

November 11

Scriptures: Read 2 Samuel 19

Key Verse: “Return, you and all your servants!” (2 Samuel 19:14)

Overview

Rather than a day of rejoicing because of the victory over the rebels, David’s extreme grief over Absalom’s death caused it to be an occasion for mourning. David viewed the events as they related to him personally. Joab, on the other hand, viewed the situation politically. A little out of line, but for David’s own welfare, Joab rebuked him for continuing to dwell upon his misfortunes. David must not have been aware that Joab had a direct part in the execution of his son (18:14-15; cf. 2 Kings 2:5), but Joab had done then as he was now doing: putting aside personal feelings and acting on behalf of the best interests of the people and the kingdom.

The nation needed David to be strong, especially at this time; therefore, Joab urged him to conceal his personal feelings. If he did not show his faithful supporters his appreciation for their fighting on his behalf, he might bring about an even greater rebellion against him. Joab’s words shocked David into facing reality and he followed his advice to “arise, go out and speak comfort to your servants” (19:7). This literally meant to speak to their hearts, encouraging them and turning away their discontent.

The return to Jerusalem, and especially the crossing of the Jordan River, had ceremonial significance. God had reconfirmed David’s kingship, and with pomp and splendour he was being officially recognized as the restored king of Israel in the procession across the Jordan and into the royal city. It was firstly the northern tribes of Israel, rather than Judah, David’s own tribe, that came to proclaim David as their king. They remembered how God had always used David to be their deliverer. It appears that Absalom’s charisma, beauty, youth, and smooth talking had infatuated the people but now, with Absalom dead, they realized who they should really be supporting.

David, however, appealed first to his own tribe of Judah to come and bring him back. He wanted assurance of their support, since Absalom’s co-conspirators and rebel army had mostly been made up of Judahites. David’s request, giving priority for Judah to bring him up to Jerusalem, and the fact that the procession had started with only half of the delegates from the northern tribes present, stirred up tribal jealousies. These jealousies eventually grew, and by the time of Solomon’s death, Judah and the northern tribes (referred to as “Israel”) were totally separated.

David’s appointment of his nephew Amasa, the rebel commander, to be the commander of his own forces in replacement of Joab, was a political move to gain the support of Absalom’s troops. It was impossible to put that many traitors to death, so David diplomatically offered them the hand of friendship. The demoting of Joab would put him in his place for speaking insolently to the king, and would prevent him, with his strong personality, from having an overbearing influence.

Now that David was returning to Jerusalem, Shimei, who had cursed him on his way out, thinking he would never return (16:13), came to plead for mercy and ask for pardon. He deserved

death, but it was, after all, a day of victory, so David granted general amnesty and swore he would not kill Shimei (19:23; 1 Kings 2:8,9,44).

Mephibosheth also came to see David. Because of his unkempt appearance, which signified extreme grief, David doubted Ziba's accusations about his treason (16:3-4). Since Mephibosheth had remained true to David, it was not right for Ziba to take all his land; yet Mephibosheth, who was honourable and noble like his father Jonathan, felt it was more important that the Lord's anointed king was returning safely than to have material possessions.

Another noble man came to welcome David — the aged Barzillai. David wanted to bring him to Jerusalem to publicly reward him for his kindness at Mahanaim (17:27-29), but Barzillai was not concerned about receiving public acclaim or repayment. He was content with David's blessing to return home and spend his final days in peace, knowing he had been a part of God's plan for the salvation of the nation.

Prayer

Father God, make us people of reconciliation and healing. We praise You for Your Son, our Lord Jesus, who came to break down the barriers that divides people from You, O God. Make us instruments of His peace.