

## David Goes Into Exile - Part Eight

*by Charles E. Wigg*

### **David Goes Into Exile**

The result of Absalom's flattery and conspiracy, was that David was driven into exile. His head covered in shame, barefoot, and weeping as he went. Little did he know that all this would happen, when he indulged his lust with his neighbour's wife. His humility is to be admired, because he accepted it all from the hand of the God whom he had despised. However though his character was soiled, yet some of the lovely things of his character remained. He did not seek sympathy, as did Saul before him. He even encouraged some to return to Jerusalem, and to profess loyalty to the usurper. He was touched by the loyalty and faithfulness of Ittai, and the six hundred men that he commanded. The wholehearted commitment of that Philistine, is one of the gems of scripture.

The challenge comes to us, are we willing to share the rejection of our King, our blessed Lord Jesus? Too often we would rather have the world's acclaim and praise, than to share our Lord's rejection and reproach. But if we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him. 2Tim. 2:12. David excels in his grace, refuses the offer of Abishai to kill the wretched Shimei who cursed him. His words are beautiful, "Let him alone, let him curse, because the Lord hath bidden him".

However David failed to discern the treachery and lies of Ziba, who slandered, and lied about his crippled master, but hastily, foolishly rewarded the lies and slander of this evil man. David's rejection brought out the love and loyalty of some unlikely men. One an Ammonite, another was Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar. This was the man with whom Mephibosheth stayed during the years of loneliness and fear. Perhaps Machir's heart was touched by the love that David showed to that poor cripple. Barzillai was the third, who was obviously a rich man, and these brought provisions of different kinds for David and those with him.

David now rises again to his height as a military strategist, and takes control of the army. He was also desiring to go out with the army but the people persuaded him not to. Nevertheless his human affection once more beclouded his judgement. He instructed all and Joab in particular, to "Deal gently for my sake, with the young man, with Absalom". However God was now in control, and He saw that justice was done. Absalom's hair was the means of bringing an end to his life. He used to shave his head at the end of each year, and to weigh the hair. He was one who "Gloried in his shame". Phil. 3:19. David's obvious grief caused the people to slink away in shame, and turned the victory into mourning. However the firm words of Joab, brought him to realise the wrong of his attitude, so he arose and sat in the gate. Thus he showed his appreciation of **the** bravery and faithfulness of the people that had risked their lives for their king.

### **The King Returns**

David's return was marked by some lovely things, and some not so lovely. It is said that he "Bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, as the heart of one man". Such was the loveliness of his character. It can be said of the Lord Jesus alone, that He bows the hearts of all those who are His, as the heart of one man. Such is the charm and beauty of His character, his actions, His majesty, there is not another like him. David wished to reward those who showed kindness to him during his time of rejection and trial. The Lord Jesus will reward all those who are loyal and faithful to Him now, during the time of His rejection. Those rewards will be handed out, when we stand before His judgement seat. Such rewards do not relate to heaven, but rather to His coming millennial kingdom. Our place in heaven is not determined by our actions here, whether good or bad. Our place there depends alone on the Lord Jesus, and what He has done for us. Heaven is no reward for faithfulness, but our place there, is the gift of infinite grace alone. When we reach that place, not one of us will but gladly acknowledge that we have no right to be there.

Shimei the son of Gera, came down accompanied by Ziba the slanderer, and 1 thousand men of Benjamin, to "welcome" the king back. Shimei had cursed David as he went out, and it is probable that all of them had fought in the armies of Absalom. But now out of fear, they come cringing. Professing a love and loyalty to David that they did not really mean. Righteousness demanded the one who had cursed the Lord's anointed, should die, but

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David extended mercy and forgiveness to the miserable sinner. However the public and shameful nature of Shimei's sin, was not forgotten, and justice was done in the early part of the reign of Solomon.

Mephibosheth also came down, his very deportment and condition showed how much he missed his king and benefactor. Since the day that David left, though he was unable to go with him, yet he had remained in a state of mourning. For him to do this, exposed him to the wrath and jealousy of the usurper, and could have cost him his life. But whatever it might cost him, he would not conceal his grief at what had been done to his king, David did not take sufficient notice of this, and made irrational demands of Mephibosheth, and rewarded the traitor and slanderer, Ziba. Here David fails as a type of Christ, who is the righteous Judge. He will not be swayed by slander or flattery, but will judge righteously, and reward those that are truly faithful. Poor Mephibosheth showed that he had learned much. He was not interested in the things that David had given Him, but rather his love was centred in the person, who had shown the kindness of God to him.

### **Potential Division**

The smouldering embers of jealousy began to be fanned into a flame, as the other tribes of Israel came to conduct the king over the Jordan. They accused the men of Judah of selfishness, of 'stealing the king away'. These men must have followed Absalom, but it seems that they had no regret or repentance for their actions. There was an evil man there, who saw an opportunity to profit personally, from this sad state of affairs, so Sheba the son of Bichri blew a trumpet, disowned any loyalty to David, secured a following, and began another rebellion. This rebellion was quickly suppressed, when the head of Sheba was thrown over the wall of the walled city into which the rebel had fled. We read of the Lord Jesus, that "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." ICor. 15:25.

### **The Remaining Crises**

There remained yet two more crises for David to face. The first was the three years of amine, that resulted from Saul's breaking the covenant that Joshua had made with the Gibeonites. While it is true that Joshua had been deceived, yet he did not inquire of the Lord in that matter. But after giving his word in Jehovah's name, God would not tolerate that promise being broken. David's mistake stems from the fact, that though he inquired of Jehovah as to the cause of the famine; yet he did not inquire as to what the righteousness of Jehovah required as a remedy. He asked the Gibeonites what they required. They required vengeance, and as a result seven men lost their lives. Though David spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, because Jehovah's oath was between them, yet he delivered up the sons of his wife Michal, and the two sons of Rizpah. There were probably others that he could have surrendered, but perhaps he sacrificed the five sons of Michal to settle an old score? From this sad incident we learn that when we make a vow or a promise, God expects us to keep it. We are told that our word must be yea, or nay, God expects us to be true to our word. James 5:12.

This finally resulted in the winding up of Saul's system. The bones of Saul and Jonathan, together with the bones of those seven men that were sacrificed to the demands of the Gibeonites were buried in the sepulchre of Kish the father of Saul. Thus justice was done, and God opened the windows of heaven once again in answer to the prayers of His people.

### **The Last Great Trial**

Chapter twenty four of 2 Samuel, is an example of God's ways being past finding out. Rom. 11:33. It seems that the nation of Israel was in such a state that they made God angry. Through the many wars and victories of David, they had enjoyed both rest, and the blessing of God. Because of this they had become complacent. This has been repeated many times during the history of the Church also. The Church at Laodicea is a clear New Testament example.. That Church was materially rich, self-satisfied etc. but in spite of this, they were spiritually, both poor, wretched, blind and naked. What was worst was the fact that the Lord Jesus was outside, and they were content to

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leave Him there. David too was in a similar state, so that when God moved him to number Israel, he was happy to agree. David wanted to know the number of his troops and their families, so that he may have something more to glory in. As well God had commanded in the Law, that when the people were numbered, each one was to pay the atonement money, which was half a shekel. This was to remind them of the price that had been paid for their redemption.

Even Joab, though guilty of jealousy that had led to murder on two occasions. Yet he had greater discernment than his king, and tried to turn him from his intention. However David had his own way, with disastrous results. Once the task was completed, David's heart smote him, and he realised that he had sinned greatly. His was a sin of presumption, the very sin which in Psalm 19 he had asked to be kept from.

God sent the prophet Gad to him with a message, and David was given a choice. He made a wise choice, preferring to fall into the hands of God, whom he knew to be abundant in mercy. As a result God sent a pestilence, (outbreak of disease), upon His people. David's army was reduced by seventy thousand men. David pleaded for the people, and he was willing to suffer and to die in the place of the people. God heard his supplication, witnessed his brokenness, and though the angel's sword was stretched out over Jerusalem to destroy it, yet God commanded that angel to withdraw its sword. The city was saved, and at the same time, God revealed to David the very place where later the temple, God's house was to be built. This was the very place where centuries before Abraham had offered Isaac, (or the ram, in Isaac's place). Araunah wanted to give the threshing floor to David, but he refused saying that he would not offer to the Lord that which cost him nothing. From this we learn that worship is meant to cost us something. So many today have the wrong idea, that worship is meant to give me something. So entertainment and similar things are substituted in its place.

The final record of David's last days is given in the beautiful Psalms of 2Sam. 22, and the first seven verses of chapter 23. What a beautiful way to end such a useful life as that which he had lived. The challenge to you and I is, "How will our lives end"? The Galatian saints began well, but they stopped. Paul had to say of Demas that he "Has forsaken me, having loved this present world". He said of those Churches in Asia that he had laboured to establish, "All they which are in Asia have turned away from me", 2Tim. 1:15. May the Lord keep us faithful to the end. May He enable us through the power of the Holy Spirit and His enabling, to bring glory to His great and holy name!