

2nd Samuel 19:31-43

Rewards When the King Returns

And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem – v. 33

As we've contemplated the characters that met David upon his return to Jerusalem, I've been trying to keep before you the truth that our King – who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords will also be returning to this earth. Indeed you could say that like king David, King Jesus will be returning to Jerusalem. When you read the section of chp. 19 that describes David's return and you see these 3 characters that are singled out that meet David you are able to learn a number of lessons of lessons that pertain to the return of King Jesus.

Through Shimei, for example, you can draw the lesson that you better seek forgiveness from King Jesus before he returns to Jerusalem. Shimei was the first to meet David and there certainly was good reason for his being first. He knew full well that he had sinned by cursing David when David had vacated Jerusalem and now he's prostrated before David begging for forgiveness while Abishai, the brother of Joab is expressing his view that Shimei ought to be executed. David chooses to be merciful and so will Jesus be merciful to those who seek Him for mercy and confess their sins the way Shimei confessed his sin.

In our last study we considered Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth is somewhat of a perplexing character, especially to David at that time because he found it challenging trying to discern between Mephibosheth and Ziba as to which one was truly loyal and which one wasn't. I don't know if I made the point in our study (so I'll make it now) that when King Jesus returns there will be no challenges to His wisdom or the way He ministers justice. David may find the matter perplexing but Jesus won't. I'm reminded of what Paul writes to Timothy in 2Ti 2:19 *Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

Whatever doubts or misgivings David may have felt toward Mephibosheth or Ziba there was certainly no doubt in his mind about the loyalty of the final character to greet him upon his return to Jerusalem. Look again at the words of vv. 31,32 *And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan. Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man.*

We have the account of this aged man back in chp. 17 providing that sustenance for the king and his followers. So we read at the end of that chapter beginning with v. 27: *And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, 28 Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, 29 And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the*

people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

Now upon David's return to Jerusalem he's showing very tangibly to Barzillai that he had not forgotten his ministry to David and his followers during the time of his exile. And it is his desire now to reward Barzillai for his love and loyalty. And this is what leads to the words of our text in v. 33: *And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.* This was more than just an offer of a meal to Barzillai. This was an invitation to move his residence to the king's court and to sit at the king's table and to know all that came with being in residence with the king which meant all the sumptuous delicacies that the king himself enjoyed in the setting of high class entertainment – singing men and singing women.

And so with Barzillai we're reminded that when our King returns, He too will reward those that have been loyal to Him. King Jesus says as much at the end of the book of Revelation. Re 22:12 *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* This is what I want to call your attention to, then, this morning –

This Reminder of the King's Rewards

The first thing I would have you see from the narrative is that:

I. Barzillai Reminds us of How Rewards are Gained from Our King

In the case of Barzillai he met David in his time of need and he ministered to him from his substance. It's important, I think, to recall the times when Barzillai so ministered to David. It was at a time when David was downcast and discouraged. It was at a time when Absalom, David's son, had risen against him. Recall the scene of David and his entourage leaving Jerusalem. 2Sa 15:30 *And David went up by the ascent of [mount] Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that [was] with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.*

It's also important to recall the rising tide of popularity that Absalom knew. He had stolen the hearts of the Israelites. The wind was definitely in his sails. David was yesterday's history; Absalom was the rising star. And the reason I set this scene before you just now is that you might know and be impressed with the fact that Barzillai identified with David and ministered to David at a time when it wasn't popular to do so and at a time when it would have been even dangerous to do so.

How would it have gone for Barzillai had Absalom gotten the upper hand and became aware of his loyalty and ministry to David? I dare say it would have cost him much, probably even his life and his possessions. But here was a man who in a very real sense heeded the exhortation of Heb. 13:13 centuries before that exhortation was written. Heb 13:13 *Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.*

Isn't that what Barzillai did by ministering to David at that point in history? And that's exactly what we're called on to do in terms of our identification with Christ. There is especially in these days a reproach to be borne in our identification with Christ. Christ's morality, you see, isn't the morality of America. Christ's definition of marriage is not the definition of marriage in our culture. So we bear the reproach of a world that is hostile to Christ. And by affirming the truth of His Word and confessing Him to be the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and the only mediator between God and men we are held in contempt by the scholarly world and we're held in contempt by the politically correct world.

The thing we need to bear in mind, however, is that Christ rewards those who identify with Him, the world's views notwithstanding. It becomes a matter at the end of the day of whose approval you want. Do you want the approval of Christian scholars, so-called, who deny a literal 6 day creation? I find it rather fascinating that no matter who you read there is a common consensus that indicates that if you go only by what the Bible says then there's no question that creation was accomplished as our shorter catechism spells it out *by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good*. But we're told by "scholars" that more things have to be taken into account than the Genesis narrative on the days of creation. And even though history demonstrates time and again that today's science is tomorrow's fiction we're to put our trust in secular science and adjust our interpretation of God's Word.

Or we're to adjust our view of the gospel in order to gain the approval of theologians (Reformed theologians mind you) who tell us that Rome's view of justification is closer to the truth than the Protestant Reformer's view of justification because the Reformers just didn't interpret the gospel through the right historical or theological lens.

Barzillai was willing to buck what was popular and was willing to risk everything in order to minister to David. He certainly illustrates for us, doesn't he, how rewards are gained from the returning king. But he illustrates how those rewards are gained in another way also. What did Barzillai actually do? Did he simply keep a low profile and harbor the notion in his heart that he believed in David?

You know there was much more to his faith than that. He gave to David. He made generous provision for David. He brought *beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, 29 And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine*. Does his ministry not remind you of that scene given in Mt. 25 which is the scene in which Christ is handing out His rewards?

When saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? – the sheep on His right hand want to know: or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

It all counts, brothers and sisters in Christ – even a cup of water given in Christ’s name – that one will not lose his reward. When you think of that it makes the potential so great for us all to be storing treasure in heaven. I believe your prayers for other Christians contributes to your reward. I believe the simple and practical things that you do for Christ’s followers contributes toward your reward. I believe your coming alongside a brother or sister who is struggling and you empathize with that person and you do what you can for that person gains for you the notice and favor and approval of your Savior because He views that as being done to Him.

So Barzillai reminds us of how we gain the reward of our returning King. We must identify with that King. We must go to Him without the camp; and we must engage in definite and specific acts of ministry toward those who also identify with Him. Would you consider with me next that:

II. Barzillai Reminds Us of the Transient Nature of This World’s Rewards

David wanted to reward Barzillai in as generous a way as he could. He keenly felt that kind of debt of gratitude to him. It’s as if he was saying in a sanctified way what a later ruler would say in a carnal way - *Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom* (Mk. 6:23). But as indebted as David felt, and as generous as he would want to be, he was limited in what he could offer Barzillai.

He could offer Barzillai only the things that come from this world – residence in Jerusalem, presumably a place at the king’s table, the delicacies and delights of all that pertained to the king’s palace – these would all be things of this present world and what Barzillai states in his respectful decline of David’s offer is that he was at an age and of such infirmities that none of what David offered could have any appeal to him.

How long have I to live, he says in v. 34 that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? 35 I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?

I’m reminded of Job’s words in Job 14:7-10: *For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. 8 Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; 9 Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. 10 But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?*

This question of Job coupled with the question of Barzillai *how long have I to live?* – make for very important matters that ought to be seriously contemplated by every one of us but especially by those that have never come to Christ. How long do you have to live? And when you give up the ghost where will you be? Will you be as that foolish landowner described by Christ in Luke’s gospel 12:19 *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*

The tragic irony of man's fallen condition is that once he lays up for himself the rewards of this world and is actually in a position to take his ease and eat and drink and be merry, he then reaches the place of a Barzillai who loses his sense of taste and his sense of pleasure. David's son and successor to the throne, Solomon, would come to realize this all the more and would devote an entire book of the Bible to the theme of vanity.

Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. And then he goes on in chp. 1 to explain what he means: *I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. 14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.* And the thing you have to ever keep in mind when you're reading the book of Ecclesiastes is that Solomon had everything – those delicacies and delights that Barzillai makes mention of – those singing men and singing women, Solomon had all of that – more than any other ruler in the world at that time.

Yet, he came to see the emptiness of it all. And yet there are so many in this world that never seem to see beyond this world. We might understand that of those that are unsaved who nothing more than a philosophy of *eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die*. But surely the Christian knows better – or does he? It certainly seems that in our culture of affluence and ease that has dominated our nation for generations it becomes pretty easy to become so attached to this world and the things of this world that we find it challenging to get beyond this world.

And to those who can't get beyond this world – Christ calls them fools. *Thou fool*, Christ says in Lk. 12:20 *this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?* And Paul describes such Christians as miserable: 1Co 15:19 *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* This world is fleeting; this world is going up in flames; this world and the things of this world are not worth becoming too attached to.

The very capacity you and I have to avail ourselves of the things of this world is fleeting. This is one of the things, I think, that makes the theory of evolution so absurd. The world is decaying and our capacity for enjoying the things of the world is decaying and yet a theory is presented to suggest that this world and the inhabitants of this world are ever progressing and evolving and becoming more sophisticated and enlightened? – talk about flying in the face of the obvious.

Barzillai knew better. He reminds me a little bit of a man that attended our church many years ago. I know I've shared this with many of you – Charles Wynalda was with us back in the day. He left our church in his later years but his brother Harold stayed with us for a time. Near the end of his days Charles wasn't attending any church and eventually cancer got hold of his body and since he didn't have any church Harold asked me if I would speak to his brother, Charles, near the end of his life. Charles didn't want any visitors but he did agree to speak with me on the phone and when I asked him if he was ready to depart from

this world he shared with me his view of this world. *At best it's boring* he said to me *and at worst it's sinful*. And he seemed ready and even anxious to be done with it. And so this lesson from Barzillai becomes pretty clear – don't set your hopes and aspirations on the things of this world. Use the things of this world without abusing the things of this world. Keep a loose grip on everything and learn to keep your focus on a better world to come.

I believe Barzillai kept his focus there. And this leads to my final consideration this morning. We've seen how Barzillai reminds us of how we can gain the King's reward and he also reminds us that the best rewards this world affords are fleeting. Would you consider with me finally that:

III. Barzillai's Request of David Reminds Us of a Better Reward to Come

2Sa 19:37 Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, [and be buried] by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.

These are certainly words spoken by a man that's prepared to die, don't you think? A man of lesser spiritual stature would probably deceive himself into thinking that by accepting David's offer of residence in Jerusalem he might extend his days. Barzillai's words indicate that he could not only see the grave but he could see beyond it.

I can picture him standing before Christ and saying to Christ Lord, when did I see thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When did I see thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when did I see thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done these things unto David and those with David in the time of his discouragement and exile, ye have done it unto me.

Even more wonderful will be the reward the King bestows on that occasion. So will it be our King that says to those on His right hand: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* (Mt. 25:34). That theme of heavenly reward is a point of emphasis in that chapter of Matthew's gospel. Earlier in the chapter in another parable, the parable of the talents, Christ describes the rewards of those who invested in His kingdom this way: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

There's a word from Christ to aim for; there's a word to devote yourself to; there's a word to live for, to die for, and to let go of all this world affords in order to obtain. Here is favor and approval and joy that moth and rust can't destroy and that thieves can't break through to steal. What could possibly compare to it?

I love every excuse I can find to quote what is for me my favorite shorter catechism question and answer. Question 38 asks: *What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection? At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly*

acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

One of the proof texts given is the very last part of 1Thess. 4:17 *And so shall we ever be with the Lord.* Barzillai could have resided with David for whatever short time he had left in this world. He saw beyond that, however. I'm inclined to believe that Barzillai is this very day in the presence of Jesus Christ and the day is coming in which he'll hear it said to him in person – *well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

You can hear that very word spoken to you. It will be spoken to all those who saw their sin and saw their need of a Savior and trusted in Christ's atoning death for their salvation and then set their minds and hearts on Him and on things above and devoted themselves to His worship and service. His grace and His favor and His rewards are certainly greater than anything and everything you can gain by way of reward in this world. So much so that Christ Himself said: *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* (Mk. 8:36).

There's a hymn in our hymnbook that begins like this:

When all my labors and trials are o'er. And I am safe on that beautiful shore, Just to be near the dear Lord I adore, Will thro' the ages be glory for me.

How long have I to live? – Barzillai asks in v. 34. It's a good question, one you do well to contemplate. How long do you have to live and what will you do with that time? Not long ago in our Psalm study for prayer meeting we covered Psalm 90. It's the one and only Psalm written by Moses but I detect in it the spirit of Barzillai. Let me close by reading for you vv. 10-12 from Psalm 90:

The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, (Barzillai's age) yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. 11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. 12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

May we indeed be taught to number our days and to apply our hearts unto wisdom. A part of that wisdom will surely be laboring for the kind of treasure that is stored in heaven where moth and rust can't corrupt nor thieves break through to steal.