

# Justice Is Served

## Today In Your Reading...

David returned to Jerusalem from exile and was restored as the King of Israel. A minor revolt broke out because of a man named Sheba, who was quickly hunted down and beheaded. Also, in a move that caught me by surprise, Joab killed Amasa. Amasa had been Absalom's rebel commander, but David had promoted him to lead all the armies of Israel (thus demoting Joab). However, though we are not given any details, Joab, who had always remained loyal to David, suspected treason and eliminated him without David's knowledge.

Finally, the Philistines rallied their forces to wage war against Israel again. They seem to always be causing trouble; so David and his men went to battle their foes. Here the King almost died, had it not been for Abishai. Despite battling some well-known giants, the Israelites prevailed. Thus, all threats to David's rule had been dealt with, and the King now reigned in peace.

In the middle of our passage today was a three-year famine, which David discovered was caused by the murder of the Gibeonites. In case you don't remember, the Gibeonites were the people who deceived Joshua, as he was conquering the land of Canaan, and made a deal with him. Joshua gave his word not to destroy them (*Joshua 9:1-27*). However, it seems that when Saul was king, he and his family attempted to annihilate the Gibeonite tribe (for reasons we do not know), thus breaking Israel's vow of protection. This betrayal angered the Lord who sent the famine as punishment.

To make things right, David delivered Saul's sons and grandsons to the Gibeonites (except for Jonathan's son Mephibosheth), to pay for their sins. While this may seem harsh, it was just. David wrote *Psalm 7* during this time, in which he praised the Lord for His justice. "The

Lord passes judgment on the nations. He is a judge who is perfectly fair; and He is angry with the wicked every day. If a person does not repent, He will sharpen His sword... I will thank the Lord because He is just" (*v.8, 11, 12, 17*).

## Daily Reflection

According to Noah Webster, justice is "the virtue of giving to every person what is due them, an impartial or right application of the law" (*1828 Dictionary*). Being just is to rectify a situation or to make things right, like a judge, without being a respecter of persons. Would you consider yourself to be a just person? Why or why not?

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What is the most difficult aspect of being just? Why do human beings struggle with handing down or receiving justice?

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**God is just.** He upholds His laws and keeps people accountable to them. He is impartial; He is not a respecter of persons. While His justice may seem unfair or uncalled for at times, we should be thankful for it. **Can you imagine the alternative, if there were no Supreme Judge of the universe and sinners were never held accountable?** Praise God today for His justice.

# Your Stronghold

## Today In Your Reading...

We read one psalm, and what a psalm it is! While David wrote these words after the Lord had rescued him from all of his enemies, these words were incredibly prophetic. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the descriptions included here were later wonderfully fulfilled by the Lord Jesus in His final days on earth.

Consider these lines in light of Christ's trials, suffering, death, resurrection, and eventual return:

"The waves of death surrounded me. The grave wrapped its ropes around me; death itself stared me in the face. But, in my distress, I cried out to the Lord who heard me from his sanctuary."

"Then the earth quaked and trembled; the foundations of the earth shook... He opened the heavens and came down; dark storm clouds were beneath His feet... The Lord thundered from heaven."

"He reached down from heaven and drew me out of deep waters. He delivered me from my powerful enemies, from those who hated me..."

"The Lord rewarded me for doing right; He compensated me because of my innocence. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and I have not turned from my God to follow evil. I am blameless before God; and, I have kept myself from sin. The Lord rewarded me for doing right."

"I chased my enemies and destroyed them. I did not stop until they were conquered. You gave me victory over my accusers. You preserved me as the ruler over nations.. He subdues the nations under me. You give victory to your King, and you show unfailing love to your Anointed."

Wow, Christ, indeed, fulfilled these words!

## Daily Reflection

What I love about the psalms of David is that they are incredibly personal. "I love you, Lord; You are my strength. You are my Rock, my fortress, my Savior, my shield, the strength of my salvation, my stronghold" (18:1-3).

These words reveal a deep, intimate relationship with the Lord, a closeness that could not occur without difficulty in David's life. He would not write these things unless he were in distress. In other words, *David's trials afforded him an avenue to grow in his faith and understanding of who God is* and how much he relied on Him for strength, for hope, for help, and for survival.

Why is it that David, or you, would never have written these things in times of convenience and comfort? **Why is easy living a poor teacher?**

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Have you ever noticed that it's during the difficult times in your life that you grow closer to God? Explain.

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Instead of getting upset with God during tough times, thank Him for giving you an opportunity to know Him in a better way. **Without the enemy "pressing in on you," you will never discover your fortress and stronghold.**

# Pride and Providence

## Today In Your Reading...

For reasons we are not told, God was angry with Israel, perhaps for some sin or disobedience. As a result, God judges the people through the prideful action of their king, a needless census during peace time, to measure his own strength and glory, so as to trust in it rather than God.

However, notice the discrepancy in who moved David to take the census. Samuel wrote that “the Lord caused David to harm them by taking a census” (24:1), while the Chronicler wrote that “Satan rose up against Israel and caused David to take a census...” (21:1). So, who was it — God, David, or Satan? All three. **Satan pre-empted it, David performed it, and God permitted it.**

Here is an occasion where we see the doctrine of concurrence at work. Concurrence is when two or more participants are involved, pursuing their own agenda and, yet, fulfilling God’s purposes. This truth is evidenced throughout Scripture. For example, who attacked Job? Who hardened Pharaoh’s heart? Who threw Jonah overboard? Who betrayed and crucified Jesus?

The bottom line is this — *we know that God is incapable of evil and cannot or does not tempt man.* Therefore, although the words may sometimes indicate otherwise, God is not at fault for causing someone to sin. However, everything must be permitted by God to occur, so He is involved with every situation in His universe; but, oftentimes to allow evil to take place, He must permit the evil one, Satan, to take part. *Many times what God permits, He is said to have caused,* but that truth does not incriminate God for the choices and sins of man.

There were two other “discrepancies” in today’s reading. First, there was the different numbers from the census and, second, there were differ-

ent payments to Araunah the Jebusite for his property. Sometimes our instinct is to believe that the Bible contradicts itself, but *we must have a higher view of God and Scripture than that.* **The Lord does not lie and neither does His Word.** The “discrepancies” are not because of Him or the Scriptures but with our understanding. The two penmen obviously counted differently or included different groups in the census, and the amounts paid to Araunah were for the threshing floor (50 pieces of silver), so David could build an altar, and for the land (600 pieces of gold), so the Temple could be built.

## Daily Reflection

Personally, **I love the fact that the Bible does not hide its “discrepancies.”** It is honest and transparent, especially when dealing with the flaws of men. David, for example, was a godly man who, at times, fell into deep sin. I want to know these things, because in them I am encouraged. Even the heroes of the faith fell short of the glory of God and disappointed Him at times; yet, David repented and was forgiven repeatedly. God’s mercy is great and His patience with David, and me, is remarkable.

The census, the death angel, and the 70,000 deaths were result of David’s pride and Israel’s sin. **Peace and prosperity lead us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought.** In those moments, we tend not only to forget God but attempt to replace Him with ourselves.

What can you do to avoid the dangers of pride?

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# Time for the Temple

May 3 — 1 Chronicles 23:1-25:31

## Today In Your Reading...

King David summoned all the leaders of Israel to Jerusalem for the coronation ceremony of his son Solomon. He took this opportunity to count the Levites, of which there were 38,000. Then David appointed 24,000 to supervise the work of the new Temple (which had not been built yet); he appointed 6,000 to serve as officials and judges, 4,000 to serve as gatekeepers and another 4,000 to serve as musicians (23:3-5).

It was easy in this passage to get lost in all of the names and numbers, but what was happening is very important. The new Temple would be magnificent in size, in splendor, and in service. It would be so big and so busy that there would be a host of servants needed to carry on the work. Now, not all 38,000 would be serving simultaneously; each person had his specific place and time assigned to him by the sacred lots. Thus, everyone knew what he was supposed to do; **someone would be ministering in God's presence and to God's people at all times.**

While all of this seems foreign to us today, as we do not have a grand Temple to which all people attend for worship, we can certainly relate, in a general sense, what is taking place here to the Church today. **No matter the size of the congregation, the Lord's work does not happen on its own.** People are needed to carry on the vital ministries of the Church to the body of Christ and the surrounding community.

Furthermore, while God has called some to be pastors or elders and deacons to lead out in specific ministries, **He has called us all to serve in some capacity.** Just as He assigned the Levites their places by sacred lots, He has assigned to each of us a spiritual gift, to be used for the good of others, to serve and minister to them (*Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12*). **Without a host of people, fulfilling their God-given**

**"assignments," the work of the Church will not be accomplished.** Here is one of many reasons why we must be involved in the ministry of a local church. It needs us to carry on what God has instructed for the benefit of believers and the propagation of the Gospel.

## Daily Reflection

When thinking about your own experience in the Church, who are some of the people whom God has used, in some capacity, to serve you? How have you been encouraged or equipped by those who have volunteered their time and efforts?

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What gift(s) has the Lord given you and how are you using them in His Church to serve others?

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When I think about my experience with the Church, **much of who I am today, spiritually speaking, is a result of a host of men and women who poured into me** as a child, a youth, and an adult. I am grateful for those who have been faithful to be used of God to disciple me. I want to be faithful, by the grace of God, to do the same for others. Do you?

# An Exchange of Faith

## Today In Your Reading...

The Chronicler kept detailed lists of the gatekeepers, the treasurers and other officials, the military commanders and divisions, the leaders of the tribes, and the important officials of David's kingdom. Did you notice that Obed-edom and his sons were listed as gatekeepers; he was the one who had cared for the Ark of the Covenant all these years. In return, "God had richly blessed him" (26:4, 5).

Then, David gathered all of these leaders together and revealed three breaking developments. First, he shared his plans to build a Temple in Jerusalem, a place "where the Ark of the Covenant could rest permanently" (28:2). Second, because David was a warrior and had shed much blood, the King told the crowd that it would be his son Solomon who would finish the work. Third, David named Solomon as his successor to the throne of Israel.

After communicating the big news, David took advantage of the opportunity he had, with everyone there, to encourage and challenge them. He said, "With God as our witness, I give you this charge... Be careful to obey all the commands of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land and leave it to your children as a permanent inheritance" (28:8). The *challenge* was to obey the Lord; the *encouragement* came in that if the people obeyed, their children would inherit the land permanently.

Then, after David charged the people, he turned to Solomon and offered a challenge to him as well. He was setting the example for the people, putting feet to the challenge he had just given. Here was a father training and encouraging his son to "get to know the God of your ancestors. Worship and serve Him with your whole heart and with a willing mind. For the Lord sees every heart and knows every plan and thought. If you

seek Him, you will find Him; but, if you reject Him, He will reject you" (28:9,10).

It is interesting that when Solomon ends his book of *Ecclesiastes*, that record of his search for the meaning of life, he said something very similar to his father's challenge. "Fear God and obey His commands, for this is the duty of every person..." (12:13). Although Solomon will have his own struggles in life, he ended up in the same place as he had begun, the same place to which his father David had pointed him. In essence, **it is because of the Lord that we live; our meaning and purpose are found in our relationship with Him.**

## Daily Reflection

How are you doing with the counsel of David and Solomon? Consider just the verbs in their challenge. Do you *know* the Lord? Are you *worshipping* Him, *fearing* Him, *obeying* Him, and *serving* Him?

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If you are a parent, like David, are you passing your faith on to your children? If you are a daughter or son, like Solomon, are you growing in the faith of your parents? Parents must not force their children to follow in their footsteps. They are to lead, train, demonstrate, encourage, equip, protect, and pray; but, *children must choose to follow the Lord themselves, or their parents' faith will never be their own.* **You must choose to serve God daily, to obey His commands, to glorify His name, and to trust Him in all things.** What will you decide?

# Yours or His?

May 5 — 1 Chronicles 29:1-1 Kings 1:53

Day 125 — 240 Days to Go

## Today In Your Reading...

David made public his choice of Solomon as his successor, which, of course, did not sit well with his oldest brother Adonijah. Having felt deprived of his rightful place on the throne, Adonijah staged a power play and “decided to make himself king.” However, his attempt to seize power was undone when David had Solomon publicly anointed and heralded as the next in line.

We also read of the tremendous outpouring of gifts for the building of the new Temple. Not only had David given of “his own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction,” but also “the leaders of the tribes, the generals and captains, and the King’s officials all gave willingly.” King David was filled with joy.

I loved David’s prayer of praise that he offered after he saw the outpouring of gifts to the Lord. It is a model prayer of thanksgiving, full of truth and wisdom. “O Lord may you be praised forever! Yours is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore You as the One who sits over all things. Riches and honor come from you alone, for You rule over everything. Power and might are in Your hands, and **it is at Your discretion that people are made great and are given strength.**”

He continued, “Who am I and who are my people that we could give anything to You? **Everything we have has come from You, and we give You only what You have already given to us!** We are here only for a moment, visitors and strangers in the land. Our days on earth are like a shadow, gone so soon without a trace. O Lord, even these materials that we have gathered to build a Temple to honor Your holy name come from You! **It all belongs to You!**”

## Daily Reflection

Wow! What a picture of the proper perspective of earthly wealth and possessions. **Everything you have belongs to the Lord.** How would this biblical view of “your money and belongings” affect how you treat them, how you use them, and how you give them away?

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But wait, aren’t you the one who worked and earned that money? Aren’t you the one who bought those things? Since it is your money and your stuff, aren’t you free to use them as you wish? While these thoughts may be “true,” what is missing here?

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These two areas, of money and possessions, may be *the most difficult to surrender* to the Lord, for **the flesh is naturally greedy and materialistic.** However, God provides for your needs. At times, He also provides more than you need, not so that you can accumulate more stuff, but so that you can give to His work and give to meet the needs of others. It is so easy to fall into bondage to greed and materialism, but take heart, *when you understand and live by these principles, they will set you free.*

# Where Everyone Must Go

May 6 — 1 Kings 2:1-12; 2 Samuel 23:1-7; Psalms 4-6, 8, 9, 11

Day 126 — 239 Days to Go

## Today In Your Reading...

The great King David passed away. "He died at a ripe old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth, and honor" (1 Chronicles 29:28). Before he died he was able to encourage his son Solomon one more time. His message to him in summary was this, "Take courage, be a man, and remember to observe all that the Lord has required in the laws of Moses. If you do this, then you will be successful in all you do" (1 Kings 2:3, 4).

It is always sad to read about the end of one's life, especially one of the heroes of the faith, "David, the man to whom God gave such wonderful success, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1). **But here in our fallen sin-filled world, death is inevitable.** David said to Solomon, "I am going where everyone on earth must someday go" (1 Kings 2:2). Unless Jesus returns, **there is a 100% chance that we will experience death**, "for it is appointed unto men to die once..." (Hebrews 9:27). Death is the consequence of sin, the promise of God because of man's rebellion against Him (Genesis 2:17).

However, as followers of Christ, *we do not need to fear death*. Because of Him, death has been defeated. If we have surrendered our lives to Him, then death has "no sting and no victory" over us (1 Cor. 15:55). **Death is not the end, but the beginning**, the gateway through which we must pass to enter into the second and more desirable life that awaits us in heaven.

After we read of David's death, we transitioned into the psalms. The next several days are consumed with them; they include all that the Lord did for David and the truths that he learned in the process. They are a wonderful testimony of his life. He wrote in Psalm 9, "I will thank you, Lord, with all my heart and tell of all the marvelous things You have done" (v.1).

## Daily Reflection

Why do you suppose death is so scary and intimidating to people?

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Knowing what you do about death, from God's perspective, how should that affect your view of it? How is it different than the world's view?

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David left behind a record of God's work in his life, the marvelous things He had done. What will you leave behind to reflect on what God has done for you?

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*It is a certainty that you will die someday.* However, because Jesus was resurrected and, therefore, defeated death, you also will be resurrected to live eternally by His side. Therefore, you can say, as Paul did, that "to live is Christ but to die is gain!" **Something far better than what you have here on earth awaits you on the other side.** Fear not, but be encouraged.