

Kings and Prophets 12-11-30a

This is Friday the 30th of November 2012. We continue our relatively new study in the Kings and Prophets. We will be resuming in 1 Kings chapter 2. Let's take a moment as we begin to ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study and ensure that we're susceptible to and amenable to the ministry of God's Holy Spirit.

Shall we pray? Father, what a blessing it is, what a privilege it is for us to spend time together with the object of gaining a better understanding of your Word, of absorbing its truths into our souls and giving voice and words of power to the Holy Spirit who resides within us to lead us and to guide us, to correct us and rebuke us and instruct us in righteousness and to ensure that we are equipped to do those things that you have put us in this time and in this place to do. We thank you for the passage of Scripture that is before us and we ask your blessing on us as we study together. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. So far in our previous two evenings, our previous four sessions in Kings, looking at the time of transition from the reign of King David to the reign of King Solomon, we've been looking at the larger picture, the big scope and pattern of events. And in our first evening, looking at the introduction, we have seen that God's dealing with his people, beginning with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, through Moses and down through Joshua and the judges, resulted finally in the selection of a king, the people's choice, King Saul, but his dynasty was not blessed.

There was an interruption and David was chosen by God to begin the dynasty that would define monarchy in Israel ever after. Similarly, in the days of Samuel, there was an interruption and a change in the priesthood. Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were residing at the remnants and rags and tatters that still survived of the tabernacle and of worship at that site.

And yet, because of the three generation curse, if you will, there was the cutting off of that line and a curse on that line so that it would not continue. And that enters back into our account, our study this evening. Last time we saw David in his covenant relationship with God, the things that God communicated to him in 1 Samuel chapter 7 about his son, that his son would build a house, and yet his household is full of many sons.

And it's interesting to look at the household of David. If you turn to 1 Chronicles, one of our parallels, 1 Chronicles chapter 3, we have a summary of the family of David. It's a bit more concise here than gathering it from the books of Samuel and Kings.

Now these were the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron. The firstborn was Amnon by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess. The second, Daniel, this is Kiliab in the other account, by Abigail the Carmelitess.

The third, Absalom, the son of Ma-akah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur. The fourth, Adonijah, the son of Hagith. The fifth, Shephethiah, by Abital.

The sixth, Ithriam, by his wife Eglah. These six were born to him in Hebron. There he reigned seven years and six months, and then in Jerusalem he reigned 33 years.

Each of these first six sons is with a different wife. And a variety of circumstances befall this group of sons, this group of half-brothers. Later on, in verse 5, it tells us in Jerusalem, Shimeah, Shobob, Nathan, and Solomon, four by Bathsheba, the daughter of Amiel.

Also there were Ibhar, Elishamah, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishamah, Eliadah, and Eliphelet, nine in all. These were all the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines, and Tamar, their sister. Well, this is a very full stable from which to select the next king.

But it is interesting that in this account, we are told that they're more or less in order, in order of birth. So you've got six at the beginning, and then you have four with Bathsheba. Now, if you're starting to fade, this is where you want to pay attention.

I do not know the birth order of Bathsheba's sons. It would appear that Solomon would be the oldest of this group, because in the account of the Bathsheba incident, you remember Uriah the Hittite, and Bathsheba is pregnant. That's what brings about the crisis and the murder of Uriah.

That son dies, and then it says immediately after that Solomon was born. But that account doesn't talk about the other sons with Bathsheba. If this list is given in chronological order, certainly the first six sons are, if the others are, then Solomon would actually have been the fourth son with Bathsheba, the fourth and youngest, if it was a chronological record.

And in fact, he would actually be the fifth, because you figure the unborn, the son who was born first with Bathsheba that died in the divine judgment would be a fifth. Well, if you just look at the listing, regardless of the chronology, just look at the way they are listed in Chronicles, remembering the son that died, David says, he cannot return to me, but I can go to him. What number son is Solomon? In the list, in the order given in Chronicles, he's number 10.

If you add in the unnamed son, he's 11. That would be six with his first six wives, and then five with Bathsheba, and he would be the 11th. Who was the 11th son of Jacob? Joseph.

And how many disciples does Jesus have left after the resurrection? 11. There's, as I said last time, there are noises behind the wall, and I don't always know what they mean. I just hear things that go bump, and I am not ascribing particular significance, but it is notable.

There are certain numbers that recur in Scripture, and the number 10, the number 11, the number 12, the number eight, the number seven, all have significance. I was extremely fascinated to watch a short documentary on the work of a physicist that lives out in Hawaii, and his name is Garrett Nisi, and he has a somewhat controversial theory that he has propounded recently. That would make him a proponent if he propounded it.

And, you know, they've been trying for a long time to find a theory of everything, gravity, the

weak force, the strong force, all of these things into one thing. Well, he's one of these quantum physicists, really brilliant guy, also a surfer and a traveler. But in graphically depicting what we know about physics, all of these sub-particles, it was so simple.

When I went to school, we only had three particles. You've got your protons, you've got your neutrons, you've got your electrons, you've got your nice little simple Bohr model of the atom, their shells. Even I could understand and figure that stuff out.

Valences, how they combined, piece of cake. That was great. Well, come to find out, that's not the smallest units.

Now they know, and it's taught to the poor children that now go to school, that electrons are made up of other things and protons are made up of other things and neutrons are made of other things and they've got spins and charges. And apparently right now there's something like 226 different particles that make up the sub-atomic particulate universe. Well, these have a variety of charges.

In fact, there's four different charges and so there are different colors that they can have. They have spins, there's matter and antimatter, there's all kinds of things. And so these fall into groups.

So what Gerrit Nisi has done is to plot these and put them on an axis and look at them in conjunction with one another. And by spacing them along the axes according to their charges and spins and colors and all the rest of it, they form a very beautiful pattern. And this pattern, although it is incomplete, in fact, it is this sort of pattern that made them feel almost certain that they would find the Higgs particle, the boson they've been looking for at the CERN thing in Europe.

And they're pretty certain to have either found it or they're going to very, very soon. All the evidence is pretty solid that they're going to track that thing down because the CERN has got seven times the power of anything previous to smash things and find out what's inside. Not a very elegant way to do science, one would think, but that's what they do.

They smash them up and see what falls out. This would be like dropping cars over a cliff and then sifting through the pieces to see what they're made of. This is the level of our sophistication in science right now.

We just bust things up and look at the debris. I say all of that to say this. There is an increasingly compelling consensus.

Well, I wouldn't say consensus, but there's increasingly compelling evidence that there is an inherent design at the very fundamental level of the universe. And it isn't anything that can have come about by random or by chance. These things just don't happen this way.

By organizing these particles, by the way, there's a TED Talk on this. If you look for, I think it's

called Theory of Everything. And if you go to the TED Talks website, you can find this.

My suggestion is don't watch the video at TED Talks. Look for the download link below. Click that.

And it says if you want to download and then there's another download link, right-click that and save it to your desktop and choose the high-definition version so that you can watch it full screen. Trust me, it's worth it. And just watch the whole thing.

It's only about an 18-minute presentation, but you'll see what I'm talking about. I don't have time to go through it all in class tonight, but I say all of that and give that by way of introduction. There is design in God's universe.

And it was easy when they didn't know what was inside a cell to say, well, these little tiny blobs probably just appeared out of the muck. Well, as they've gotten inside and found out how incredibly complex, more complex than an electronically controlled production factory someplace with welders and assembly lines and computers turning things off and on and inventory control and all the rest of it, cells, a single cell is more complex than that. And look how many people it takes to put a factory together and figure it all out.

The individual cell, any living cell is more complex than that. I'm talking about a single-celled organism, for example. Blood cell might be simpler.

But in the same way, physicists who have been doing their best for decades to prove that everything could come about by chance and through natural forces are increasingly coming up against a wall where when they thought they would find simplicity, they find incredible complexity and incredible order and design. It's design. You pull up that video and look at what these particles create.

And by the way, when they say, oh, well, design or intelligent design is unscientific because you can't make predictions from it, that design. And this guy is not an intelligent design guy. He's just a physicist.

I'm looking at his design and saying he's looking at this design and predicting the existence and the nature of 20 more particles. Because when you look at this spirographical, incredibly beautiful, complex object, which, by the way, depending on how you turn it in seven-dimensional and eight-dimensional space, and on his Web site, if you go to Garrett Lisey's Web site, he's got an interactive deal where you can go in and you can turn this thing on your own. You can drag and line up this complex thing and look at it all different ways.

Looking at it in one dimension, there are seven clusters. All of these myriads of particles form seven perfectly symmetrical clusters, six around the outside and one right in the center, identical. You turn it another way and it is this tremendous eight-dimensional galaxy with everything perfectly proportioned, perfectly spaced.

Well, if you get a chance, I don't often recommend just stuff to look at, but you ought to look at that. You'll be praising God for the beauty of his design because that's what it is. And this guy has no religious thought in his head, but he has uncovered, I think, part of that beautiful symmetry.

There's symmetry in God's Word as well. One of the things that we saw last time is that there is, according to Ecclesiastes, a time and a season for everything under heaven. There is a time for sin to be allowed, for sin to have its way, for the rulers of the darkness of this age to prevail, and there is a time for them to be defeated but left here for training.

And then there will be a time when they are fully eliminated. There is a time for war and there is a time for peace. David is the king during the time of war, driving out the enemies.

It takes violence. It takes radical sword slinging and giant slaying to purge the land and prepare it for occupancy. This is David's job.

Well, what we see in Kings, as we pick up the study now, with the death of David and the second Davidic king, who is Solomon. Solomon is the king of peace. His name is Shalomo, Peace Man.

He's the peace guy. It's his name. If we missed the clue, David, you can't build my house because you are a man of war and a man of blood.

Shalomo, your son, is going to build it. Well, David charges his son in 1 Kings 2 and gives him some instructions. I go the way of all the earth.

Keep the charge of the Lord your God. First and foremost, keep your eyes on the Lord. There are details and circumstances.

David's going to give him some recommendations and some charges, some instructions, some commands. Remind him of his commission from the Lord and so on. But he says, first and foremost, keep the charge of the Lord your God.

Walk in his ways. Keep his statutes, his commandments, his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses. Now, these things are distinct and different.

In order that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, that the Lord may fulfill his word which he spoke concerning me, saying, that the Lord may fulfill. Fulfillment of these covenants is conditioned on obedience. This is true for us.

God has made many great and precious promises. We have a new and better covenant founded on new and better promises. We are in Christ.

We can overcome. We can inherit. We can bear fruit.

We can be useful to God and reflect his glory, if we take heed to our way and walk before him in

truth, just as David tells Solomon here. Then in verse five, we have this interesting discussion. Moreover, you know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me and what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed.

And he shed the blood of war in peacetime and put the blood of war on his belt that was around his waist and on his sandals that were on his feet. Therefore, do according to your wisdom and do not let his gray hair go down to the grave in peace. My suggestion for homework this past week was to review the history of Joab and of the next man who is mentioned here, Shimei and Barzillai and these others that are specifically mentioned by David, either for good or for ill.

But let's talk about Joab first. Joab is David's nephew, Zeruiah. And I think her name T.S.R. is the name of a ruler.

I remember that because Tsar in Russian has the same idea. Tsariya has the notion of the Lord is my prince or the Lord is my ruler or something like that. This is Zeruiah's name.

Now she is evidently a, and there is some confusion in the Hebrew scripture. If our understanding is correct, she is sort of a stepdaughter of Jesse because she is also said to be the daughter of a local king. And her bona fides are not pertinent at the moment, but she's David's sister.

And this makes Joab, Abishai and Amasa, the three brothers, her sons, David's nephews. All of them serve with David. All of them are with him when he is in the wandering years.

And Joab is a good guy. Joab does a lot of great things. Turn back to 1 Samuel chapter 25.

Actually 24 and 25. We're going to just look at a few things. We don't have time to do a complete review of Joab.

In fact, skip over to 2 Samuel. We'll just do all of this at once. I'll change my approach here.

Just go to 2 Samuel. Really the first place where Joab shows up with any distinction is after David is anointed king in Judah. And in chapter 2, Ish-bosheth.

His name was probably Ish-baal. And you know, bosheth means foolishness. And they didn't like the name Baal for obvious reasons.

So either his nickname or his substitute name is Ish-bosheth, man of foolishness, where it was probably named by his father Ish-baal, man of the Lord. Baal meaning Lord. Abner the son of Ner.

This is verse 8 of chapter 2. Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim and made him king over Gilead, over the Asherites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, over all Israel. By the way, a little point of

trivia if you want to amaze your friends and you can't win drinks at the bar, I guess. But who was the first king of the northern kingdom? Ish-bosheth.

He reigned for two years over every tribe except Judah. And it's given to us right here. Two whole years.

David reigns over one tribe. Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, reigns over 11 tribes. Even Benjamin is under Ish-bosheth.

Ephraim, the guys across the Jordan, everybody is under Ish-bosheth except the tribe of Judah. So David is kind of an upstart and Ish-bosheth is the main guy. And notice what the Bible says.

Ish-bosheth in verse 10, Saul's son was 40 years old when he began to reign over Israel and he reigned two years. This is the very same formula you find throughout the king lists. So many years old when he began to reign and this is how long he reigned.

Only the house of Judah followed David. The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months. Now Abner the son of Neron, the servants of Ish-bosheth, went out from Ahanaim to Gibeon.

And Joab the son of Zeruiah and the servants of David went out to meet them. And we've been through this episode at Gibeon where 12 of the men of Judah and 12 of Abner's men meet at the pool and they each grab each other and stab each other. And these left-handed guys, right-handed guys stabbing each other and they all die.

Then a general battle breaks out. That place is called the Field of Sharp Swords down in verse 16. Very fierce battle.

Abner and the men of Israel are beaten. This is the day when they pursue hotly and Asahel pursues Abner in verse 19. He doesn't swerve to the right or the left.

Abner pleads with him. He says, how am I going to face your brother Joab if I have to kill you? Asahel will not give up. Abner uses his speed against him, allows him to catch up, then stops short and shoves his spear back and Asahel impales himself on Abner's spear.

Makes quite a shocking sight. And Abner called to Joab in verse 26 and said, Shall the sword devour forever? Very meaningful phrase. Shall the sword devour forever? We give up.

We quit. Let's call a truce. No more war.

We're running. We're not fighting. We're through.

Let's not have the sword keep devouring when it doesn't need to anymore. Do you not know that it will be bitter in the latter end? How long will it be then until you tell the people to return from pursuing their brethren? Joab, to his credit, says, As God lives, unless you had spoken, surely by morning all the people would have given up. Joab blew a trumpet.

All the people stood still and did not pursue Israel anymore, nor did they fight anymore. Nor did they fight anymore. The time of war is over.

Abner and his men went on all that night. Joab returned from pursuing Abner. The servants of David had struck down of Benjamin and Abner's men 360 men who died.

Of David's men, there were 19 plus Asahel. When he had gathered all the people together, there were missing of David's servants 19 men and Asahel. So that's 20 to 360.

You can see why Abner's men were fleeing. There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

What form this took, we don't really know. Then you have the sons of David iterated here for us again in 2 Samuel. But look at verse 22 of the next chapter.

322 of 2 Samuel. The servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David in Hebron.

Abner had communicated to the kingdom of David. He had agreed. He, if you read the preceding chapter, part of the chapter, Abner in verse 20, and 20 men came with him to David at Hebron.

David made a feast for Abner. Abner said to David, I will rise and go, gather all Israel to my Lord the King, that they may make a covenant with you and that you may reign over all that your heart desires. So David sent Abner away and he went in peace.

Time of peace. Even this long war. First the battle results in peace.

Then this long war between the two houses ends in peace. There is a covenant. There is a truce.

And there is an agreement. Abner leaves in peace. But Joab murders Abner.

You can familiarize yourself with that story. So, Joab is a good guy. Joab is a great general.

He wins a lot of battles. He cautions David when David's judgment is not sound. When David wants to number the people, it's Joab who tries to slow him down.

It's Joab who attacks the city and secures Jerusalem for David, finds the water shaft place. It's Joab who is attacking and leading the armies when David is back home getting tangled up with Bathsheba. And it is Joab who then doesn't resist David when David decides to murder Uriah.

You wonder what would have happened if Joab had simply said, I can't do that. But Joab is loyal almost to a fault. Well, here's the thing.

Why does Joab come under sentence of death at the end of David's life? You can't help but think of the cities of refuge where if there was an accidental or disputed homicide where a guy says, I

didn't mean to, I didn't murder him, it was an accident or it was unintentional, he would flee to the city of refuge. This is back in Numbers. Numbers 35.

All about the cities of refuge. And how long did a guy have to stay at the city of refuge to be safe from the avenger of blood? When was he free to return to his home? The death of the high priest. And there's an interesting lesson there, an interesting illustration there, because there are seven cities of refuge.

Remember, there's three across the Jordan and four in the land. And over the course of the life of the high priest, there could be dozens of individuals in each of these cities that were there for various reasons. And there's even a tradition in the Talmud that the high priest's mother would send gifts and clothing and knit sweaters and stuff for these guys that were waiting in the cities of refuge because she didn't want them all praying for her son's death.

Sure hope that guy dies, you know. Killed one guy. Shouldn't be too hard to kill the priest.

Then I can go home type of thing. But it's an interesting picture because why can these guys go home upon the death of the high priest? Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. Life for a life.

But you remember the unwitting prophecy that is given by the high priest when the Lord Jesus is about to be arrested and go to the cross? Wouldn't it be better for one man to give his life on behalf of the nation? Well, the high priest's death is a picture of atonement for all of these men in the cities of refuge. One for many. One dies.

Many are forgiven. Many are atoned for. And that's the priest.

It's his priestly function. It is as though his priesthood is somehow involved in this expiation for these men. Now notice there's a different penalty for those who are blood guilty.

The penalty for murder was death. These were guys that it was unintentional. Either they were careless or they were unwitting.

I was rolling this stone along the top of the wall and my wheelbarrow tipped. I couldn't catch it and the stone fell and killed someone. That man had to flee to the city of refuge and wait for the death of the high priest.

There's a lot of other details. Elders could find him innocent and so on. But typically that's what would happen.

These sort of indeterminate cases. Well, here's a case where it is because David is alive that Joab is not judged. Joab is guilty.

He murders Abner. He murders Amasa. You remember Amasa was another relative, another nephew of David that Absalom installed in Joab's seat when Absalom ran David out of town.

Joab went with David and so Absalom says, Amasa, you're now the chief of staff of the army. You're the general of the armies. Well, when they returned, Absalom got his hair caught in the tree.

David said under no circumstances hurt Absalom. Who killed him? Joab. Because of this, David fires Joab and retains Amasa as the general of the armies.

Well, Joab can't have that. So, Amasa is slain. So, you've got the blood of Abner.

David doesn't mention it. I think it might have been too painful for him, but the blood of Absalom, the blood of Amasa, shed in time of peace. Once again, Absalom guys are all on the run.

Absalom is helpless in the tree. There's no need to kill him. And David has specifically said, do not kill him.

You can debate the wisdom and the benefit of him being gone, what he might have done later, but if you cannot trust someone to obey the authority over them. David made a covenant. That covenant has David's authority.

Joab violated that covenant in killing Abner. David gave a command. Joab violated the command in killing Absalom.

David made an appointment and a judgment. And Joab violated that appointment and that judgment by slaying Amasa. So David cannot, Joab has been with him from the beginning.

Joab and his brothers, Abishai, the oldest brother, Amasa the youngest. Joab is the middle brother of those three. Abishai was with David back when David was in the cave.

Remember when Saul came in and it just says David's men, but the second time David spares Saul's life, it's Abishai who was with him and they take the water bottle and the spear. And there's that conversation with Abner and with Saul. That was Abishai.

Well, this is the point. Joab is safe in terms of his life as long as David is alive. But it is only David's personal grace, if you will, that suspends the sentence.

It has been suspended. It hasn't been removed. And David says, when I'm gone, that suspension is no longer in effect and sentence needs to be carried out.

He has shed the blood of war in peacetime. Here's the application as we go to our break. You can point to a lot of great accomplishments.

You can point to a lot of fine things, a lot of loyalty, a lot of battle, a lot of victories. Remember, Joab is a great man of honor. After the Bathsheba incident, remember the city that he was attacking when he sent Uriah up to the front and the army retreats and leaves Uriah out there and they're shot from the walls and so on.

And Joab gives an elaborate message to the messenger when he goes back and he says, now, if David asks why this happened, you tell him Uriah also is dead. Joab is sort of acting as David's conscience here and David doesn't pick up on it. He says, oh, well, that's okay.

You know, the sword takes one as well as another. And it isn't until Nathan tells him the parable of the lamb that he comes to his senses. But they are out besieging Rabbah.

That's the town that they're besieging when Uriah is killed. It's a long battle, but they eventually win it. And if you look at the end of chapter 12 of 2 Samuel, Joab fought against Rabbah of the people of Ammon and took the royal city.

Joab sent messengers to David and said, I have fought against Rabbah and I have taken the city's water. Now, therefore, gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called after my name. If you don't hurry up and get here and make some sort of a sham battle, I'm going to be the victor of Rabbah.

And in fact, he ought to be. He has waged the entire campaign. The only thing David contributed was the Uriah incident where they suffered a defeat and lost some other good men to try to cover David's error.

But Joab loyally says, you need to come over here with some troops and you be the guy that marches in so that it will be your victory and not mine. That's a great act of loyalty. He's incredibly loyal and incredibly, it shows a lot of character that he didn't just cover himself with glory and take the city.

He's a good guy. You can research his history and see many other fine moments for Joab. Here's the sobering part.

And this is the thing to remember. All of those accomplishments do not overcome his crimes. And what was the nature of his crime? He had clear commands.

He knew exactly what David had said, what David wanted, and he did the opposite. It was, as it were, a sin of the high hand. It was willful disobedience after a sure knowledge of the truth.

Hebrews talks about that. If we sin willfully after we have come to a knowledge, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins but a certain fearful expectation of judgment. This fearful expectation of judgment is fulfilled at David's death.

And Joab cannot escape it. He is reprieved for a time, but it will come eventually. People enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

People can rebel. People can be disobedient. People can abuse God's grace for a time.

And it may seem as though justice is not in effect and judgment is not going to take place. Be assured, everyone's sins will find them out. Joab never repents for this.

I don't think he's ever sorry for avenging his brother's death. He's not sorry for avenging himself on Abner. He's not sorry for avenging himself on Amasa.

He's not sorry for slaying Absalom. He never had any regrets. He never had any sorrow.

He thought he was right. And that will bring his gray hair down in blood rather than in peace. It is a reminder to us that you can't just go counting your laurels and saying what good things have happened in the past.

This is only removed and resolved the way David's blood guilt was, by going to God in repentance and in confession and in claiming the grace of God against thee and thee only have I sinned. David did things just as bad as Joab. Why was he not judged? Look at the difference in the aftermath.

Joab never repents. He's not sorry. Not that sorrow is inherent, but he doesn't change his mind about it.

He thinks he was right. Well, we'll pause here and take a break. When we come back, we're going to look at the other case, Abiathar.

Abiathar is an even more shocking example. That's what we'll look at when we come back.