

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

So It Begins II Samuel 2:1-11

Intro: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” This is the opening line of Charles Dickens’ classic novel: The Tale of Two Cities. I only mention this b/c that is what our passage deals w/ today. On the initial read, it may seem like these verses are simply dealing w/ yet another Near Eastern political power struggle. But that’s the problem w/ a 1st glance, it’s always superficial. What’s really going on in this passage? Let’s remind ourselves of what the book of II Samuel is all about. It’s **not** about David or the Israelite monarchy. This book is about a covenant God who makes covenant promises to a covenant king thru whom He will preserve His covenant people. So, the question isn’t “What’s going on in this passage” but “What is YHWH doing in this passage?”

This is **not** simply a squabble between political parties nor is it a run-of-the-mill civil war. What we are actually seeing here is a kingdom that’s been **established** under **divine guidance** being **opposed** by another kingdom that’s been inaugurated purely by human ambition. The dominant truth being expressed in our text is 1 that we should be very familiar w/ & it’s simply this: that **people are seldom eager to receive the kingdom of God**.

The 3 references to David’s installment as king over the tribe of Judah (4a, 7b, 11) break the text into its proper sections. Each section reveals something about the kingdom struggle in David’s time & in our lives today.

God’s Kingdom originates - 1 - inquired- David doesn’t make a move w/o seeking direction from YHWH. Certainly, this was the key 2 success in David’s life. Not that he did this every time he made a move but (as we have previously seen) in those times when David moves **w/o** God’s guidance, even if he’s successful, he still ends up regretting it. In this instance, his path forward may seem obvious to us: he’s already been anointed king by Samuel; he recently taken possession of the golden armband & crown that king Saul wore; yet, now he stops 2 seek divine guidance. Why? **John Calvin** says this: “Even tho David clearly knew that God had constituted him as king & that Saul had trespassed, even tho the time was ripe for him to

enjoy the crown, nevertheless he asked God to tell him what he should do. Why? B/c although he was on the way, he still knew that he could err seriously if God did not guide him.”

David wanted more than just having God’s blessings on **his** plans, he wanted to be right in the middle of God’s plans. This is a spiritual discipline we should practice thru all of our life, to go to God for direction, especially when facing an important decision. Let’s find out from Him what we should do & not be so self-assured that we fail 2 ask God 2 show us which next step would be the most effective & honoring to Him.

Hebron- David is still in Ziklag at this time: Philistine territory (enemy) & he is about to burn all his Philistine bridges. Achish, king of Gath, may have believed David was still under his authority but he would be in for a rude awakening. David knew it was time for him to return to his own country & begin to reign over his own people. He asked the Lord if he should settle in any of the cities in Judah & the Lord said “**Yes.**” Not willing to take that at face value, David asks for more specifics & the Lord gives them: “**Hebron.**” Don’t make the mistake of thinking you have to get specific answers to every prayer: “**Lord, should I eat Mexican today or Chinese?**” David wasn’t discussing lunch options here, he’s facing a major life decision. But, in those times when we are facing a major life decision, if we are fervent in our prayers & patient in our faith, God will reveal to us the specifics that we need to move forward in His will.

2-3- Hebron was important in Jewish history. The tombs of Abraham & Sarah; Isaac & Rebecca; Jacob & Leah were near by. The city was the inheritance of Caleb. Hebron was probably the most important city in the southern part of Judah, so David moved there w/ his men per God’s guidance & they lived in the towns surrounding the city. David has broken completely from Philistia & has made a new beginning in Hebron. For the 1st time in 10+ yrs, David & his men & their families were no longer fugitives but this is not the only 1st to happen here, nor is it the greatest.

4- they anointed- this is important b/c it shows that David didn’t seize the throne himself, the elders of Judah approached him. Now, David had long since been promised the throne of Israel (**10-15 yrs b/4**) but he’s a far cry from being king over all Israel & he won’t receive the charter of the monarchy until **ch7**. But none of these things should distract us from massive significance of what just occurred in this verse. This vs should have

a historical marker sign next to in your Bible b/c something never b/4 seen is taking place. Here, for the 1st time, **YHWH**'s chosen king visibly rules on earth. The kingdom of God has become visible in the world – 4 those w/ eyes to see it!

Sure, it's at Hebron (boonies) & only over 1 tribe but this is no fluke; all this was under **YHWH**'s guidance at every turn. It's a small beginning, but it *is* the kingdom of God: **concrete, visible, earthly**. For the moment, the kingdom of God has tucked itself away in the hills of Judah. The kingdom of God really *is like a mustard seed!* (**Mt 13:31-32**) We tend to emphasize the growth aspect of the parable but that wasn't what Jesus emphasized. He was highlighting the obscurity & hiddenness of the kingdom of God in His day. There didn't seem to be anything **regal** in the life & work of Jesus & His disciples but that should not obscure that fact that, where Jesus is, the kingdom of God is present!

What's the takeaway for us? **Never allow the unassuming (unpromising) form of the kingdom blind us 2 the real presence of the kingdom**. It's no trifling thing when **YHWH**'s chosen king begins to reign! God's kingdom might not appear to be powerful or glorious to our eyes but that doesn't mean it isn't (**Eph 1:18-21**) This is the reality of the kingdom of God! Tho we may be discouraged by what we see w/ our eyes, what the Spirit reveals to our hearts gives us the strength to stay on our feet. It may be that the majority of our labor for the Lord w/b done in the **Hebron** stage but as long as we know that He already reigns supreme in the heavenlies, we should be content in our service.

God's Kingdom is offered - 5-7- blessed-David's mixing politics & faith here but don't mistake it as a purely political move. David's not quite like the politicians we know & love (2 gripe about). David's being sincere in his approval of Jabesh-Gilead but he is also being sharp. He thanks the men of Jabesh-G & asks for **YHWH**'s blessings on them for the kindness they showed Saul & his sons, but then he makes a bid for their allegiance to his kingship. There's no law against mixing condolences w/ campaigning (yet). In his bold political move, David asks for a bold response. The men of Jabesh-G were used to taking risks, now let them take another one. They had shown how brave they were in their night raid on Beth-shan; let their courage rise up again & be the 1st in the North to recognize David as king.

Here's what we want to focus on: David calls Jabesh-G to **submit** to the fledgling kingdom of God in Hebron but his call, his offer is extended w/ such **pleasantness**. No **threats**, no **coercion**, no **saber-rattling**; he merely **suggests** it. Isn't this the exact same way that David's greatest Descendant calls people into His kingdom? **Matt 11:28-30** Note: Jesus doesn't attempt to hide the cost of coming to Him. We know what the yoke means – absolute submission. But His appeal is so pleasant. He attracts us w/ His character (**gentle & lowly**) & w/ His reward (**you will find rest**). It's as tho He is **tempting** us to become Christians! That's the nature of Christ's kingdom call: He doesn't hide the yoke or the fact that we may be lonely in that yoke but He lures us in by His pleasantness & His glorious promise of rest.

Here's the deal – a right response to David's or Jesus' offer can be costly. To us, Jabesh-G may just seem like a far off place in a long ago time but the truth is, we're all citizen of Jabesh-G! That's where we all live b/c the passage clearly shows that Jabesh-G is sandwiched between David & Abner, between the true kingdom in mustard seed form & an illegitimate kingdom that demands allegiance. To defy this kingdom takes the guts that only come from grace!

God's Kingdom is opposed - 8-11- What's the significance of Abner's actions here? Making Ishbosheth king wasn't just a continuation of Saul's hostility towards David, it was also an open act of rebellion against **YHWH**, who had rejected Saul & had chosen David to be king over Israel & who had given such clear evidence of this anointing in the eyes of the nation that even Saul was convinced that David would be the divinely appointed successor to his throne. Abner's move here isn't just the beginning of a political power play. No, he knew **YHWH** had promised the throne to David (3:9-10, 18). By opposing **YHWH's** chosen king, Abner was actually opposing **YHWH's** rule & will. He knew **YHWH's** will but chose to defy it. Thus, Abner joins ranks w/ the kings of the earth in **Ps 2:2** who **set themselves... against the Lord** & w/ the like of Herod, Pontius Pilate & all who say, "**We will not have this man to reign over us.**"

So, the kingdom of God has just appeared on the earth & it is immediately met w/ rebellion & opposition. This kingdom conflict continues today & it will go on in some form or another until Jesus returns **w/ power & great glory** (Matt 24:30). If you're in God's kingdom, you cannot allow the **defiance** of

any contemporary Abner's to depress you or deter you from serving your King. "**Only the house of Judah followed David**" (10b) It might not have seemed like much at the time but that was YHWH's place & calling for David & that's God's place & calling for us as well. Even in the low times; even in the day of small things we must trust the Lord, seek His guidance & obey His direction. There's no reason to be discouraged even if you only see the mustard seed form of God's kingdom. No matter how small it may appear, we have it on good authority that the kingdom of God will 1 day become a great mountain & will fill the whole earth (Dan 2:35)

David's kingdom, the true kingdom, appears fragile & small while Abner's kingdom, the illegitimate kingdom, appears to have all the power & prestige. But you can't go by appearances. David's kingdom will expand & become more glorious (under Solomon) than any Israelite or Gentile could have ever imagined; while Abner's kingdom will shrivel up & collapse on itself. Today, if Jesus Christ is your Savior & Master then you're in the kingdom of God. It may seem small, it certainly is difficult but that's just for the here & now. Ultimately, Jesus will return to this earth, He will establish His glorious kingdom over all the earth & those who are already in His kingdom will rule & reign w/ Him on the earth.

If Jesus is not your Savior & Master, then you're still in Abner's kingdom, the illegitimate one, the kingdom that will eventually wither & die. If that sounds good to you, you don't have to do anything; just wait – destruction is coming. But, if that sounds terrible to you, then you must do something – you must defect. You must choose to flee Abner's kingdom & you must choose to enter Jesus' kingdom. You must deliberately enter into Christ's kingdom b/c just like David, Jesus will not force His rule on you, at least not yet. 1 day He will, but then it will be too late to enjoy the benefits.

Today, Jesus offers you entrance into His kingdom. You can enter for free but it will still cost you! It will cost you: submitting your life & will to His divine which may seem like a lot but really it's not, not when compared to all the blessings that come from being in His kingdom: free from sin's guilt, bondage, control; free from the impossible task of earning God's love or favor; free passage from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Best of all, you now have the opportunity to engage in an intimate relationship w/ your Creator & you are granted eternal life so that your relationship w/ God can continue forever.

Jesus is calling you today, offering you entrance into His glorious kingdom.
Will you accept His offer?

