

A Seven and a Half Year Delay

Call to Worship: Psalm 110

1st Scripture: Matthew 22:41-46

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 2:1-11

Hymn Insert- *Amazing Love*

Hymn #19 (Supp)- *Standing on the Promises*

Hymn #678- *Christ Will Have Dominion*

Introduction:

The people of Judah have anointed David, to be their king, in accordance with God's promise several years earlier. However, when God had anointed the young David to be king, the scope of his reign was to be much broader than the people and territory of Judah alone. He was to replace Saul, as king over *all* twelve tribes; as king over *all* Israel. And so, the question that remains at this point is, "What about the remaining tribes, north of Judah?" What about the rest of Israel, God's chosen people?

Last time, we saw that David had promised to show kindness to the people of Jabesh Gilead, for the noble way in which they had rescued King Saul's body, so as to provide Saul and his sons with a proper and respectable burial. There is a sense, in which, David had anticipated (and rightly so), that God would bring the rest of Israel under his dominion as well. For, Jabesh Gilead was located up in that northern portion of Israel, on the east side of the Jordan River. It would have hardly been imaginable that David would have not reigned over all of Israel, keeping the twelve tribes together, and especially in light of God's sovereign promise.

And we recall David saying, last time, "Look, be strong and valiant, though your master Saul is dead, Judah has anointed me king over them." "The southern portion of the kingdom of Israel has already committed themselves to my leadership. I am awaiting a response from the rest of the kingdom. I am already in a position that would presume my reign over the entire kingdom, in accordance with the divine will of God. And so, be strong and courageous, for you have my support and backing."

But, as we will see in our text for this morning, brethren, David's proper expectations are put on hold, as an unexpected intrusion places a roadblock in his path to the north. And this intrusion is no small matter, for it leads to a "seven and a half year" delay, until the fulfillment of God's promise to David. And brethren, as we process the reality of this delay this morning, especially in the light of God's sovereignty, I believe that there are critical principles and applications, which can be drawn out for us, here in the year 2013!

I. A Seven and a Half Year Delay

The word, "but," at the beginning of verse 8, relates to all that David had just said to the people of Jabesh Gilead, confirming what I have just said about David's expectations, regarding the remainder of the kingdom of Israel. David had blessed and confirmed his great support of the people of Jabesh Gilead, because they had given King Saul a proper burial...BUT Abner, the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army (and Saul's cousin), intruded upon David's right to reign over all Israel, by taking Saul's incompetent son, Ishbosheth, and setting him up as king instead. Without presuming by force, David, rightly trusting God (as he had up to this point), anticipated that the remaining tribes of Israel, would set him up as king as well. But the shocker came, as Abner, crossed the Jordan River with Ishbosheth, and pronounced him king over the remaining tribes, at Mahanaim. Establishing Ishbosheth's kingdom in Mahanaim, being less than 20 miles south of Jabesh Gilead (and on the east side of the Jordan, with Jabesh Gilead), would have prevented David from even accessing Jabesh Gilead during the reign of Ishbosheth. In fact, we are told very clearly that Abner made Ishbosheth king over *Gilead*, as well as over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, and over all Israel" (vs. 9). And so, clearly, an unexpected roadblock, prevented David from obtaining full reign over all Israel, at this time. In verse ten, we are further told that, "only the house of Judah followed David," indicating that the remaining people of Israel, indeed, subjected themselves to the reign and authority of Ishbosheth.

It is worth noting for the time being, that Abner, had his own interests in mind, when he had set up Ishbosheth as king. This will become clearer, as we move on, to the extent that it would seem as if Ishbosheth were more of a "puppet king," or a figure head (carrying Saul's name), used by Abner, to secure his own power over the nation. Ishbosheth's weakness and ineptness seem already evident, by the fact that he did not go out to war with his father (and his three other brothers), but again, this will become clearer in the next few weeks. Suffice it to say, for now, that Abner stepped in, and thought to thwart the will of God, for his own selfish reasons. And in due time, he will bear his judgment for this. And furthermore, God has brought another Scriptural character to the forefront, exposing another heart, which lacks the fear of God.

Moving on to verse 10, we are told that, "Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed

David." In chapter five (verse 4), we find that David was thirty years old at this time, when he began to reign over Judah, at Hebron. [Gives you an idea of the age difference between David and Jonathan, Saul's firstborn. If Ishbosheth was 40, and between him and Jonathan were Abinadab, Malchishua, and possibly add to the mix Merab (& Michal?)---1 Sam. 14:49, how old might Jonathan have been when he died, maybe in the 50 range?; 20 years older than David then?]

You will also notice that we are told that Ishbosheth reigned for "two years." This begs the question, "How do we account for the seven and a half years, which David reigned over Judah alone?" In other words, what was going on in the northern kingdom for the other five years? There are a few different opinions given on this matter. I will just leave you with the three possibilities that I found to be most feasible. First, it could be that the northern kingdom was without a king for some time, either before or after (or both before and after) the reign of Ishbosheth, while David awaited the fulfillment of God's promise. When the remaining tribes of Israel anoint David as king, you will find in chapter 5, that, as was the case with Judah, the tribal representatives come to David and ask him to be their king. Again, this would be well in keeping with David's unwillingness to move ahead of providence. David took no steps forward without the Lord's clear direction. And secondly, some are of the opinion that the two years spoken of here (concerning Ishbosheth's reign) are not referring to the totality of his reign, but rather the time he reigned, up until the events, which are described in verse 12, where Israel and Judah (now, both established under their kings), begin to war with each other. A final possibility (though seemingly, least likely of the three), is that David reigned over Israel *in Hebron* for 5 years, pre-Jerusalem...etc.

Whatever position you come to here, clearly there is no error. It would be unimaginable that the writer could make such an obvious error within the span of two verses. For, in verse 11, he speaks of the 7 1/2 years, which David reigned over Judah alone. This then brings us to the conclusion of our passage for this morning, found in verse 11.

"And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months." Needless to say then, brethren, an additional 7 1/2 years of time had past, before David had finally established his reign over *all* Israel! And it is then that God's promise, in accordance with the anointing oil put upon David's head by Samuel, had come into its complete fulfillment.

II. Closing Thoughts and Applications

Brethren, in closing, let me leave you with two closing thoughts and applications:

1) Recognize again, that repeated and gloriously emphasized virtue of patience, found in the heart of David. Brethren, we are meant to see this over and over and over again, because God wants us both to recognize a) that we can trust God's promises no matter what present state we are in, and b) that it is right and proper for creatures to humbly subject themselves to the sovereign outworking of God's providence. Brethren, this is a vital and oft repeated lesson, given us in the Scriptures. We don't want to miss this!

We recall, at the beginning of this chapter, that following the death of Saul, David made no presumptions, even though He had a very clear promise from God, the fulfillment of which he could have attempted to force in his own strength. David, indeed, looked forward to the fulfillment of the promise, brethren. He eagerly waited for it, but he never stepped beyond God's moral law or the progression of his providence, to obtain it. From Ziklag, in the land of the Philistines, David inquired of God, as to whether or not he should go up to Judah. And when God gave him the go ahead, even then, David inquired again, as to where in Judah, he should go. And God sent him to Hebron, where the people of Judah came to David and set him up as king over them. But he made no further presumptions regarding the remaining tribes, even though he knew God had promised to secure his throne over all Israel. And when Abner, had (contrary to the revealed will of God) set up Ishbosheth as king, David did not force his way into the position that ought rightfully to have been his. In fact, when Israel and Judah begin to battle (in the next section of Scripture), it is initiated by Abner, and not David. David knew that God would, in His time, fulfill the whole promise. Do you see the patience of David here, brethren? Do you see the total submission to God and His providence, reflected in David's heart here? And this has been David's way, all along, has it not?

When David had been given two opportunities to kill Saul, in the past (when Saul was unrighteously pursuing David), David could very easily have justified killing Saul, in self defense, and as a means of seeking to unfold God's promise. But David would not! He refused to touch the Lord's anointed. He would rather dwell in the discomfort of dens and caves, and even in the land of the Philistines, then live with the discomfort of a violated conscience before God. Honoring and obeying God was of more importance than taking hold of the promise, from

David's standpoint. Indeed, David valued his conscience before God *more* than the promise, did he not? And here, in our present text, he settles into the position, in which God has providentially set him, and is willing to go no further, for the time being. He has come part of the way; he has tasted part of the promise, but he will not force the remainder to come, before God's timing. And so, he must wait...*again!* And for how long? Seven and a half years!

Now brethren, let us bring this right home to our own hearts, here, this morning. Let us see, that in the midst of God's many promises to us, we must and ought to place a greater priority on obeying and honoring God, even above the benefits of all of His promises. We ought to revel in all that God has given us, and will continue to give us, in Christ, brethren! But our desire to come into the realization of those benefits and blessings, must never, ever supersede our commitment to honor and obey God. If we fail in this regard, we will fall into one of two traps. We will either seek to bring about the fulfillment of God's promises, by our own fleshly means, or, we will insubordinate ourselves to God's will and run ahead of His providence. We don't want to marry Hagar, as an attempt to bring about the promised Seed, which is to come through Sarah, even though many years have passed, and Sarah is still barren. We don't want to attack the Canaanites, so as to take the Promised Land too early, when the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete. God's timing is perfect, in a just sense, and in a sanctifying sense, for the good of our own souls.

You say, "Pastor, what exactly do you mean? Can you be a bit more specific?" Well, let me give you one example, to help you along with the principle, which I am seeking to bring out here:

Consider the example of prayer for a few moments.

We read of God's delighting in our prayers. We read of God's willingness to answer our prayers, and the certainty of this reality, when we pray in accordance with His revealed will. We read of God's willingness to hear us, as a loving Father, in spite of our sins, as we confess our sins to Him in repentance, while seeking His grace. We have the imagery of a loving Father, (given us by the Lord Jesus), who, better than an earthly father, grants the requests of His children. "If you ask your earthly father for an egg, would he give you a scorpion, or for a piece of bread, would he give you a stone? Of course not, because he loves you! And, if your earthly father, being evil, yet desires to hear from you, and to do you good, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask?"

We are given numerous charges, encouragements and exhortations to continue, consistently and persistently in prayer, and we are assured of God's favor, toward His children, who do so. But, what often happens, brethren? We pray and we pray and we pray, and it just seems like God is not answering us. It just seems like He does not care. We do not have His *felt* peace. Things seem to be getting worse and worse and worse, even as we pray. We are in turmoil, we are in trial, and at times, we are in agony. And we say, "What's the use?" "Why pray at all, anymore?" "Why pray about my marriage, when it seems beyond repair....for so many years now." "Why pray about this particular sin that I am struggling with? I have prayed numerous times, and yet, I have fallen over and over again." "Why pray for the salvation of loved ones, when they only mock my faith, all the more?" "Why attend the prayer meetings, when even the bud of fruit, is just not springing up?" "Why pray about sleep, when upon doing so, I am all the more tormented by terrible thoughts, which leave me with another sleepless night?" And on and on and on, we can go, with many more examples, brethren.

What is the message here, brethren? Don't give up! God hears! God is present! God is active in your life, at this very moment! And He will answer, as is best; as is truly best, in due time. That is the glory of prayer! We can be assured at every moment that all that God has promised, will happen, in due time. David will reign over all Israel, at the perfect time, though seven and a half more years must first pass. Other providential realities must be in place. David's faith needs to be groomed, a little more, right there. He must serve well in Judah first, alone, to prepare him for his full reign...etc. And when we pray about things, which we are not guaranteed to be in accordance with God's will, we have the assurance that God will do what is best. God will not give us what is not truly best for us, even if we desire it, anymore than a parent will give his child, poison, though it tastes like a lollipop. But keep praying, brethren!

And here is the key! As you pray, look for the answers, but always look within the bounds of God's moral will. And be willing to accept further delays, even when your desire is within reach, if providence requires it, or if you can only reach it now, by way of violating the revealed, moral will of God. Lying, may seem to provide a means for getting your spouse to comply with your desire, but it is better to forgo your desire, or to lay it aside for a time, than to trample on God's moral will. Hiding the truth about God's sovereignty, or His wrath, or the necessity of repentance, from your inquiring family members or friends, as an attempt to get them to, "make a decision for Christ," is no way to win them to Christ. Better to graciously

offend with the truth, than produce a hypocritical "profession of faith." Turning to illegal drug use or alcohol, as a means of escaping from the pains of depression or anxiety, is no short cut to true relief and joy in Christ, which come by God's means and in His timing. Again brethren, the moral will of God must always supersede the desires that we have, even when they are certainly in accordance with God's promises. The devil had no problem offering Christ a short cut to the throne, which would bypass the cross. But Jesus's mind was bent on doing the will of God, and He would not bow to satan, though offered a painless path to the throne. God would bring Jesus there, by way of the cross, and in doing so, many sons would be brought to glory! Let us, likewise, brethren, not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

2) Lastly brethren, we might relate David's partial reign here, in some sense, to the present reign of Christ...and it is worth noting!

David sufficed to reign over Judah alone for 7 1/2 years, before reigning over all Israel. And he did so, in submission to the divine will. The Lord Jesus Christ, even after His death and resurrection; even after having been given authority over all things, sufficed to have a *realized* reign, solely over His church. Through the Gospel, we are made willing, in the day of His power! But most; indeed, the great majority of this world, has no present realization of the reign of Christ. They are committed to another king, as it were. Indeed, they mock Christ; they take His Name in vain; they trample upon His Moral Law; they refuse to bow the knee to Him. And Christ waits and waits and waits, not 7 1/2 years, but for at least a few millennia, thus far...until He is recognized and honored by all, as the true, universal King, over all things. He endures the wicked evils committed within His domain, for a time. But, in due time, His Father will set up His throne, *visibly*, for all to see, and every knee will bow; and every mouth will confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

But, why this delay, in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ? Why does He endure the great injustices committed under the sun, on His watch, for a time? Because He is unwilling that any of His own, should perish! Because He loves every last one of His sheep, and He is unwilling to bring down the mallet of His justice, upon the wicked, until every last one of His sheep, is brought into His fold, by a God given, faith! Jesus did not return in the year 2013, in part, because some of you would have perished in your sins, had He done so. And until that last trumpet sounds, brethren, there is still hope for others; for family members, for friends, for our

children! But when the last of His sheep enters the ark (of Christ), God Himself will close the door, and the flood of His wrath will come upon this world, with great fury and vengeance!

Oh unbeliever, flee to Christ, while there is still time and hope! Flee the wrath to come, and embrace Christ, repenting of your sins, before it is too late!

AMEN!!!

The Lord's Supper!