

# FORERUNNERS OF THE NEW ORDER

## DAVID ORTON

*"These were the men who came to David at Ziklag, while he was banished from the presence of Saul...warriors who helped him in battle." (1 Chronicles 12:1)*

Before every historic visitation of the Spirit God has sent forerunners.

John the Baptist set the pattern. As a voice crying in the wilderness he prepared the way for the ministry of Christ.

Likewise, John Wycliffe, the 'morningstar of the Reformation', blazed the trail for Martin Luther. Frank Bartleman, as a prophetic intercessor, for William Seymour and the Azusa Street outpouring. The Latter Rain and Healing Revivals of the late 1940's prepared the way for the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960's and 70's.

And again, there is a prophetic forerunner movement preparing the way for the next move of God – for what I believe will be the greatest manifestation of Christ that history will ever record. It will be the closest approximation of the kingdom of God on earth yet. And will be ushered in by an unprecedented level of the supernatural – in fact it will far exceed what we read of in the Book of Acts and in revival history – the glory of the latter house will truly be greater than the former (see Hag 2:9). God has kept the best wine until last (see Jn 2:10) – and as the scripture declares, *"The end of a thing is better than its beginning"* (Eccl 7:8).

But how will this happen? Through the *forerunner spirit*.

David symbolises for us the full manifestation of the emerging kingdom of God. It has been said we relate to Adam *racially*, to Abraham *redemptively*, to Moses *corporately*, but to David *regally*. He typically represents Christ and his kingdom. So, as we study David's life and reign we learn how the kingdom works and increases in the earth.

David's preparation for the throne began in Bethlehem. Here, his first anointing, through Samuel the prophet, signalled his regal destiny, thrusting him into the oft-perplexing processes toward its fulfilment.

On the heels of this anointing, and subsequent meteoric rise, David was driven into a fugitive existence. Pursued by Saul's jealous attacks he fled to the wilderness finding refuge in Adullam's Cave and later in Ziklag. Here he was joined by the first intake of warriors who became known as David's "mighty men".

These became the forerunners of his kingdom.

It was they who not only prepared the way for David's second and third anointing, but also ultimately turned the kingdom over to him, establishing his reign over all Israel.

In identifying with David and the prophetic word over his life they blazed the trail for a new order, for the transition from the Saul-system to the "new thing".

But let us understand the full import of their actions.

They were aligning themselves with a fugitive outlaw. At a surface glance David clearly had no future. Saul was secure as King. The monarchy was safe in his hands with no indication of change. At his eventual death numerous family were able to succeed to the throne as the need arose. A dynasty was now in place and David was in the cold.

So, in aligning themselves with David these 'mighty men', the forerunners of the kingdom, had burned their bridges – there was no going back. They had turned their backs on all that the established order promised – security, a future, a reputation, and promotion.

We must, therefore, ask what motivated them. Admittedly, with the intrigue of court life and frustrated ambition, some may have defected to David out of less than noble motives. However, the course of David's life in relation to his "mighty men" suggests otherwise. They remained faithful to David and the kingdom for life. Apart from the betrayal of Absalom (David's own son) and his co-conspirators there is no record of division or subterfuge among the "mighty men" themselves.

So, let us look at the character of these men to discover something of the *forerunner spirit*.

Their defining attribute, as we turn to Scripture, was "*bravery*" –

*"Some Gadites defected to David at his stronghold in the desert. They were brave warriors, ready for battle and able to handle the shield and spear. Their faces were the faces of lions..." (1 Chr 12:8).*

As warriors they proved themselves by outstanding acts of bravery in battle. Jashobeam raised his spear against 800 men and killed them in one encounter (see 2 Sam 23:8 & 1 Chr 11:11). Eleazar, as one of the three mighty men, stood his ground against impossible odds even when the rest of Israel retreated, gaining a great victory (see 2 Sam 23:9,10; 1 Chr 11:12-14). Likewise, Shammah, in the face of Israel's fleeing troops took a stand, again bringing victory (see 2 Sam 23:11-12). When holed up in Adullam it may have been these three who, as a spontaneous gesture, broke through enemy lines at risk of their lives to bring their commander-in-chief, David, a wished-for drink from the well of Bethlehem (see 1 Chr 11:15-19). And we dare not forget Benaiah who "performed great exploits" by striking down two of Moab's best warriors, killing a lion in a pit in the snow,

and bringing down a spear wielding 7 1/2 feet tall Egyptian with only a club (see 2 Sam 23:20-23; 1 Chr 11:22-25).

While these men were possessed of outstanding physical bravery, more importantly, they had already displayed great moral courage in joining themselves to David. Forsaking the comforts and accoutrements of Saul's court they faced impossible odds with David's outlaw band. They had already selflessly abandoned themselves to David and, perhaps more significantly, to the word of the Lord over his life. When it came time for the third and final anointing at Hebron the scripture says –

*"These were the chiefs of David's mighty men – they, together with all Israel, gave his kingship strong support to extend it over the whole land, as the Lord had promised..." (1 Chr 11:10; also v 1-3).*

Their alignment with David was not just the gung-ho daring-do of youthful men, but a considered commitment to prophetically revealed destiny. They were fully cognizant of Samuel's word over David and the different spirit by which he was animated. This discernment of prophetic purpose then demanded their all. The call of the kingdom wrenched them from hearth and home, from all that was nearest and dearest. As Jesus said, *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple"* (Lk 14:26). Every human relationship – every security and personal right, must be laid down to pursue the call of the King and his kingdom. It demanded the forsaking of all their prestige and position in Saul's regime.

Their battle prowess was, therefore, only a reflection of a life already laid down.

It is significant that repeatedly these men swam against the tide. In battle they stood their ground while others retreated. While all fled in one direction they went the other. They did not go with the crowd. Nor will those who hear the call of the kingdom over the cries of self-preservation. Others may but you may not.

This is the distinguishing mark of the forerunner – in the face of impossible odds they move into the kingdom animated by a force of spirit others do not possess – *"From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it"* (Mtt 11:12).

Having heard the voice of destiny they have settled the question of ownership. They are no longer their own – and so, in the heat of battle they are able to lay their lives on the line. They are able to offer themselves in sacrificial feats of bravery, and thereby, see God work on their behalf. God plus one will always create a majority!

And so, what to the natural eye was impossible became possible. God's providences fulfilled his promises. Men and circumstances, despite impossible odds, were moved by the hand of providence toward the fulfilment of David's prophetic and kingdom destiny.

Saul and his system were taken out of the way and the Davidic order established in its place.

But the challenge remains for us – will we go with the flow, with the established order, or make the break? Will we pursue selfish advantage, or the high call of the kingdom? Will we, as David's mighty men, "fight the good fight of faith", standing alone in the face of a system hostile to the heart of God? And will we submit to the circumcision of heart that tears us away from Saul and his value-system?

Before we conclude I need to explain my understanding of the Saul-system. It is not primarily a denominational or organisational structure – it is not so much *how* we do church, rather, it is *why* we do church. Our structures have only served to institutionalise the underlying idolatry of self. Saul's besetting sins were, and ours still are, self-will and self-preservation. In all human community, including the redeemed, this creates a false value-system, which is only then served by structure. This was the motivating force behind Babel – the first community – when they declared, "*Let us build a tower...to make a name for ourselves...*" And so, these sins of the heart motivate and animate the Saul-system – and are therefore more or less common to all denominations, churches, and ministries. This is the source of all denominational-*ism* and sectarian-*ism*.

There are many today who are looking for the new order – for community transformation and the increase of the kingdom. But as with David's kingdom there are two categories of "mighty men" – those who gathered to David in the wilderness (Adullam and Ziklag), and those who gathered later at Hebron (see 1 Chr 12:1 cf v 23). The former were a small band of initially 400 (and later 600; see 1 Sam 22:2; 27:2; 30:9), the latter numbering many thousands (see 1 Chr 12:23-37). So, what was the difference? The death of Saul. After his death they came out of the woodwork, flocking to David's support at Hebron. But we must ask who will have the greater reward – the 'wilderness band' or the 'Hebron band'?

Let us be unequivocal – the Saul-system will ultimately fail. And when it does there will be an influx of souls into the heart of David's camp – into the very heart of our heavenly David himself. These, as in David's army, are still described as "mighty men". As warriors and forerunners they will still be instrumental to the increase of the kingdom – they are still part of the advance guard. But this 'Hebron band' will be second to those who had already identified with David in the wilderness. While Saul was still alive – and at the loss of reputation, prestige, and position, the 'wilderness forerunners' were the cutting edge of the advance guard. They blazed the trail for the less intrepid, for the coming 'Hebron band'.

In this Third Day of the Church, the 'third anointing' at Hebron and the fullness of the kingdom is imminent – but there is still time.

We are facing some choices – will I wait for the convenience and comfort of Hebron, or will I go to David now? Will I hold on to the status and security of the visible structure,

or seeing that which is invisible will I let go? Am I willing to go to Christ now, and suffer with him outside the camp?

Sure, he is in the wilderness, sure I will lose my reputation, sure this is not the populist line – but what a joy to know that I have fulfilled destiny, that I have responded to the heart-cry of God, so that –

*"When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek" (Psa 27:8).*

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