

January 14

Scriptures: Read 1 Chronicles 12 & 13

Key Verse: "... there was joy in Israel." (1 Chronicles 12:40)

Overview

While David was in exile from Saul, he certainly was not alone. The Lord had brought to him many supporters besides those from his own tribe of Judah. Fighting men, who had formerly been with Saul, were defecting to join David's forces at Ziklag, a city of Philistia on the border of Judah's territory (for background see 1 Samuel 27:1-7). These men recognized that God had chosen David to be king. No doubt they had also left Saul because of his madness and treachery. Even a large number of Benjamites, Saul's own tribesmen, left him to give their support to David. Saul was aware of this and was paranoid about it (cf. 1 Samuel 22:7-8). These Benjamites were a group unusually gifted in ambidextrous fighting skills, and this was of great value to any army (12:2). Even in previous years, the Benjamites had been known for left-handedness (Judges 3:15; 20:16).

David was also joined (probably previous to his residence at Ziklag) by some men from the tribe of Gad, some more from his own tribe, and some from Benjamin while he was at his stronghold in the wilderness, which may refer to the cave of Adullam or at En Gedi (1 Samuel 22:1; 23:29). When another group came to join him, he was suspicious, for he had previously been betrayed (1 Samuel 23:5, 12; 23:19-20). He knew Saul was sly and could have sent these men to trick him. David expressed his utter innocence and called upon God to bring judgment if anyone did him harm (12:16-17). The Lord confirmed the peaceful intentions of these men when His Spirit "clothed Amasai" (literal translation); therefore, the truthfulness of his words was clear. God's words would have served as an encouragement to David who might have been in despair (12:18).

God sent David the help of some men from the tribe of Manasseh. They joined him just before he was sent away from joining the Philistines in battle against Saul (background found in 1 Samuel 29), which was no doubt an answer to his prayer. David would not fight against Saul, and the suspicion of the Philistine leaders was correct (12:19). David's army was indeed strong enough to wage war against Saul, and he had the support of the majority of Israel. This support is evident from the many men of every tribe who came to him at Hebron after Saul's death to make him king. As long as Saul was still king, however, David would not lift his hand against the one whom the Lord had anointed (1 Samuel 24:6; 26:9-11). He was content to wait upon the Lord to bring about his kingship in His own way and timing, for God is indeed faithful to fulfill His promises.

With the help of Manasseh, David pursued and destroyed the raiders, likely referring to the Amalekites who burned his city of Ziklag and took captive all their wives and children (12:21; 1 Samuel 30:1, 17-18). During this same period, Saul was wounded in the battle with the Philistines, and this led to his suicide. With the news of Saul's death, the people of Israel flocked to David. No tribe, including Levi and those east of the Jordan, was without representation. It was a joyful time, for they saw the will of God finally accomplished and marked by total unity.

All Israel pledged loyalty to David, for they knew God had chosen a godly and just king to rule over them. Great joy comes to the people of God when they are in unity and His will is done.

The Lord prospered David as king, and some time after he had conquered Jerusalem for his capital, he desired the Ark of the Lord to be brought into a place of prominence. For two generations, it had been all but forgotten in Kirjath Jearim. All Israel agreed to bring the Ark to Jerusalem (for background and further comments see “Day Unto Day” commentary on 2 Samuel 6). Their intentions were commendable, but they disregarded the command of God, as Moses had instructed, concerning the correct transportation of the Ark — the Levites of the family of Kohath were to bear it upon their shoulders (cf. Numbers 4:15). Uzza’s death caused the people to have the respect and fear of the Lord that they should have had in the first place. If they had done so, this misfortune would not have occurred.

With utmost respect, the household of Obed-Edom took in the Ark of the Lord. When the Lord was obeyed and honoured in the way that pleased Him, many blessings followed.

Prayer

Lord, Your will was done in the establishing of David as King. May Your will be accomplished in our lives even in the middle of difficult circumstances. Amen!