visible reign.

It is such a momentous event and yet it takes place out of the spotlight. It doesn't seem like much. The world at large would be unimpressed. The king whose descendant and on whose throne will reign the creator of the universe ascends to the throne in such an unassuming and humble way. Yet it is THIS throne which is the seat of divine power and universal authority.

Jesus has come to this throne in a similar sort of way. He was born in a stable in a village and was welcomed by shepherds. He was not welcomed by kings and rulers and the important people. The rulers of this world were unimpressed and cast him out. A mustard seed is very unimpressive. Its size is so small. But God grows his kingdom from unimpressive beginnings. It is just the way of the Lord. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed; it is the smallest of seeds but when it is grown it is larger than the other garden plants and becomes a tree. Listen, the world in which we live goes after the glitz and glamour, the bright and exciting, but we must never underestimate what God is doing behind the scenes in the midst of what may seem small and

nondescript. Do not listen to the depressing whispers that say where you are and what you are doing is unimportant.

We move next from a coronation to . . .

#### **V. A Delegation.**

David's first mentioned act as king of Judah is an act of diplomacy. He sends a delegation to Jabesh-gilead. For perspective, David was in Hebron which was located on the south side of the Israelite territory, and Jabesh-gilead was about half-way to the northern extreme. David learned how the men of Jabesh-gilead had bravely and valiantly made the twenty-mile round trip to retrieve the bodies of Saul and his sons from humiliation. The Philistines had displayed their bodies on a temple wall, but the men of Jabesh-gilead brought them home and gave their bones an honorable burial. This town had been delivered by Saul during the early stages of his reign, and they had not forgotten him. They were fiercely loyal to Saul. It could be assumed they would regard David as their enemy. But graciously David now reaches out to Jabesh-gilead.

We saw a couple weeks ago how scripture connects the coronation of Jesus with his resurrection. And once Jesus was raised, the climax of his time with those who followed him was to commission them to go into the world as messengers with his gospel. Before he ascended, he appointed men to be his witnesses in Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. Paul explains that "Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." We are ambassadors for Christ. We urge the world through Christ to be reconciled to God.

Going back to David, we need to note the manner in which he dispatched the delegation to Jabesh-gilead. He expressed gratitude and blessing. David is truly pleased by their efforts to honor Saul. He is also taking advantage of the opportunity, now that he is recognized as king in Judah, to invite this loyal-hearted city to join with him. He promises to do them good, and he urges them to be valiant by siding with him. Let them be among the first of the other tribes to acknowledge what has already been recognized by the men of Judah.

It is such a winsome evangelistic appeal that David makes. It is a caring call to join his kingdom. He does not come with threats and intimidation. Absent is a judgmental attitude. Here is a vivid example of gentleness and understanding, of seeking to earn the right to be heard. David's example reminds me of the counsel of James: "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." Jesus approached folks in a similar spirit when he called them to himself. He said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Here is a model for us in relationships as well as in evangelism. It is the way of the Lord, for "while we were still sinners" God showed us his love. While we were enemies we were reconciled to God. Let us like David and like Jesus approach a world that is at enmity with her king to WARMLY invite it to join the band of those who are reconciled to God in Christ. Let us with kindness and grace invite those with whom we may be at odds to join together peaceably.

The final facet of David's ascent to the throne is . . .

#### **VI. Opposition.**

Look down to verse 8. "But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul and brought him to Mahanaim and made him king over Gilead and the Ashurites and Jezreel and Ephraim and Benjamin and all Israel."

Remember Abner? The second time David spared Saul's life he went into the camp of the Israelite army at night. There in the midst of the camp, like everybody else, lay Saul asleep and Abner nearby. David took the spear and water jar and went away. When he was at a safe distance, David had cried out and rebuked Abner for not watching out over the king. Abner knew as surely as Saul had expressed that God had appointed David to be the next king in Israel. So his act is more than just a retaliation for David's rebuke. It was an act of defiance not only of David personally but even more so of God. Abner wanted to remain in power so he went off and he made Ishbosheth to be king. And the areas of his reign specifically include Gilead.

The pressure was on Gilead. David invites them to join him and Abner declares them to be under the rule of the son of Saul. Like David indicated, following him was going to require them to be valiant; they would have to buck a defiant enemy of God.

Ever since the creation there has been a hostile enemy to the kingdom of God. From the anointing of David by Samuel, David faced the enmity of Saul. Now, with the men of Judah anointing David as their king, David is opposed by Abner. The same hostility and opposition was brought to bear upon Jesus, David's greater son. Humanity by nature with its darkened understanding, satanic domination, and selfish pride rejects God's king.

Those who follow God's king can expect the same opposition he faced. It is not a happy thing to say. But it is the truth, and if you think otherwise, you will find yourself sadly mistaken and far less prepared when the hostility comes. Jesus warned his disciples, "If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18-19). Paul reminded the Thessalonians that Christ's followers are destined to suffer persecution from a hostile world. It is no different for you and me.

At this point only the house of Judah was following David. Sometimes in this age, it will seem like true followers are in the minority. At times it may seem that almost the entire world is on the side of the opposition. Sometimes Christ's kingdom does not look like much . . . like a little mustard seed. But hold on. There is no reason to be discouraged. We are waiting for our king to return as he has promised. And he will. Heaven will open and he will come as a conquering king. He will set his people free and rule the nations with a rod of iron. The mustard seed will be a tree.

## **Conclusion**

So the coronation of King Charles III was quite the flamboyant affair, but the ascent of David, though quite matter-of-fact, is of far greater significance as it points us to the crowning of the king of kings and lord of lords.