

1 Kings 2:35 — 3:2

Benaiah, Zadok, Shimei, and the Seeds of Departure

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 2:35–46; 3:1–2

“And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host, and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar. And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth hence any whither. For it shall be that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die. Thy blood shall be upon thine own head.

Shimei said unto the king, The saying is good, as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days. And it came to pass at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away unto Achish, son of Maacah, king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, Behold, thy servants be in Gath. And Shimei arose, and saddled his ass, and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants. And Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath.

And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and was come again. And the king sent and called for Shimei and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the Lord, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, on the day thou goest out and walkest abroad any whither, thou shalt surely die? And thou saidst unto me, The word that I have heard is good. Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the Lord, and the commandment that I have charged thee with? The king said moreover to Shimei, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father. Therefore the Lord shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head, and king Solomon shall

be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord for ever.

So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, which went out and fell upon him that he died. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord until those days. And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.”

Benaiah and Zadok — Faithful Service and Covenant Fulfilled

Verse 35 is not a little filler thrown in — this is part of God's Word, and two principles are discernible in it. One is faithful service, and the other is God making good his promises. Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was a man who had shown himself faithful in service — the exploits recorded of him in another chapter show a man in whom, typically speaking, the world, the flesh, and the devil were overcome. It is this man who is put in Joab's place. And the manifestation of reward for faithful service is a characteristic of the millennium, connected not with the rapture but with the appearing in glory and the setting up of the kingdom. The rapture is entirely of grace; all will be brought to places of nearness to the Father and to the Father's house. But when it comes to the kingdom, numerous parables make clear that it is at Christ's appearing in glory that the faithfulness of the servant will be manifested. Something of that is typified here.

And then Zadok comes from the line of Phinehas, and God had made a covenant of the priesthood to Phinehas. Three times in Ezekiel 40–48 it is written that the

sons of Zadok will minister before God in the millennium. This is the typical fulfilment of that. Darby's translation renders "room" as "stead" — Benaiah and Zadok were replacements. One replaces Joab as head over the army; the other replaces Abiathar in the priesthood. And the kingdom being established in the hand of Solomon is the typical foreshadowing of when God's covenant promise to Phinehas will be made fully good in the coming kingdom. So all the ancient promises to his people will be made good.

Notice that in verse 35, it says twice: "the king put." That called for obedience, and it gave direction and order to the lives of these two men — a happy and blessed thing. In the New Testament similarly, the Lord Jesus as head of the church gives certain men his gifts, and when the king puts, it is put. When we bow to that ordering, it gives blessedness and order to our lives.

Our Great High Priest — No Succession

It is a sad thing when the head of religious matters has to be replaced because of evil involved in that person. That happens in the world with some frequency — not only in large national or international religious organizations, but even in some little locality, where there is a man who has a place of religious leadership and he has to be replaced. That is a great upheaval.

But so far as can be told, there is no instruction whatsoever in the New Testament for replacing, among Christians, such a man. For we are taught in Hebrews that we have a great high priest in the heavens. He abides forever, and there will never be an occasion for his replacement. He is eternal at God's right hand — our Lord Jesus. It is written that in the power of an endless life he holds that office — that place over us in things that have to do with God. It is unchangeable; it lasts forever; there is no mechanism for replacement or succession. We hear from time to time of denominational places where there was a nice clergyman for a while, and either something went wrong, or he got old and died, and had to be replaced.

But near as can be told, Scripture gives no counsel for such a thing, because what we have as those who believe on the Lord Jesus is an eternal great high priest. Even Zadok, a much more worthy man than Abiathar, died and had to be replaced. But not so our great high priest.

In this verse we come perhaps as close as the Old Testament does to what Zechariah speaks of — Christ being priest upon his throne, the two offices combined in himself. The power of the throne executed by Benaiah, and the priesthood exercised by Zadok, coming together in one verse, point toward what will be fully true in Christ in the millennium. Solomon could not typify both perfectly, being of the tribe of Judah and not of the priestly tribe. But the Melchizedek order is an order in resurrection — an entirely different matter — and that is the order under which Christ will reign as priest upon his throne.

Shimei — The Heart That Was Never Judged

Shimei's wickedness toward David before was not by the transgression of a royal command; it was a gratuitous insult, more in the character of lawlessness. There is a distinction between sin as lawlessness — which expresses self-will without a specific command being transgressed — and outright transgression, which sets itself against a definite command. Both are sin. But the man who did not know there was a command and gave expression to the wickedness of his heart is sinning in the character of lawlessness, whereas the one who knows the command and goes directly against it is a transgressor. Solomon's arrangement for Shimei gave occasion for both to be manifest.

The speech Shimei made when he came down to meet David at Jordan sounded well: "The saying is good, as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do." There is plenty of fraud that can produce a good line, a good speech. But Solomon proved wiser, for he knew that the saying was not so good. He figured that what this man said, this man would not do — which is why he put him in this

position: to bring out the guilt and bring it upon him. As J.N.D.'s translation puts it in verse 44: "Thou knowest all the wickedness of which thy heart is conscious." Solomon told him, it was not ignorance. You yourself are conscious of it. It had never been judged.

How soon he forgot. Three years — not very long from one point of view — to then simply walk out and go to Gath as if there were no death sentence attached. It is contempt for the royal authority, the same spirit of contempt that was in his heart when he cast stones at David and cursed him. The heart had never changed, only the circumstances. When David looked like he was getting power again, Shimei ran down to try to ward off punishment. But the rebellious spirit was not self-judged and remained. Solomon detected it, and knew the character would sooner or later come out and manifest itself — which it did.

It is also of note that Shimei's servants ran away to the Philistines — westward, to Gath. The very name Philistine is said to mean traffickers — those who traffic in divine things as though the inheritance were theirs, without having come in through the Red Sea and Jordan as Israel did. They got into the land but not in the way of faith. And it is something of a character fit that Shimei's servants ran to that place, and he went after them there. Moreover, Shimei happened to be living in the same city with a king of great wisdom. He could have brought this problem of his runaway servants to Solomon. He did not. He said, in effect, the man who can solve my problem is Achish, the king of Gath. And that gives an additional character to his sin — not only did he go to seek resolution at the wrong place from the wrong man, but he dishonored the one he ought to have turned to.

And then Solomon's words in verse 44 also carry the echo of Eden. "For in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" is what the Lord God commanded the man in the garden. And there was someone who came to Eve and said, "Ye shall not surely die." It is always, perhaps, possible to find the bad advice one wants, if the decision to go ahead has already been made. One will

receive good counsel, and more good counsel, but sooner or later there is someone who gives the bad advice one wanted all along, and then it can be acted upon.

Shimei and Jerusalem as a City of Refuge

Shimei's relationship to Jerusalem in this passage is like, or at least similar to, the relationship between a manslayer and a city of refuge. There were six cities of refuge, three on each side of Jordan, to which someone who had caused a neighbor's death without malice aforethought might flee. He was required to remain there until the death of the high priest; then he was free to return home. It would not shelter a murderer — the murderer would be put to death for his murder regardless. But for the manslayer, it was a place of refuge.

Well, Shimei had Jerusalem in that way. The day he stepped outside of Jerusalem was the day the sentence of death was to be executed upon him. And this reflects, in a way, very nicely upon Jerusalem itself. That Jerusalem was for this man like a city of refuge — a city of hope, a city of salvation, deliverance from the avenger of blood. It would make Jerusalem, in that sense, the seventh such city — a perfect number. It is interesting too that in Hebrews 7, when Melchizedek is expounded, the apostle says, first by interpretation, king of righteousness, and after that, king of Salem, which is king of peace. That is what Shimei had to discover. Who was to be that character, and how thoroughly he failed at it.

Seeds of Departure — 1 Kings 3:1–2

One begins to see the seeds of departure in the very first verse of chapter 3. Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter to wife. Was Pharaoh, king of Egypt, going to help fix Solomon's problems? Or provide some benefit to the kingdom of Israel in its needs? Where should Solomon have turned, if not to the world at all? It would have been a very

great deal better for him to have turned to the Lord.

Just as Shimei, when his two servants ran away to Gath, did not take that problem to the one who sat with him in the same city — a king of great wisdom — but went to Achish the king of Gath instead. Solomon does a very Shimei-like thing in chapter 3, verse 1. Instead of taking up whatever the matters were directly with the Lord, he makes affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Can marrying the daughter of Pharaoh be offset by building the wall of Jerusalem, that emblem of separation between the place where Jehovah had chosen to put his name and the world round about? One cannot set those things against each other and say they cancel out. Because what of the woman? In the book of Nehemiah, there were Jews in Jerusalem who had married wives of the surrounding nations. Such a person would have been exactly the one Nehemiah would have been most concerned about — for divided allegiance. And what would one expect of the children of such a union? Would they not come out speaking half the language of the foreign wife and not able to speak the language of their own country? Which is exactly what happened in the days of Nehemiah. Things have their effect. They may be subtle, but they have their effect.

Then there is the matter of sacrificing in the high places, mentioned both of the people and of the king. It is not condemned here — that comes later. The Lord has patience with certain things, and then later on they really need to be put away, and by that time there is a history behind it. We do not find it condemned here, but the way it is put, and the fact that it is mentioned, hints that God's thought is that it should be otherwise. In those who went to the high places there was an absence of respect for the temple — and just because the temple was not built exactly yet does not mean there was no lack of interest in it, no lack of respect for the place where God had chosen to put his name. Wherever the Tent of Meeting was, that should have been the attractive center for the people until the house was built.

In spite of the distastefulness of these three things at the beginning of chapter 3, there is something instructive in them as to the character of the book of 1 Kings as a whole. It relates to the history of Israel and shows the failure and ruin of the first man at every turn. If it is Shimei, it shows Shimei's ruin. If it is Solomon, it shows Solomon's failures. It harps almost endlessly on the same thing: there is nothing good in man, in the flesh. But you will find everything that is good in God, in our Lord Jesus Christ. And you get that side of things in 1 Chronicles, where the history of the nation is written so as to constantly set forth all those good things that come from God.

The kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.