**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**2 SAMUEL-002. ONE FOLD AND ONE SHEPHERD by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"1. Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. 2. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the Lord said to thee, Thou shalt feed My people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. 3. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord: and they anointed David king over Israel. 4. David was thirty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned forty years. 5. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah, 6. And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land; which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither. 7. Nevertheless, David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David. 8. And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house. 9. So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward. 10. And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him. 11. And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house. 12. And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for His people Israel's sake."*

*2 Samuel 5:1-12*

The dark day on Gilboa put the Philistines in possession of most of Saul's kingdom. Only in the south David held his ground, and Abner had to cross Jordan to find a place of security for the remnants of the royal house. The completeness of the Philistine conquest is marked, not only by Abner's flight to Mahanaim, but by the reckoning that David reigned for seven and a half years and Ishbosheth two; for these periods must be supposed to have ended very nearly at the same time, and thus there would be about five years before the invaders were so far got rid of that Ishbosheth exercised sovereignty over his part of Israel. It is singular that David should have been left unattacked by the Philistines, and it is probably to be explained by the friendly relations which had sprung up between Achish, king of Gath, and him (1 Samuel 29.). However that may be, his power was continually increasing during his reign at Hebron over Judah, and at last Abner's death and the assassination of the poor phantom king, Ishbosheth, brought about the total collapse of opposition.

**I.** This passage deals first with the submission of the tribes and the reunion of the divided kingdom. A comparison of verse 1 with verse 3 shows that a formal delegation of elders from all the tribes which had held by Ishbosheth, came to Hebron with their submission. The account in I Chronicles is a verbatim copy of this one, with the addition of a glowing picture of the accompanying feasting and joy. It also places much emphasis on the sincerity of David's new subjects, which needed some endorsement; for loyalty which has been disloyal as long as it durst, may be suspected. The elders have their mouths full of excellent reasons for recognising David's kingship,--he is their brother; he was their true leader in war, even in Saul's time; he has been appointed by God to be king and commander. Unfortunately, it had taken the elders seven and a half years to feel the force of these reasons, and probably their perceptions would still have remained dull if Abner and Ishbosheth had lived. But David is both magnanimous and politic, and neither bloodshed nor reproaches mar the close of the strife. Seldom has so formidable a civil war been ended with so complete an amnesty. Observe the expression that David made a league with them... before the Lord. The Israelitish monarch was no despot, but, in modern language, a constitutional king, between whom and his subjects there was a compact, which he as well as they had to observe. In what sense was it made before the Lord? The ark was not at Hebron, though the priests were; and the phrase is at once a testimony to the religious character of the league and to the consciousness of God's presence, apart from the symbol of His presence. It points to a higher conception than that which brought the ark to Ebenezer, and dreamed that the ark had brought God to the army. Modern theories of the religious development of the Old Testament ask us to recognise these two conceptions as successive. The fact is that they were contemporaneous, and that the difference between them is not one of time, but of spiritual susceptibility. Who anointed David for this third time? Apparently the elders, for priests are not mentioned. Samuel had anointed him, as token of the divine choice and symbol of the divine gifts for his office. The men of Judah had anointed him, and finally the elders did so, in token of the popular confirmation of God's choice.

So David has reached the throne at last. Schooled by suffering, and in the full maturity of his powers, enriched by the singularly varied experiences of his changeful life, tempered by the swift alternations of heat and cold, polished by friction, consolidated by heavy blows, he has been welded into a fitting instrument for God's purposes. Thus does He ever prepare for larger service. Thus does He ever reward patient trust. Through trials to a throne is the law for all noble lives in regard to their earthly progress, as well as in regard to the relation between earth and heaven. But David is not only a pattern instance of how God trains His servants, but he is a prophetic person; and in his progress to his kingdom we have dimly, but really, shadowed the path by which his Son and Lord attains to His,--a path thickly strewn with thorns, and plunging into valleys of the shadow of death compared with which David's darkest hour was sunny. The psalms of the persecuted exile have sounding through them a deeper sorrow; for they testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ. No cross, no crown, is the lesson of David's earlier life.

**II.** We have, next, the first victory of the reunited nation. Hebron was too far south for the capital of the whole kingdom. Jerusalem was more central, and, from its position, surrounded on three sides with steep ravines, was a strong military post. David's soldier's eye saw its advantages; and he, no doubt, desired to weld the monarchy together by participation in danger and triumph. The new glow of national unity would seek some great exploit, and would resent as an insult the presence of the Jebusites in their stronghold. The attack on it immediately follows the recognition of David's kingship. It is not necessary here to discuss the difficulties in verses 6-8; but we note that they give, first, the insolent boast of the besieged, then the twofold answer to it in fact and in word, and last, the memorial of the victory in a proverb. Apparently the Jebusites taunt is best understood as in the margin of the Revised Version, Thou shalt not come in hither, but the blind and the lame shall turn thee away, They were so sure that their ravines made them safe, that they either actually manned their walls with blind men and cripples, or jeeringly shouted to the enemy across the valley that these would do for a garrison. The other possible meaning of the words as they stand in the Authorised Version would make the blind and lame refer to David's men, and the taunt would mean, You will have to weed out your men. It will take sharper eyes and more agile limbs than theirs to clamber up here; but the former explanation is the more probable. Such braggart speeches were quite in the manner of ancient warfare.

Verse 7 tells what the answer to this mocking shout from the ramparts was, David did the impossible, and took the city. Courage built on faith has a way of making the world's predictions of what it cannot do look rather ridiculous. David wastes no words in answering the taunt; but it stirs him to fierce anger, and nerves him and his men for their desperate charge. The obscure words in verse 8, which he speaks to his soldiers, do not need the supplement given in the Authorised Version. The king's quick eye had seen a practical path for scaling the cliffs up some watercourse, where there might be projections or vegetation to pull oneself up by, or shelter which would hide the assailants from the defenders; and he bids any one who would smite the Jebusites take that road up, and, when he is up, smite. He heartens his men for the assault by his description of the enemy. They had talked about blind and lame; that is what they really are, or as unable to stand against the Israelites fierce and sudden burst as if they were: and furthermore, they are hated of David's soul. It is a flash of the rage of battle which shows us David in a new light. He was a born captain as well as king; and here he exhibits the general's power to see, as by instinct, the weak point and to hurl his men on it. His swift decision and fiery eloquence stir his men's blood like the sound of a trumpet. The proverb that rose from the capture is best read as in the Revised Version: There are the blind and the lame; he cannot come into the house. The point of it seems to be that, notwithstanding the bragging Jebusites, he did come into the house; and so its use would be to ridicule boasting confidence that was falsified by events, as the Jebusites had been. It was worth while to record the boast and its end; for they teach the always seasonable lesson of the folly of over-confidence in apparently impregnable defences. It is a lesson of worldly prudence, but still more of religion. There is always some watercourse overlooked by us, up which the enemy may make his way. Overestimate of our own strength and its companion folly, flippant underestimate of the enemy's power, are, in all worldly affairs, the sure precursors of disaster; and in the Christian life the only safe temper is that of the man who feareth always, as knowing his own weakness and the strength of his foe, and thereby is driven to that trust which casts out fear.

On the other hand, David's exploit reads us anew the lesson that to the Christian soldier there is nothing impossible, with Jesus Christ for our Captain. There are many unconquered fortresses of evil still to be carried by assault, and they look steep and inaccessible enough; but there is some way up, and He will show it us. For our own personal struggle with sin, and for the Church's conflict with social evils, this story is an encouragement and a prophecy.

Jerusalem was captured by a reunited nation with its king at its head. As long as our miserable divisions weaken and disgrace us, the Church fights at a disadvantage; and the hoary fortresses of the foe will not be won till Judah ceases to vex Ephraim, and Ephraim no more envies Judah, but all Christ's servants in one host, with the King known by each to be with them, make the assault.

**III.** We have, lastly, the growth of the kingdom. I pass over topographical questions, which need not concern us here. The points recorded are David's establishment in the stronghold, his additions to the city, his increasing greatness and its reason in the presence and favour of the God of hosts, the special instance of this in the friendly intercourse with Hiram of Tyre and the employment of Tyrian workmen, and the recognition of the source and the purpose of his prosperity by the devout king. We see here the conditions of true success,--The Lord, the God of hosts, was with him. We see also the right use of it,--David perceived that the Lord had established him king. He was not puffed up into self-importance by his elevation, but devoutly and clearly saw who had set him in his lofty place. And, as he traced his royalty to God, so he recognised that he had received it, not for himself, but as a trust to be used, not in self-indulgence, but for the national good,--and that He had exalted his kingdom for His people Israel's sake. Whosoever holds firmly by these two thoughts, and lives them, will adorn his position, whatever it may be, and will be one of God's crowned kings, however obscure his lot and small his duties. He who lacks them will misuse his gifts and mar his life, and the more splendid his endowments and the higher his position, the more conspicuous will be his ruin and the heavier his guilt.