

THE BOOK OF 2 SAMUEL

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INTRODUCTION

Although not stated, it's generally accepted by Jewish tradition that Samuel is the author of 1 Samuel, however, since we read about his death, in 1 Samuel 25:1, it's widely accepted that someone else wrote the account of his death. Jewish tradition also indicates that Samuel was the author of 1 Samuel 1-24, and the prophets Gad and Nathan wrote 1 Samuel 25-31, all of 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles 29:29-30. The writer of 2 Samuel also refers to other writings that aren't a part of the Bible, such as the Book of Jashar, 2 Samuel 1:18, and The Chronicles of King David, 1 Chronicles 27:24.

DATE

Since the history of 2 Samuel covers the period of the 40-year reign of King David, which is from about 1055 B.C. to 1015 B.C. It was a period of struggle as the kingdom had transitioned from the reign of Saul to the end of the reign of David.

THE BOOK

In the Jewish canon of Scriptures, the books of 1 and 2 Samuel are one book, this makes sense as 2 Samuel is basically a continuation of 1 Samuel. The historical events from 1 Samuel 31 to the end of 2 Samuel are parallel with 1 Chronicles 10-29. 2 Samuel continues the theme of how God preserved the seed-line nation of Israel, and in particular, the seed of David through whom He would bring the Messiah into the world, 2 Samuel 7.

The Book of 2 Samuel is about King David and within it, we read about the events of Israel while David was king. We read about many wars and how they secured the city of Jerusalem, which would become their capital. We read about David's love for God and God's love for him.

For the most part, David was a good king, but he did make some huge mistakes. He had sex with a married woman called Bathsheba and he ordered the death of Bathsheba's husband.

We also read about how David's own son, Absalom, fought against David and wanted to become king and we how time and time again how God saved David from all his enemies.

THE UNITED KINGDOM

The most glorious part of the history of Israel was the United Kingdom, so-called to distinguish it from the Divided Kingdom which followed, it lasted from about 1095 to 975 B. C. and included the reigns of three great kings, Saul, David, and Solomon. The story of this period is related in the two books of Samuel, 1 Kings 1-11, 1 Chronicles 1-2 and 1 Chronicles 9.

SAUL, ISRAEL'S FIRST KING

You will remember that for about 300 years the twelve tribes of Israel had been loosely governed by judges. The last and greatest of these was the prophet Samuel. But the children of Israel wanted to be like their neighbours; they came to Samuel and asked for a king.

Although God was much displeased with their request, He instructed Samuel to anoint as their king a young man named Saul who stood head and shoulders above the people. The people gathered at Mizpeh and were presented with their new ruler who was so timid that he hid among the baggage.

Saul began his forty-year reign well. Israel was beset by enemies and he undertook the task of driving them back. His army defeated the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Edomites and others. Soon Saul was a popular figure among the people. But his popularity went to his head and he ceased to be a humble servant of God.

Instead, he became self-willed, bent on doing things the way he wanted them done, regardless of the will of God. On one occasion he was commissioned to 'utterly destroy the Amalekites.' Instead, he spared the king and saved some sheep and cattle to sacrifice.

Because he had thus disobeyed the Lord, Samuel rebuked him with the words, 'Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.' **1 Samuel 15:22**. From that time on, God rejected Saul as king. Saul deeply loved him and selected him as his armour bearer. David quickly rose to prominence by slaying with a sling the champion of the Philistines, the giant Goliath. The ensuing glory given to David provoked the jealousy of Saul who began to suspect that David was trying to supplant him as king. From that time on Saul sought to kill David and for years hunted him as an outlaw over the hills of Israel.

Perhaps the most beautiful friendship in the Bible is that of David and Jonathan, the son of Saul, who, although he realised that David would become king instead of himself, constantly sought to save David from his father's ire. Saul and Jonathan both fell in battle with the Philistines to prepare the way for David as king.

DAVID, A MAN AFTER GOD'S HEART

After Saul's death, David was crowned king of the tribe of Judah while Saul's sorry son, Ishbosheth, reigned over the rest of Israel. When his kingdom collapsed after seven years, David's authority was extended over all of Israel. David selected Jerusalem as his capital and set about the task of making Israel a great nation. In successive wars, he expanded the kingdom from the Nile to the Euphrates River.

David was truly a man after God's own heart. The Lord declared of him, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.' **Acts 13:22**.

The psalms written by David are an expression of his complete devotion to God. This consecration was especially evident in his constant willingness to obey all the Lord's commands. We may learn from him that we cannot expect the approval of God unless we are always willing to do what He asks of us without question.

Despite David's success and his faithfulness to God, he made one grave mistake that followed him to his death. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. Some stories have portrayed Bathsheba as a siren who intentionally seduced David. Nothing in the Bible bears out this idea.

To cover up his sin, David had Uriah placed in the thick of battle so that he might be slain, and then, when he was dead, took Bathsheba as his wife. All of this greatly displeased God and Nathan the prophet was sent to rebuke David by telling him the parable of the ewe lamb, **2 Samuel 12**.

David repented, but his troubles now began. His son Absalom murdered his own brother. Later Absalom led a revolt against David and died in the attempt. For a time, David was forced to flee. Adding to his grief, another son, Adonijah, attempted to usurp the kingdom with the help of David's trusted general, Joab.

To forestall the kingdom from falling into the wrong hands, David had his son, Solomon, crowned king while he yet lived. Shortly thereafter David died, bringing to an end the forty-year reign of a great man of God.

SOLOMON, FROM WISDOM TO IDOLATRY

Solomon's rule was in sharp contrast with his father's. While David had faced turmoil for almost his entire reign, Solomon's was one of unbroken peace. He began auspiciously. In a dream, he asked for God's wisdom rather than riches and honour, and because of his thoughtful request was rewarded with all three. Solomon's wisdom is known to all.

Three thousand proverbs and 1005 songs came forth from this sage! Much of his wisdom is recorded for us in the three books which he wrote and which we will study in another lesson. Politically he extended the influence of Israel to its greatest height making it a world power.

The fabulous wealth of Solomon astounds us, even to this day. He had 1400 chariots, 12,000 horsemen and an annual income of six hundred threescores and six talents of gold. And he didn't have to pay an income tax!

On one occasion he was given an outright gift of one hundred and twenty talents of gold by the queen of Sheba. When she visited Solomon to see if all the reports of his fame were true, she was so amazed that she exclaimed, 'Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard.' **1 Kings 10:7**. The greatest of all Solomon's accomplishments was his building of the temple of God to replace the tabernacle in which Israel had worshipped since the wilderness wanderings. Probably no structure in the world's history has equalled it in cost. Built by 183,000 men in seven and a half years, it cost an immense sum of money to erect.

The great wealth of Solomon eventually led to his undoing. He sought every kind of pleasure and married 700 wives and 300 concubines. Most of these were idolaters and what a time he must have had in trying to please them all. His high cost of living led him to tax the people heavily, much to their dissatisfaction.

His reign had started with wisdom and wealth; it ended with women and idolatry. When his forty-year rule ended he was a thoroughly disillusioned and unhappy man. In his revelry, he had laid the groundwork for the division of his great kingdom after his death.

OUTLINE

- The Time of the Coronation (After Saul's Death), **2 Samuel 1:1-27**
- The Extent of the Kingdom (over Judah), **2 Samuel 2:1-7**
- The Effort to Include the Other Tribes, **2 Samuel 2:8-4:12**
- David Enthroned over All the Tribes, **2 Samuel 5:1-6**
- The Government Established in Jerusalem, **2 Samuel 5:7-25**

The Ark Brought to Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 6:1-23
 David's Proposal, 2 Samuel 7:1-3
 God's Disposal, 2 Samuel 7:4-29
 He Defeats Philistia, Moab, Zobah, Aram, Edom, 2 Samuel 8:1-18
 He Shows Kindness to Mephibosheth, 2 Samuel 9:1-13
 He Defeats Ammon, 2 Samuel 10:1-19
 David's Crimes Within the Kingdom, 2 Samuel 11:1-27
 Adultery, 2 Samuel 11:1-13
 Murder, 2 Samuel 11:14-27
 The Death of His Baby and the Restoration to Power, 2 Samuel 12:1-31
 The Incest of Amnon, 2 Samuel 13:1-39
 The Rebellion of Absalom, 2 Samuel 14:1-18:33
 Disorder in the Kingdom, 2 Samuel 19:1-39
 Revolution in the Kingdom, 2 Samuel 19:40-20:26
 The Famine, 2 Samuel 21:1-14
 The Exploits, 2 Samuel 21:15-22
 The Song of David, 2 Samuel 22:1-51
 The Last Words of David, 2 Samuel 23:1-7
 The Deeds of David's Mighty Men, 2 Samuel 23:8-39
 The Census and Plague, 2 Samuel 24:1-25

CHAPTER 1

‘After the death of Saul, David returned from striking down the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days. On the third day a man arrived from Saul’s camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honour. ‘Where have you come from?’ David asked him. He answered, ‘I have escaped from the Israelite camp.’ ‘What happened?’ David asked. ‘Tell me.’ ‘The men fled from the battle,’ he replied. ‘Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead.’ Then David said to the young man who brought him the report, ‘How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?’ ‘I happened to be on Mount Gilboa,’ the young man said, ‘and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots and their drivers in hot pursuit. When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I said, ‘What can I do?’ ‘He asked me, ‘Who are you?’ ‘An Amalekite,’ I answered. ‘Then he said to me, ‘Stand here by me and kill me! I’m in the throes of death, but I’m still alive.’ ‘So I stood beside him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen, he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my lord.’ 2 Samuel 1:1-10

DAVID HEARS OF SAUL’S DEATH

When news concerning Saul and Johnathon’s death got back to David, David was deeply stressed over the report, he was mourning, hence why he tore his clothes and put dust over his head.

Notice that the Amalekite reported to David what had happened, it was a different story from the account we read about in 1 Samuel 31:1-13 / 1 Chronicles 10:1-12. We don’t know why he changed some of the details concerning Saul and Johnathon, possibly because he wanted to get paid for giving his report.

The Amalekite, reports that Saul asked him to kill him, it’s a possibility that when Saul fell upon his own sword, he didn’t instantly die, 1 Samuel 31:4, and so, at that point, he asked the Amalekite to kill him. Whatever the real account was doesn’t really matter but what does matter, is the motives behind the Amalekite telling David in the first place, he was looking for a reward for being the one who killed Saul.

‘Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and for the nation of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. David said to the young man who brought him the report, ‘Where are you from?’ ‘I am the son of a foreigner, an Amalekite,’ he answered. David asked him, ‘Why weren’t you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD’s anointed?’ Then David called one of his men and said, ‘Go, strike him down!’ So he struck him down, and he died. For David had said to him, ‘Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, ‘I killed the LORD’s anointed.’ 2 Samuel 1:11-16

The response of David and his men, to the Amalekite’s report, was more mourning and deep remorse because Saul, God’s anointed King of Israel, 1 Samuel 10:1, had been killed by the hands of an uncircumcised man. With the friendship and love David had for Johnathon, 1 Samuel 18:1, would have only added to his emotional pain.

When David asks the man where he was from, he replied he was a foreigner, an Amalekite, this tells us he was a stranger living in the land of the Israelites. It’s clear that he didn’t really belong to God because unlike Saul’s armourbearer, 1 Samuel 31:4, he shows no respect or concern for killing God’s anointed.

This was the reason why David ordered the Amalekite to be killed, also in doing so he would be carrying out God’s earlier command to destroy all the Amalekites, 1 Samuel 15:3, something which Saul failed to do, 1 Samuel 15:4-22.

‘David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, and he ordered that the people of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar): ‘A gazelle lies slain on your heights, Israel. How the mighty have fallen! ‘Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice. ‘Mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, may no showers fall on your terraced fields. For there the shield of the mighty was despised, the shield of Saul—no longer rubbed with oil. ‘From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied. Saul and Jonathan—in life they were loved and admired, and in death, they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. ‘Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold. ‘How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women. ‘How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!’ 2 Samuel 1:17-27

DAVID’S LAMENT FOR SAUL AND JONATHAN

As part of a lament, for Saul and Johnathon, David ordered all the people of Judah to be taught the lament of the bow which was written in the Book of Jashar. We don’t have any record of this book today, but it was probably an Israelite record of poems and songs written for heroes of Israel, Joshua 10:12-13.

David’s lamentation is simply beautiful Hebrew poetry, David became famous for writing these poems, 2 Samuel 23:1, and songs and many are found within the Psalms. In this lament, David expresses his deep sorrow over the death of Saul and his friend Johnathon and he highlights the fact that it is God who is working through Israel. Gath and Ashkelon were the two main cities of the Philistines that in the text stand for the entire country of Philistia. Gilboa was the place where Israel was defeated and both Saul and Jonathan killed, 1 Samuel 31:1.

David nowhere rejoices over the death of Saul, despite Saul’s several attempts to kill him which tells us a lot about David’s respect for him as God’s anointed king, Luke 6:37.

David ends his lament with some beautiful words about his dear friend Johnathon.

CHAPTER 2

‘In the course of time, David inquired of the LORD. ‘Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?’ he asked. The LORD said, ‘Go up.’ David asked, ‘Where shall I go?’ ‘To Hebron,’ the LORD answered. So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns. Then the men of Judah came to Hebron, and there they anointed David king over the tribe of Judah. When David was told that it was the men from Jabesh Gilead who had buried Saul, he sent messengers to them to say to them, ‘The LORD bless you for showing this kindness to Saul your master by burying him. May the LORD now show you kindness and faithfulness, and I too will show you the same favour because you have done this. Now then, be strong and brave, for Saul your master is dead, and the people of Judah have anointed me king over them.’ 2 Samuel 2:1-7

DAVID ANOINTED KING OVER JUDAH

Sometime after ordering the Amalekite to be put to death for killing Saul, David inquires of the Lord as to where to go, God tells him to go to Hebron, a town of Judah. David, his two wives and his men then go to Hebron and settled there. It’s here that David is anointed as king of Israel.

David’s days of being a shepherd boy and a giant killer are far behind him now, he’s come such a long way and his relationship with God has become stronger as he learned to trust him more with each step he makes.

David had been anointed as king three times now, his first anointing was by Samuel, 1 Samuel 10:1, which indicated God’s will and intention. Here in this passage, we find the second time, when the men of Judah exalted him over the house of Judah and finally when he was made king over all of Israel, 1 Chronicles 14:8.

As God’s anointed king, the first thing David does is show kindness to those who respected Saul, God’s first anointed king. The people of Jabesh Gilead had shown a lot of respect for Saul, this is shown in the way they cared for his body after it had been desecrated by the Philistines, 1 Samuel 31:11-13.

WAR BETWEEN THE HOUSES OF DAVID AND SAUL

‘Meanwhile, Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul’s army, had taken Ish-Bosheth son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim. He made him king over Gilead, Ashuri and Jezreel, and also over Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel. Ish-Bosheth son of Saul was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned two years. The tribe of Judah, however, remained loyal to David. The length of time David was king in Hebron over Judah was seven years and six months.’ 2 Samuel 2:8-11

Because Israel demanded a king many years ago, 1 Samuel 8:6, it appears that their appetite to have another king to replace Saul was so great that the men in Israel began anointing their own kings. Once again they totally ignored the fact that God was their King and He would be the one who would select their next king.

Abner goes ahead and totally ignores God’s will by personally anointing Ish-Bosheth as a king, 1 Chronicles 8:33 / 1 Chronicles 9:39. It appears that Abner was the only person in Northern Israel with any real power. He was possibly an uncle of Saul, 1 Chronicles 8:33, and was in full command of Saul’s army following Saul’s death.

Abner’s motives are very questionable here, it appears that proclaiming Ish-Bosheth as king was a tactical move on his part because as we shall see later, he wants to become king himself, 2 Samuel 3:7-11.

It’s pretty clear that Abner took full control of Israel after Ish-Bosheth reigned for two years. Ish-Bosheth was more like a figurehead king over all of Israel because he was never anointed as king by God. And so, his strength was only from those around him and not from God.

After the death of Ish-Bosheth, David stayed in Hebron, afterwards, he goes to Jerusalem and integrated his government and the faith of Israel in the city of Jerusalem. The length of David's reign in Hebron was seven years and six months, 2 Samuel 5:5.

'Abner son of Ner, together with the men of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, left Mahanaim and went to Gibeon. Joab son of Zeruiah and David's men went out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. One group sat down on one side of the pool and one group on the other side. Then Abner said to Joab, 'Let's have some of the young men get up and fight hand to hand in front of us.' 'All right let them do it,' Joab said. So they stood up and were counted off—twelve men for Benjamin and Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, and twelve for David. Then each man grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust his dagger into his opponent's side, and they fell down together. So that place in Gibeon was called Helkath Hazzurim. The battle that day was very fierce, and Abner and the Israelites were defeated by David's men. The three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab, Abishai and Asahel. Now Asahel was as fleet-footed as a wild gazelle. He chased Abner, turning neither to the right nor to the left as he pursued him. Abner looked behind him and asked, 'Is that you, Asahel?' 'It is,' he answered. Then Abner said to him, 'Turn aside to the right or to the left; take on one of the young men and strip him of his weapons.' But Asahel would not stop chasing him. Again Abner warned Asahel, 'Stop chasing me! Why should I strike you down? How could I look your brother Joab in the face?' But Asahel refused to give up the pursuit; so Abner thrust the butt of his spear into Asahel's stomach, and the spear came out through his back. He fell there and died on the spot. And every man stopped when he came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died.' 2 Samuel 2:12-23

After making Ish-Bosheth king, Abner, who was Saul's former commander of his army, 1 Samuel 14:50, makes an aggressive move on Joab, who was the commander of David's army. He suggest that they choose twelve men from both armies and have a fight, the idea behind this was to see which army would be considered victorious.

Sadly, the outcome wasn't good, no one won, it was a draw because they ended up killing each other. Because of this aggressive move by Abner, a fierce battle took place between both armies. This battle then set the stage for Joab, David's nephew, 1 Chronicles 2:15-16, to develop a quarrel with Abner.

The three sons of Zeruiah were Joab, Abishai and Asahel, Zeruiah was a sister of King David, and her three sons, David's nephews, all held important positions of trust in David's army.

Joab commanded his army, Abishai was with David when they found Saul asleep and pleaded with David to allow him to kill Saul, 1 Samuel 26:6-12, both he and Asahel were counted among David's thirty mighty men, 2 Samuel 23:8-38 / 1 Chronicles 11:20 / 1 Chronicles 11:26.

Abner had warned Asahel repeatedly to turn away but Asahel ignored his pleas and continued to run after Abner and so because Abner was more experienced, he killed Asahel.

This ended this bloody battle immediately. The result of Abner killing Asahel, who was Joab's brother, would later come back to haunt him, as Joab would take revenge and kill him for killing his brother, 2 Samuel 3:27.

'But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner, and as the sun was setting, they came to the hill of Ammah, near Giah on the way to the wasteland of Gibeon. Then the men of Benjamin rallied behind Abner. They formed themselves into a group and took their stand on top of a hill. Abner called out to Joab, 'Must the sword devour forever? Don't you realize that this will end in bitterness? How long before you order your men to stop pursuing their fellow Israelites?' Joab answered, 'As surely as God lives, if you had not spoken, the men would have continued pursuing them until morning.' So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the troops came to a halt; they no longer pursued Israel, nor did they fight anymore. All that night Abner and his men marched through the Arabah. They crossed the Jordan, continued through the morning hours and came to Mahanaim. Then Joab stopped pursuing Abner and assembled the whole army. Besides Asahel, nineteen of David's men were found missing. But David's men had killed three hundred and sixty Benjamites who were with Abner. They took Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb at Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men marched all night and arrived at Hebron by daybreak.' 2 Samuel 2:24-32

After the killing of Asahel, Joab and Abishai continued to pursue Abner, Joab's men gathered together again to get ready for another battle with Abner's men. However, Abner asks for a truce, and Joab agrees because he understood there would be no point in having many more men dying.

When Joab tells Abner 'if you had not spoken', he possibly meant if Abner hadn't spoken earlier, then the battle would have never had happened in the first place and many men wouldn't have needlessly died.

This war which began in the pool of Gibeon was over, for now, sadly, as we shall see at the beginning of the next chapter, this wasn't going to last, 2 Samuel 3:1. Joab then takes Asahel and buries him in his father's tomb. It appears that Joab is being very patient because as we shall also see in the next chapter, he will get his revenge, 2 Samuel 3:27. This was the turning point for Israel as a nation as they now begin to fight with each other, instead of fighting and removing the Canaanites from the land. This was now all about a power struggle between men, which God said would happen if they were given their own earthly king, 1 Samuel 8:11-18.

CHAPTER 3

'The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time. David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker. Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel; his second, Kileab the son of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third, Absalom the son of Maakah daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; and the sixth, Ithream the son of David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.' 2 Samuel 3:1-5

This war which began in the pool of Gibeon, 2 Samuel 2:12-23, turned out to be a long war, the power struggle within the house of Israel had begun.

This was the point where God was put on the back shelf as their King, and politics took over as each side placed allegiance to their kings. Here the allegiance was between Ish-Bosheth, 2 Samuel 2:10, and David. David would become stronger as a result of these conflicts, which would fulfil Samuel's prophecy, 1 Samuel 15:28.

One of the main problems David had was having too many wives, although it was very common in these times. He had many children through them, 1 Chronicles 3:5-9, but as is always the case with having many wives, and many children with different mothers, this brings many problems.

Concerning the sons of David, Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar, the full sister of Absalom, 2 Samuel 13:1, and was murdered by Absalom, who also rebelled against his father and wanted to remove him as king, 2 Samuel 13:23-38. We know nothing about Chileab, who is called Daniel in 1 Chronicles 3:1. Adonijah had himself proclaimed king during the final illness of David, 1 Kings 1:1-27. Apart from what we have in these verses, we also know nothing about Shephatiah or Ithream.

ABNER GOES OVER TO DAVID

'During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner had been strengthening his own position in the house of Saul. Now Saul had had a concubine named Rizpah daughter of Aiah. And Ish-Bosheth said to Abner, 'Why did you sleep with my father's concubine?' Abner was very angry because of what Ish-Bosheth said. So he answered, 'Am I a dog's head—on Judah's side? This very day I am loyal to the house of your father Saul and to his family and friends. I haven't handed you over to David. Yet now you accuse me of an offense involving this woman! May God deal with Abner, be it ever so severely, if I do not do for David what the LORD promised him on oath and transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish David's throne over Israel and Judah from Dan to

Beersheba.' Ish-Bosheth did not dare to say another word to Abner, because he was afraid of him. Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to say to David, 'Whose land is it? Make an agreement with me, and I will help you bring all Israel over to you.' 'Good,' said David. 'I will make an agreement with you. But I demand one thing of you: Do not come into my presence unless you bring Michal daughter of Saul when you come to see me.' Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, demanding, 'Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins.' So Ish-Bosheth gave orders and had her taken away from her husband Paltiel son of Laish. Her husband, however, went with her, weeping behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, 'Go back home!' So he went back.' 2 Samuel 3:6-16

As the war was going on between the two households, Abner appears to be getting stronger. He was certainly looking out for himself because he goes to those who were in allegiance with Saul. It appears that Abner's reign was getting stronger as Ish-Bosheth's reign was getting weaker.

Abner became very angry with Ish-Bosheth because he accused him of having sexual relations with Rizpah, 2 Samuel 3:21, who was one of Saul's concubines. This was probably Abner's intention from the very beginning, he himself longed to be king even though he made Ish-Bosheth king, 2 Samuel 2:8-10.

This was the perfect excuse for Abner to take over as king he thinks he is wise and so, in his anger he threatens to give the throne to David, which silenced Ish-Bosheth, this would mean that all of Israel would be under David's reign. Abner goes ahead and sends messengers to David which tells us he wants the power to shift from Ish-Bosheth to David as soon as possible.

David reminds them that he actually won Saul's daughter in marriage in an agreement with Saul and the proof was in the hundred Philistine foreskins.

Although here it states that David paid one hundred foreskins, 1 Samuel 18:24-25 and 1 Samuel 18:27 mention that David two hundred foreskins. David had actually delivered to Saul two hundred, but only one hundred had been required, and therefore only that number is mentioned.

David, who was always thinking ahead, knows if he has Saul's daughter, Michal as his wife, this would give him great political power within Israel, which would result in those who originally followed Saul would now follow him. The problem here was that David had no right according to God's law to take her back as his wife, Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

Notice that Michal's husband, Paltiel is weeping behind her, it's possible that Michal's love for David wasn't as strong as it once was, 1 Samuel 18:20. David wasn't really interested in having her back because he loved her but because of political reasons and we feel for Paltiel as he appears to have been an innocent victim of this political move.

'Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and said, 'For some time you have wanted to make David your king. Now do it! For the LORD promised David, 'By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.' Abner also spoke to the Benjamites in person. Then he went to Hebron to tell David everything that Israel and the whole tribe of Benjamin wanted to do. When Abner, who had twenty men with him, came to David at Hebron, David prepared a feast for him and his men. Then Abner said to David, 'Let me go at once and assemble all Israel for my lord the king, so that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires.' So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.' 2 Samuel 3:17-21

At this point in time, it appears that Abner was acting honourably because he knew that the kingship of Ish-Bosheth was coming to an end. Abner also realises that the only way the Philistines would ever be defeated is when David rules over Israel as a whole as God intended.

Earlier Abner made Ish-Bosheth king, 2 Samuel 2:8-10, but he now realises that God had actually anointed David to be king, 1 Samuel 10:1 / 2 Samuel 2:4 / 1 Chronicles 14:8. Abner even goes to the length of approaching the Benjamites to encourage them to allow David to rule over all of Israel.

JOAB MURDERS ABNER

‘Just then David’s men and Joab returned from a raid and brought with them a great deal of plunder. But Abner was no longer with David in Hebron, because David had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. When Joab and all the soldiers with him arrived, he was told that Abner son of Ner had come to the king and that the king had sent him away and that he had gone in peace. So Joab went to the king and said, ‘What have you done? Look, Abner came to you. Why did you let him go? Now he is gone! You know Abner son of Ner; he came to deceive you and observe your movements and find out everything you are doing.’ Joab then left David and sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern at Sirah. But David did not know it. Now when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into an inner chamber, as if to speak with him privately. And there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed him in the stomach, and he died. Later, when David heard about this, he said, ‘I and my kingdom are forever innocent before the LORD concerning the blood of Abner son of Ner. May his blood fall on the head of Joab and on his whole family! May Joab’s family never be without someone who has a running sore or leprosy or who leans on a crutch or who falls by the sword or who lacks food.’ (Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.)’ 2 Samuel 3:22-30

After David had sent Abner away in peace, Joab tells David that Abner has come to deceive him. Remember Abner was a man whose heart was filled with revenge, he wanted Abner dead because Abner killed his brother, Asahel, 2 Samuel 2:18-23/ 1 Kings 2:5.

After expressing his anger with David, Joab, along with Abishai start chasing after Abner, when they caught him they killed him because he killed their brother.

Keil in his commentary says the following concerning this incident. This act of Joab in which Abishai was also concerned, was a treacherous act of assassination, which could not even be defended as blood revenge, since Abner had slain Asahel in battle after repeated warnings, and only for the purpose of saving his own life. The principal motive for Joab’s action was his most contemptible jealousy or the fear lest Abner’s reconciliation with David should diminish his own influence with the king. The same was true later in his murder of Amasa, 2 Samuel 22:10.

When news got back to David about Abner’s murder, he proclaimed he was innocent in all of this but also declared a judgment against the household of Joab because he murdered an innocent man. The judgment was that someone in Joab’s family would always have issues with one of the following, running sores, leprosy, leaning on crutches, falling on the sword or lacking bread.

Willis in his commentary suggests that these five curses were, gonorrhoea, leprosy, effeminacy, untimely death and hunger. We do know that in later years, Joab was deprived of his office, which he regained only by an act of daring bravery, 1 Chronicles 11:6.

David here is expressing God’s feelings because of what Joab did to Abner and it appears that Abner was truly sincere when he planned to help David become king over all of Israel.

‘Then David said to Joab and all the people with him, ‘Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth and walk in mourning in front of Abner.’ King David himself walked behind the bier. They buried Abner in Hebron, and the king wept aloud at Abner’s tomb. All the people wept also. The king sang this lament for Abner: ‘Should Abner have died as the lawless die? Your hands were not bound, your feet were not fettered. You fell as one falls before the wicked.’ And all the people wept over him again. Then they all came and urged David to eat something while it was still day; but David took an oath, saying, ‘May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets!’ All the people took note and were pleased; indeed, everything the king did pleased them. So on that day all the people there and all Israel knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner. Then the king said to his men, ‘Do you not realize that a commander and a great man has fallen in Israel this day? And today, though I am the anointed king, I am weak, and these sons of Zeruiah are too strong for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds!’ 2 Samuel 3:31-39

Here again, we see David's humility and respect for Saul. Abner had shown great loyalty to God's anointed, Saul, 1 Samuel 3:1, and so, David pays his respects to Saul by mourning the loss of Abner who was one of Saul's loyal servants.

David here is sending a clear message to all of Israel that he had nothing to do with Abner's death and that he wouldn't act like this to anyone else in Israel.

David says although he is the anointed king and very weak, these sons of Zeruiah are too strong for him, Zeruiah was David's sister, 1 Chronicles 2:16.

It's clear that David was nothing like Zeruiah's sons, Joab and Abishai, who were David's nephews because he never had a vengeful heart, his heart was full of mercy and forgiveness, and he was a man after God's own heart, 1 Samuel 13:14 / Acts 13:22.

CHAPTER 4

'When Ish-Bosheth son of Saul heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel became alarmed. Now Saul's son had two men who were leaders of raiding bands. One was named Baanah and the other Rekab; they were sons of Rimmon the Beerothite from the tribe of Benjamin—Beeroth is considered part of Benjamin, because the people of Beeroth fled to Gittaim and have resided there as foreigners to this day.' 2 Samuel 4:1-3

ISH-BOSHETH MURDERED

When Ish-Bosheth got news about the death of Abner, he 'lost courage', that's because he knew his time was up. Because his strength didn't come from the Lord and the only real strength he had was in Abner, he now knows that his reign as king was coming to an end.

The sons of Rimmon, Baanah and Rekab, weren't Israelites but possibly Amorites or Canaanites, we know this because Rimmon was from a Gibeonite city, Joshua 9:1-26. The Gibeonites were severely persecuted by Saul who murdered many of them, 2 Samuel 21:1-14. As a result of this persecution, the Gibeonites fled to Gittaim and the town of Beeroth which were considered to be a part of Saul's tribe, Benjamin.

'(Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in both feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became disabled. His name was Mephibosheth.) Now Rekab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, set out for the house of Ish-Bosheth, and they arrived there in the heat of the day while he was taking his noonday rest. They went into the inner part of the house as if to get some wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rekab and his brother Baanah slipped away. They had gone into the house while he was lying on the bed in his bedroom. After they stabbed and killed him, they cut off his head. Taking it with them, they travelled all night by way of the Arabah. They brought the head of Ish-Bosheth to David at Hebron and said to the king, 'Here is the head of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, your enemy, who tried to kill you. This day the LORD has avenged my lord the king against Saul and his offspring.' 2 Samuel 4:4-8

Mephibosheth was Johnathon's son, the only surviving heir of Saul's family and here it describes his fate. Verse 4 lays the foundation for what's coming up in 2 Samuel 9, where David meets him. Notice his nurse picked him up but was in such a hurry that Mephibosheth fell and became disabled, 2 Samuel 9:13.

Notice what Rekab and Baanah did when they got inside Ish-Bosheth's house, They stabbed him, killed him and then cut off his head. Once more treachery was involved in the death of a king who would reign in Israel. The reason

Rekab and Baanah took the head of Ish-Bosheth to David, was because they wanted a reward for killing one of David's rival kings.

‘David answered Rekab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble when someone told me, ‘Saul is dead,’ and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and put him to death in Ziklag. That was the reward I gave him for his news! How much more—when wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed—should I not now demand his blood from your hand and rid the earth of you!’ So David gave an order to his men, and they killed them. They cut off their hands and feet and hung the bodies by the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-Bosheth and buried it in Abner's tomb at Hebron.’ 2 Samuel 4:9-12

David doesn't mix his words or feelings here, when Rekab and Baanah tell him they have killed, Mephibosheth. He reminds them of what he did to the Amalekite who reported to David that he killed Saul and was looking for a reward, 2 Samuel 1:1-15.

David hates this kind of murderous act, especially when those who do them, seek some kind of political reward for doing so. David demands Mephibosheth's blood which means he wants to hold the murderers guilty and execute them, Genesis 9:51 / Genesis 42:22 / Psalms 9:12.

We must remember that God commanded murders to be put to death, Genesis 9:6 and we must remember that God hears things we can't hear, one of those things is unavenged blood, Genesis 4:10.

David wastes no time here in putting Rekab and Baanah to death, he didn't really have any other choice, because if he allowed them to live, then people may think that he was part of the plan to kill Mephibosheth.

However, by killing them straight away, David sent a clear message out to all of Israel, that no one of honour should be murdered by treacherous men, 2 Samuel 1:14-16. No one can approach him to look for some kind of political reward for doing something so evil.

CHAPTER 5

‘All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, ‘We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, ‘You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.’ When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.’ 2 Samuel 5:1-5

DAVID BECOMES KING OVER ISRAEL

When everyone gathered at Hebron, they tell David that they are his own flesh and blood, in saying this they were pledging their allegiance to David, 1 Chronicles 11:1-3. They now recognise that David was to be king because God wanted him to shepherd his people.

Although we don't know the details, David made a covenant with the people and tells them he would do as they say. Usually, when a covenant was made between parties, there would be a time of great celebration and an offering was usually sacrificed.

It was now that David began his unchallenged reign over Israel at the age of 30, which was the normal age at which a Levite priest assumed his duties.

This is now the third time David has been anointed as king, the first time he was anointed by Samuel but it was done in secret, 1 Samuel 10:1. The second time was after the death of Saul when Judah made him king at Hebron, 2 Samuel 2:1-7.

We mustn't forget that Abner played a big part in making this moment happen when he turned his allegiance from Ish-Bosheth and brought all of Israel to David, 2 Samuel 3:12 / 2 Samuel 3:17-19.

DAVID CONQUERS JERUSALEM

'The king and his men marched to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites, who lived there. The Jebusites said to David, 'You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off.' They thought, 'David cannot get in here.' Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion—which is the City of David. On that day David had said, 'Anyone who conquers the Jebusites will have to use the water shaft to reach those 'lame and blind' who are David's enemies. 'That is why they say, 'The 'blind and lame' will not enter the palace.' David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built up the area around it, from the terraces inward. And he became more and more powerful, because the LORD God Almighty was with him.' 2 Samuel 5:6-10

After David becomes king he makes the decision to go from Hebron to Jerusalem or as it was sometimes called, Jebus, where he would function as king of Israel, 1 Chronicles 11:4-9 / Galatians 4:26.

The Jebusites were a remnant people of the Canaanites, and they still lived in the city. As the text tells us, they were very arrogant and proud of their fortified city, thinking it was impenetrable.

No one knows what this water shaft was, it could have been a water drain or sewer, or it could have been a water source which came in from outside the city, 1 Chronicles 11:4-7.

The point is that the Jebusites thought that this water shaft was the only way into the city because it was the only part of the city which wasn't guarded.

This is the first reference to Zion in the Bible; this was the hill where the Jebusite's fortified city was built upon. It was now going to be called the city of David, which as we now know is also called Jerusalem.

The N.I.V. tells us that David built up the area around the city from the 'terraces inward'. The K.J.V. tells us that David built the city from 'the Millo inward'.

Millo was one of many fortified cities which had the same name, one of them is found in Shechem, Judges 9:6 / Judges 9:20. Both Solomon, 1 Kings 9:15, and Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 32:5, in later times strengthened and repaired the Millo.

'Now Hiram king of Tyre sent envoys to David, along with cedar logs and carpenters and stonemasons, and they built a palace for David. Then David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel. After he left Hebron, David took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem, and more sons and daughters were born to him. These are the names of the children born to him there: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhaz, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet.' 2 Samuel 5:11-16

Hiram, who was the king of Tyre, became very supportive of David, 1 Kings 5:1 / 1 Kings 9:10-14. It appears that David not only wanted to have a strong city but he wanted to make allies with those around him, 2 Samuel 8:9. Later when David wanted to make an alliance with the Ammonites, but they rejected it, this rejection led to a war with the Arameans, 2 Samuel 10:1-19.

David is fully aware for Israel's sake that God anointed him to be king of His people after Saul's sinning got out of control, 1 Samuel 14:1-7 / 1 Chronicles 3:5-9. David was well aware of what God was doing through him for Israel's benefit.

Shammua was the name of the one who was sent out by Moses to spy on the land of Canaan, Numbers 13:1. The first four sons mentioned here were born to Bathsheba, the daughter of Ammiel, 1 Chronicles 3:5.

Here again, we read about how David took more concubines and wives, although it was common practice in Old Testament times, this was a sin on David's part, Deuteronomy 17:17.

David had added to his collection of wives and concubines in Jerusalem, along with the other six he obtained at Hebron, 2 Samuel 3:2-5, and Michal, 2 Samuel 3:14-16, and those mentioned here. It appears up until this point David had a total of fifteen or twenty wives and concubines, it becomes apparent why Solomon went on to have seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, 1 Kings 11:3.

DAVID DEFEATS THE PHILISTINES

‘When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they went up in full force to search for him, but David heard about it and went down to the stronghold. Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim; so David inquired of the LORD, ‘Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you deliver them into my hands?’ The LORD answered him, ‘Go, for I will surely deliver the Philistines into your hands.’ So David went to Baal Perazim, and there he defeated them. He said, ‘As waters break out, the LORD has broken out against my enemies before me.’ So that place was called Baal Perazim. The Philistines abandoned their idols there, and David and his men carried them off.’ 2 Samuel 5:17-21

Earlier when Israel wasn't united but divided, the Philistines took full advantage of Israel's disunity because Israel was no threat to anyone, 1 Samuel 4:11.

Now that David is king and Israel has become one, the Philistines see them as a great threat and move in to remove the threat, 1 Chronicles 14:8-17. They used to see the Israelites as simple farmers and no threat to anyone but now, under David, they see that they have become a powerful military force.

The Philistines spread out in the Valley of Rephaim, which was the valley of the giants, it was located just south of Jerusalem within another valley called the valley of Hinnom, Joshua 15:8.

After inquiring of the Lord and the Lord gives him the go-ahead, we read that the waters broke out, David had obviously received some kind of advance notice of what the Philistines were planning to do and so he took his men and surprised attacked the Philistines from the east as they were moving towards Jerusalem.

Notice that the Philistines abandoned their idols and David and his men carried them off. We know that later David ordered his men to burn the idols, 1 Chronicles 14:12 / Deuteronomy 7:5 / Deuteronomy 7:25.

‘Once more the Philistines came up and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim; so David inquired of the LORD, and he answered, ‘Do not go straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the poplar trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the poplar trees, move quickly, because that will mean the LORD has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army.’ So David did as the LORD commanded him, and he struck down the Philistines all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.’ 2 Samuel 5:22-25

Although David made a surprise attack against the Philistines when they were approaching Jerusalem and they fled, the Philistines once again decide to give it another go. David under God's command circles behind the Philistine army to finish them off.

Notice how God brought about this victory for Israel, the noise of marching on the tops of the poplar trees made the Philistines panic, and so David and his men kills them all. This is very similar to what we read about concerning the way Gideon defeated the Midianites, Judges 7:15-23.

Gibeon was a small city near Jerusalem and Gezer, was located to the northwest of Jerusalem, 1 Chronicles 14:8-17.

We can imagine the ripple effect through all the surrounding nations after David and his men defeated the Philistines. Everyone was afraid of the Philistines and so if David and his army could defeat them, the nations around would have a whole new respect for David and his army.

CHAPTER 6

‘David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand. He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark. They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.’ 2 Samuel 6:1-5

THE ARK BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM

In the last chapter, we saw all the men of Israel go to David and anointed him as king of Israel, 2 Samuel 5:1-3. This chapter begins with David gathering thirty thousand young able men to go and collect the ark of God from Baalah, Joshua 15:9 / Joshua 15:60 / 1 Chronicles 13:6. The ark had been there for around twenty years, following the removal of it to that place at the request of the men of Beth Shemesh, 1 Samuel 6:19-7:2.

David wanted Jerusalem not only to be a political and military centre for Israel but a religious centre too. This is the reason why he wants the ark of God to go to Jerusalem, where it can be the focus of Israel’s faith.

This becomes clearer later when he decided he wants to build a temple in Jerusalem as a home for the ark. David’s plan was to bring everything and everyone together in one place, but this wasn’t God’s original plan for Israel, 2 Samuel 7:1-7.

The text tells us that they set the Ark of God on a new cart, the problem with this was it was only the priests who were allowed to carry the Ark on poles which they carried on their shoulders, Exodus. 25:12-15 / Exodus 37:1-5 / Numbers 7:9.

The priests weren’t even allowed to touch the Ark and if they did touch it, they would die, Numbers 4:15. Another problem is the Ark was always to be covered in goatskin, Numbers 4:6.

David knew exactly what he was doing here, he sinned by moving the Ark on a cart, and he was fully aware that what he was doing was wrong, 1 Chronicles 15:12-13. David and all of Israel began celebrating before the Lord, which is ironic because they had disobeyed God’s law concerning moving the Ark.

‘When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The LORD’s anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God. Then David was angry because the LORD’s wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah. David was afraid of the LORD that day and said, ‘How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?’ He was not willing to take the ark of the LORD to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.’ 2 Samuel

When they reached Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the Ark of God to stop it from falling as the oxen stumbled. This again was another mistake the Israelites made, because it was only the Levitical priest who could move the Ark, using only poles, [Exodus 25:14-15](#) / [Numbers 4:15](#) / [Numbers 4:20](#).

As a result of touching the Ark, God became angry and struck Uzzah down dead, [1 Chronicles 13:1-14](#), even the Levitical priests couldn't touch the Ark or they would die, [Numbers 7:9](#). Uzzah must have known he wasn't allowed to touch the Ark, or God wouldn't have killed him for doing so.

This act of God would certainly send shockwaves throughout Israel, as they were reminded that they can't just do things any way they want and ignore God's commands. We could also say that this act of God would also remind all of Israel that God was still in their presence.

David asks how the Ark of the Lord ever come to him, on the surface, it appears that David may have acted in ignorance about how the Ark was to be moved, or the Levitical priests didn't inform him of how the Ark was to be moved. But the truth is David was fully aware of God's command concerning moving the Ark, [1 Chronicles 15:12-13](#).

It's possible that Abinadab, [2 Samuel 6:3](#), knew nothing about what God said concerning moving the Ark, and so he and his household, wasn't blessed, and when David took the Ark to the house of Obed-Edom, God blessed him and his household. Obed-Edom may have been a priest and must have treated the Ark of God with respect, knowing that it symbolised God's presence and because of this, the Lord blessed him and his household, [2 Samuel 6:12](#).

'Now King David was told, 'The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God.' So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.' [2 Samuel 6:12-15](#)

After being told that the Lord has blessed Obed-Edom and his household, he decides he wants to move the Ark of God again to the city of David, that is Jerusalem. Those who carried the Ark took six steps then David sacrifices a bull and fattened calf, [1 Chronicles 15:1-16:43](#).

It appears he's learned the lesson from what happened to Uzzah. This time when he moved the Ark, although the text doesn't tell us, he moves it properly. The Levitical priests must have moved it on poles, [Exodus 25:14-15](#) / [Numbers 4:15](#) / [Numbers 4:20](#).

This was obviously a religious ceremony because David danced before the Lord when the Ark arrived safely. The dancing was basically moving around in circles in an out of control fashion. Notice he was wearing an ephod, [1 Chronicles 15:27](#) tells us he was also wearing a robe. The ephod was a made of linen and was worn by a priest, it was a small apron used on ceremonial occasions.

Some believe at some point in David's dancing he must have become naked, they believe that this is made clear from Michal's reaction later, [2 Samuel 6:20](#). He 'exposed' himself as some translations have it, because of his dancing, and because God had already commanded the proper attire to wear, [Exodus 28:40-43](#). Because of this, they believed David once again broke God's law in his excitement.

However, the text tells us David was wearing an ephod, [1 Chronicles 15:27](#) tells us he was also wearing a robe and I find no reason to believe otherwise. There's nothing in the text which suggests he was naked, the N.I.V. uses the word 'half-naked' in [2 Samuel 6:20](#), the K.J.V. uses the word 'uncovered', and other translations use the word, 'exposed'. None of these suggests that he was naked.

'As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart. They brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the LORD. After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship

offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty. Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.’ 2 Samuel 6:16-19

As everyone is celebrating Michal, Saul’s daughter and David’s wife, 2 Samuel 3:13-14, is far from being pleased. Her displeasure comes not only because of her husband’s behaviour, but also because her heart was far from God, she didn’t think that the Ark of God being brought to Jerusalem was worth celebrating. As we shall see in a moment, she is very sarcastic with David when he goes to her, 2 Samuel 6:20.

The priests take the Ark and place it inside the tent, this isn’t the original tabernacle, which was made at Mount Sinai, that was made around 400 years before what’s happening here, 1 Chronicles 17:4-6. What David did here was made another tent so that God’s Ark could dwell in it, 1 Chronicles 15:25-16:3.

The problem here was that David wanted a permanent house for the Ark in Jerusalem but the tabernacle was never left in one place, it was to be portable and continually moved around the different territories of Israel under the direction of God, so all the Israelites could get access to it.

‘When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, ‘How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, going around half-naked in full view of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!’ David said to Michal, ‘It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD’s people Israel—I will celebrate before the LORD. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honour.’ And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.’ 2 Samuel 6:20-23

It’s clear that Michal doesn’t love David as she did in the beginning, 1 Samuel 18:20, she’s upset with him because he danced around in front of other women and we must also remember that David had no right to take her back in the first place as his wife, Deuteronomy 17:17. She was probably struggling to forgive David for taking her away from her husband, Paltiel, 2 Samuel 3:15-16.

David tells Michal that what he did wasn’t for his own pleasure or because he was trying to win people over, his motives were pure, he was simply excited about the Ark coming to Jerusalem because that meant God was with them again, and he did was glorify God.

David tells her that the Lord chose him before He chose Saul, her father, and as a result of Michal’s resentment towards David, she was punished by not being able to have any children, which was shameful for an Israelite, 1 Samuel 1:5-7.

CHAPTER 7

What we read about here in this chapter and the next, go together with what we read in 1 Chronicles 17 and 1 Chronicles 18. They are not recorded in chronological order, rather they are written to let us know about the events which happened after the Ark was brought to Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 6:12-15.

GOD’S PROMISE TO DAVID

‘After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, ‘Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.’ Nathan replied to the king, ‘Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you.’ 2 Samuel 7:1-3

After settling into his palace and having peace from his enemies David goes to Nathan the prophet and tells him he's living in a house of cedar, while the Ark of God is in a tent, that is a tabernacle.

David wanted to make a permanent home for the tabernacle but God's original plan was for the tabernacle to be mobile and God would dwell within it. It was never intended to stay in one place but to be moved around among Israel's territories.

We must remember that God knew that Israel would reject Him as King and demand a physical king, that's why he gave laws concerning a new king, **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**. But when it comes to the tabernacle there were no alternative plans, especially concerning the building of a temple, that's because the tabernacle, and the continual refurbishing of it, was to continue throughout their history, **1 Chronicles 17:4-6**.

The reason why there were no alternative plans for the tabernacle is simply because God isn't found in any physical structure and God isn't just the God of Israel, **John 4:21-24**. Although God never commanded the building of a temple, He allowed them to build one, so that we learn from their mistakes, **1 Corinthians 10:11 / Romans 15:4**.

‘But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying: ‘Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’ ‘Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies. ‘The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you.’ **2 Samuel 7:4-11**

Nathan receives word from God concerning David's idea about building a temple and tells him to go and rebuke David for having such an idea. God says that He had moved in a tent for over 400 years with Israel, **1 Chronicles 17:4-6**. He asked, ‘should a house of cedar be built for Him?’ in other words if God could move in a tent for 400 years then, why couldn't He continue to do so?

The way God speaks here clearly tells us that even the temple that Solomon was eventually going to build was never a part of His plan for His people. The Israelites were to use the tabernacle and tabernacle only, throughout their entire history and when they wore it, they were to make another one to replace it. this was God's plan.

Nathan was to tell David that God raised him up as a shepherd and then anointed him as ruler over His people. God was the One who protected him and will give him a great name and God says that He will give David a house. In the context of God is saying, ‘now that we're on the subject of ‘houses’, let Me tell you about the real spiritual house that I am building’.

The reason why God was against having a temple built was because it would give the impression that God was limited to a certain location. David was a man of war and guilty of much bloodshed and David didn't have the time to build the temple, **1 Kings 5:3-4**. Of course, the main reason why God didn't want a temple built is simply because it was never a part of His plans to do so.

Coffman in his commentary asks the following, did the Jewish temple have God's approval? He responds by saying the following.

The answer to this question is an unqualified negative. If it had been God's will, He would never have destroyed it twice! Jesus Christ referred to the temple as ‘a den of thieves and robbers’, **Matthew 21:13**. It was the temple crowd

who engineered the crucifixion of Christ and opposed the preaching of the Gospel. They were not merely thieves and robbers but liars and murderers as well.

Significantly, the Book of Hebrews bypasses and ignores the Jewish Temple altogether, identifying all of the typical functions mentioned in Exodus, NOT with the temple, but with the tabernacle.

Christ himself is the True House, or Temple of God, **John 2:10**. And that means that the Jewish edifice was the False Temple. The true temple of God today is the ‘spiritual body’ of Christ, namely, his holy church, **1 Corinthians 6:19**. It is no contradiction of this truth that God’s Spirit did indeed, for a time dwell within the temple of Solomon, but Ezekiel gives a dramatic account of how that Spirit left it with the sound of a mighty rushing wind, **Ezekiel 11:22-23**. Also, God’s command through the prophets for the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah cannot be interpreted as God’s approval of the temple. That command to rebuild the temple is in the same category as Christ’s command to Judas Iscariot to ‘get on with the betrayal’, **John 13:27**, or the holy angel’s command for Baalam to, ‘go with the men’, **Numbers 22:35**.

It was far too late in Israel’s history to change their infatuation with an earthly temple, **Amos 9:11 / Acts 7:47 / Acts 15:16-18**.

‘When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.’ Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.’ **2 Samuel 7:12-17**

Nathan was to tell David after he had died, God would raise up David’s offspring to succeed him. These words are highly prophetic which concerned the throne of David, which represented the authority of God on earth. God promised David that He would set up his offspring after him and establish his kingdom.

God says He ‘will build a house for My Name’, here He is describing what He would do through this One whom He would eventually raise up after David, **1 Chronicles 17:1-15**. A careful reading of this prophecy shows us there were two promises made. God would set up David’s descendants upon his throne.

The use of the words ‘his’ and ‘he’ tells us this is an individual, although there is a secondary fulfilment of the prophecy that referred to the Messiah.

Obviously, the first individual to sit on David’s throne would be his son, Solomon, but this reference to ‘I will be his father, and he will be my son’, also speaks about the Messiah who would come in the future, **Psalms 2:7 / Psalm 89:26-27 / Acts 13:33 / Hebrews 1:5-7**.

Notice that God says, ‘When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands’. Although the N.I.V uses the word, ‘when’ which implies that this person will do wrong, the K.J.V. correctly uses the word, ‘if’, which implies this person has the choice to do wrong. The point is that this verse isn’t speaking about Solomon, it’s speaking about the Christ, **Isaiah 53:5**.

Notice God also said, ‘your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.’ There’s no misunderstanding of what God means here, and Who He is referring to, this is all about the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is the One who would sit upon David’s throne, not to Solomon, **Psalms 16:10 / Acts 2:25-31**.

God is speaking about the Messiah, who in the future would sit on his throne and rule, **Psalms 110:1 / Acts 2:34 / 1 Corinthians 15:26-28 / Ephesians 1:20-22**.

The immediate fulfilment of the prophecy refers to Solomon, but David knew that this was speaking about Someone way beyond his heirs, we know that David knew these words referred to Someone who was coming sometime in the future because he says so himself, **2 Samuel 7:19 / Psalm 89:34-37 / Acts 2:30.**

DAVID'S PRAYER

‘Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said: ‘Who am I, Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, Sovereign LORD, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant—and this decree, Sovereign LORD, is for a mere human! ‘What more can David say to you? For you know your servant, Sovereign LORD. For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made it known to your servant. ‘How great you are, Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. And who is like your people Israel—the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt? You have established your people Israel as your very own forever, and you, LORD, have become their God. ‘And now, LORD God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised, so that your name will be great forever. Then people will say, ‘The LORD Almighty is God over Israel!’ And the house of your servant David will be established in your sight. ‘LORD Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant, saying, ‘I will build a house for you.’ So your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. Sovereign LORD, you are God! Your covenant is trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant. Now be pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever in your sight; for you, Sovereign LORD, have spoken, and with your blessing the house of your servant will be blessed forever.’ **2 Samuel 7:18-29**

When David goes to speak to the Lord, he uses the words, ‘Sovereign LORD’ on several occasions. He begins by asking, ‘who am I?’, this tells us that David fully understood the enormity of the prophecy concerning his house, **1 Chronicles 17:16-27.**

He obviously didn’t understand the prophetic references concerning the Messiah who was to come, **1 Peter 1:10-12,** but he did understand that God was going to do great things through his descendants to accomplish something incredible.

It’s clear that David is incredibly thankful and humbled that God was going to use him and his family to create a wonderful future for Israel as a whole.

He boldly prayed to God from his heart and tells God to just do what He promised, He would do. He knew that God was God and that every word which comes from His mouth are true, **Psalm 119:160 / Proverbs 30:5 / John 17:17,** David knew that God can be trusted.

Coffman says the following concerning David’s prayer.

There’s no doubt that David’s prayer was a plea on behalf of his physical posterity, but God’s answer to such a prayer uttered by a faithful and loving parent must always depend to a great extent upon the descendants of such a parent.

When the physical descendants of David became wicked and reprobate, they, along with all of the apostate nation, were displaced and punished by their exile in Babylon. However, there were two very significant ways in which God answered this prayer.

1. The descendants of David were indeed continued upon the earth ‘before the Lord’ until, in the fullness of time, the terminal heir to David’s throne, namely, Joseph the son of Jacob, was able to pass it on to Christ the Messiah, who was the legal heir of Joseph, but not his literal son, **Matthew 1:16.**

2. The other way consisted in the continuity of David's personal descendants through his son Nathan until Jesus Christ was born miraculously of the Virgin Mary, whose husband Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli, Mary's father, **Luke 3:23**, the daughter of Heli, directly descended from David through Nathan.

Thus in this manner, David's house was continued 'forever' before the Lord, especially in consequence of the fact that Christ himself and the total of that Israel, of all races and kindreds of men) which constitutes his 'spiritual body' are also reckoned in the 'house of David', **Matthew 1:1**.

CHAPTER 8

What we read about here in this chapter and the last chapter, goes together with what we read in **1 Chronicles 17** and **1 Chronicles 18**. They are not recorded in chronological order, rather they are written to let us know about the events which happened after the Ark was brought to Jerusalem, **2 Samuel 6:12-15**.

'In the course of time, David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and he took Gath from the control of the Philistines. David also defeated the Moabites. He made them lie down on the ground and measured them off with a length of cord. Every two lengths of them were put to death, and the third length was allowed to live.

So the Moabites became subject to David and brought him tribute. Moreover, David defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah, when he went to restore his monument at the Euphrates River. David captured a thousand of his chariots, seven thousand charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers. He hamstrung all but a hundred of the chariot horses. When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down twenty-two thousand of them. He put garrisons in the Aramean kingdom of Damascus, and the Arameans became subject to him and brought tribute. The LORD gave David victory wherever he went. David took the gold shields that belonged to the officers of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. From Tebah and Berothai, towns that belonged to Hadadezer, King David took a great quantity of bronze. When Tou king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer, he sent his son Joram to King David to greet him and congratulate him on his victory in battle over Hadadezer, who had been at war with Tou. Joram brought with him articles of silver, of gold and of bronze. King David dedicated these articles to the LORD, as he had done with the silver and gold from all the nations he had subdued: Edom and Moab, the Ammonites and the Philistines, and Amalek. He also dedicated the plunder taken from Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah. And David became famous after he returned from striking down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. He put garrisons throughout Edom, and all the Edomites became subject to David. The LORD gave David victory wherever he went.' **2 Samuel 8:1-14**

DAVID'S VICTORIES

This chapter begins with the words, 'in the course of time', which implies that this chapter, along with the next two chapters happened over a period of several years. If David wanted to remain king and further establish his kingship then he was going to have to defeat all of Israel's enemies.

David's first threat was found in their old foes, the Philistines they were a constant thorn in the flesh for Israel, **Numbers 33:55**, since Israel took over Palestine. David's main aim was to get rid of all the enemies of Israel in Palestine, or at the very least bring them into subjection.

David's second threat was the Moabites, David totally massacred them, which is strange because there was a time when David trusted the Moabites, when his father and mother stayed with the king of Moab while he was a fugitive from Saul, **1 Samuel 22:3-4**. We don't know exactly what the Moabites had done to provoke David to take such drastic actions against them, but we presume it must have been something terrible.

Notice that David hamstringed all the chariot horses, **Joshua 11:6 / Joshua 11:9**, this appears to be very cruel, but in this case very necessary. If an army has no horses to pull their chariots, then the chariots would become useless. The shields of gold were possibly valuable ornaments worn by the Syrian soldiers, **1 Kings 10:16**.

Tou, king of Hamath obviously didn't want to get involved in a battle with David and so he sends David his congratulations for defeating Hadadezer, who was one of Hamath's enemies.

Hamath was the northeastern stronghold of the Solomonic Empire, **2 Kings 14:25**. The people of Hamath were descendants of Ham and Canaan, **Genesis 10:18**. Joram brought David a lot of valuable gifts, **Psalms 18:43-44**. David continues his conquest by killing eighteen thousand Edomites. Coffman says the following about this passage.

The avid seekers of 'contradictions' or 'discrepancies' are diligent to point out that David is here said to have slain those Edomites, but that **1 Chronicles 18:13** ascribes the victory to Abishai, and that **1 Kings 11:15-16**, and the heading of **Psalms 60** declare that it was Joab who did it! However, as Willis noted, David was involved as king, Joab was commander of the army, and Abishai had charge of that particular battle.

Because of David's conquests over all these armies, Israel as a whole became very rich from the spoils of war. The nations around were becoming poorer whilst Israel was getting richer as a nation, **1 Chronicles 18:1-13**.

DAVID'S OFFICIALS

'David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people. Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelek son of Abiathar were priests; Seraiah was secretary; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; and David's sons were priests.' **2 Samuel 8:15-18**

Unlike Saul before him, David as king of Israel treated people justly and right, he treated them fairly, **1 Chronicles 18:14-17**. Saul was only bothered about himself, and his rule and didn't care how he treated people as long as he got his own way but David had people's hearts in his mind, he was for the people, he wasn't in a power trip but genuinely cared for the welfare of others. **Matthew 20:25-28 / 1 Peter 5:3**.

What we read here is a list of David's administrators for the business of the kingdom, among whom the sons of David were certainly included, as we learn later in the activities of Absalom. The parallel inspired account tells us exactly what the functions of David's sons were, **1 Chronicles 18:17**. We must remember, despite what the text says here, that David's sons were not priests as we understand the word priest.

R. Payne Smith, says the following about the word, 'priests' used here. In the time of the writing of **1 Kings**, this word, 'kohen', as a word for 'priest' was already becoming obsolete, as proved by **1 Kings 4:5**, and therefore the author of **1 Chronicles 18:17**, writing at a still later time, changed the passage to give the correct meaning.

We are certain that the Chronicler knew what the passage in **2 Samuel 8:18** meant, and that he was also aware that the word, 'kohen' had gone out of use as a term for chief officials; and so he properly rendered the passage thus, 'David's sons were the chief officials in the service of the king.'

CHAPTER 9

'David asked, 'Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?' Now there was a servant of Saul's household named Ziba. They summoned him to appear before David, and the king said to him, 'Are you Ziba?' 'At your service,' he replied. The king asked, 'Is there no one still alive from the house of

Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?' Ziba answered the king, 'There is still a son of Jonathan; he is lame in both feet.' 'Where is he?' the king asked. Ziba answered, 'He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar.' So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel. When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honour. David said, 'Mephibosheth!' 'At your service,' he replied. 'Don't be afraid,' David said to him, 'for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.' Mephibosheth bowed down and said, 'What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?' Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's steward, and said to him, 'I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops, so that your master's grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table.' (Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.) Then Ziba said to the king, 'Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do.' So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons. Mephibosheth had a young son named Mika, and all the members of Ziba's household were servants of Mephibosheth. And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table; he was lame in both feet.' 2 Samuel 9:1-13

DAVID AND MEPHIBOSHETH

After David had conquered the enemies of Israel, 2 Samuel 8:14, and settled in as king over Israel, he appears to have learned that Mephibosheth, Johnathon's son, who as a five-year-old was crippled, is still alive, 2 Samuel 4:4.

Mephibosheth's real name was Meribbaal or Meribaal, 1 Chronicles 8:34 / 1 Chronicles 9:40. By this time Mephibosheth had grown up, got married and had become the father of a young son Mica.

This was an occasion when David remembered his covenant with Jonathan, 1 Samuel 18:3 / 1 Samuel 20:1-4 / 1 Samuel 20:14-17, and so, looking for anyone who might be an heir of Jonathan through whom he could preserve Jonathan's posterity. This shows us how David is a man of his word and a man of honour.

Although David asks the question, no one is able to answer, but someone else tells him about Ziba, who was a close relative of Saul. Ziba appears to be in full possession of all the properties of the former king, Saul, but as Machir had been caring for Mephibosheth, it seems likely that Ziba had made himself quite wealthy in those intervening years after Saul's death.

Lo Debar was located in north-eastern Palestine east of the Jordan River and not far from Mahanaim, which was Ish-Bosheth's capital. Ammiel is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 3:5 as the father of Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon and so Machir was Bathsheba's brother, making him a brother-in-law of King David.

It appears that Machir was a very wealthy person and because he loved Saul's family, took Mephibosheth into his home and cared for him. This tells us that Machir was a very faithful and generous person, and later helped David when Absalom rebelled against him, 2 Samuel 17:27-29.

It's clear that when Mephibosheth appeared in front of David, he was fearful for his life, as he bowed down.

Understandably, he would be nervous about this meeting because it was common practice that any heir to the former king was to be killed.

Mephibosheth calls himself a dead dog, which was used as an exaggeration of the truth, 1 Samuel 24:14, and he realises that he wasn't called to David to be killed but to be rewarded so that Johnathon's name may continue in Israel. Mephibosheth is very humbled by all this, he knows he doesn't deserve mercy, but he receives it.

Because Mephibosheth was disabled on both feet, Ziba was asked to continue to look after Mephibosheth and bring the produce of the fields to Mephibosheth, in other words, everything which belonged to Jonathan was to be returned to Mephibosheth. Later, Mephibosheth's descendants would become prominent leaders within the tribe of Benjamin, 1 Chronicles 8:35-40 / 1 Chronicles 9:40-44.

Although Ziba appears to be sincere here, it wouldn't be too long before he betrays David and rebels against him, 2 Samuel 16-20.

CHAPTER 10

In this chapter we read about the war between David and the Ammonites, this is an explanation of 2 Samuel 8:12. We can also read more about this in 1 Chronicles 19:1-19.

'In the course of time, the king of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun succeeded him as king. David thought, 'I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me.' So David sent a delegation to express his sympathy to Hanun concerning his father. When David's men came to the land of the Ammonites, the Ammonite commanders said to Hanun their lord, 'Do you think David is honouring your father by sending envoys to you to express sympathy? Hasn't David sent them to you only to explore the city and spy it out and overthrow it?' So Hanun seized David's envoys, shaved off half of each man's beard, cut off their garments at the buttocks, and sent them away. When David was told about this, he sent messengers to meet the men, for they were greatly humiliated. The king said, 'Stay at Jericho till your beards have grown, and then come back.' 2 Samuel 10:1-5

DAVID DEFEATS THE AMMONITES

We don't know how long this period was when Nahash, the king of the Ammonites died and his son, Hanun took his place as king, but David thought he would show him kindness. David chooses to do this because Nahash before he died showed David some kindness.

Although it's not clear what kindness David is referring to, some commentators believe that, since Nahash was a bitter enemy of Saul, 1 Samuel 11:1-11, he must have helped David when David was on the run from Saul and his men.

It's clear that David's intentions were honourable but the Ammonite commanders aren't so sure, they think he's spying out on the land to take it over. It's easy to understand why they would think this way, especially when we remember that David slaughtered two-thirds of the Moabites earlier, 2 Samuel 8:1-2.

It's also possible they remembered that God condemned them in His law, Deuteronomy 23:3-6. The Moabites and the Ammonites were related because both groups descended from Lot and his daughters, Genesis 19:36-38.

Because they didn't trust David and his men, Hanun seized David's envoys and shaved off half of each man's beard. To shave off any part of an Israelite's beard was seen as a way of humiliating someone.

Hanun obviously wanted to totally humiliate them and so he also cuts off half of their garments, which would mean they would be exposed, Isaiah 20:4. It's clear that Hanun has no respect for David or his men.

David's respect for his men is seen when he tells them to wait in Jericho until their beards have grown back. He didn't want them to feel undignified, embarrassed or humiliated by anyone.

'When the Ammonites realized that they had become obnoxious to David, they hired twenty thousand Aramean foot soldiers from Beth Rehob and Zobah, as well as the king of Maakah with a thousand men, and also twelve thousand men from Tob. On hearing this, David sent Joab out with the entire army of fighting men. The Ammonites came out and drew up in battle formation at the entrance of their city gate, while the Arameans of Zobah and Rehob and the men of Tob and Maakah were by themselves in the open country.' 2 Samuel 10:6-8

Although Nahash, Hanun's father showed kindness to David, Hanun himself showed total disrespect. He knew exactly what he was doing when he treated David's messengers with total disrespect. He knew that this would cause trouble between the Ammonites and David, he knew that David would retaliate and so he prepares his men and the Syrians for war.

'Joab saw that there were battle lines in front of him and behind him; so he selected some of the best troops in Israel and deployed them against the Arameans. He put the rest of the men under the command of Abishai his brother and deployed them against the Ammonites. Joab said, 'If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you are to come to my rescue; but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come to rescue you. Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The LORD will do what is good in his sight.' Then Joab and the troops with him advanced to fight the Arameans, and they fled before him. When the Ammonites realized that the Arameans were fleeing, they fled before Abishai and went inside the city. So Joab returned from fighting the Ammonites and came to Jerusalem.' 2 Samuel 10:9-14

This battle against the Ammonites and the Syrians took place at the gate of Ammon. Joab and his brother, Abishai, split up to fight them separately and they were willing to fight because they believed that God was going to fight with them because this war was not justified and unwarranted.

After the Ammonites and the Syrians run away, Joab returned to Jerusalem. It's difficult to understand why Joab called off the battle and returned to Jerusalem, especially since they were winning. One possible explanation was that it was winter or winter was on its way, most nations never fought against anyone else in winter seasons.

'After the Arameans saw that they had been routed by Israel, they regrouped. Hadadezer had Arameans brought from beyond the Euphrates River; they went to Helam, with Shobak the commander of Hadadezer's army leading them. When David was told of this, he gathered all Israel, crossed the Jordan and went to Helam. The Arameans formed their battle lines to meet David and fought against him. But they fled before Israel, and David killed seven hundred of their charioteers and forty thousand of their foot soldiers. He also struck down Shobak the commander of their army, and he died there. When all the kings who were vassals of Hadadezer saw that they had been routed by Israel, they made peace with the Israelites and became subject to them. So the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites anymore.' 2 Samuel 10:15-19

After fleeing from Joab and his brother Abishai the Arameans decide to regroup. Hadarezer was one of the most powerful leaders at this time in Syria, 2 Samuel 8:3, got his men together to fight David and his men again. This time David would personally lead his men and the Arameans once again lost and fled although David killed Shobak, the commander of their army and a few hundred of their fighting men.

They now know they can't defeat Israel, so they offer to make peace with them, and they became subject to Israel and the good news is that they were also now afraid to help the Ammonites in the future.

CHAPTER 11

In this chapter, we read about one of the infamous events in the life of David, where he commits adultery with Bathsheba and orders the murder of her husband Uriah.

From this chapter, right through to chapter 20, we begin to read about David's dreadful reign as king of Israel and his punishment from God for his actions.

We read about David's adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah followed by God's judgment against David in 2 Samuel 11-12. We read about the rape of Tamar by Amnon and his murder by Absalom in 2 Samuel 13. We read about the rebellion of Absalom in 2 Samuel 14-19 and finally, we read about the rebellion of Sheba in 2 Samuel 20.

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

‘In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, ‘She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.’ Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, ‘I am pregnant.’ 2 Samuel 11:1-5

In the previous chapter we read how Israel defeated the Syrians and put them under subjection, 2 Samuel 10:15-19, David now turns his attention to Ammon and will bring them under subjection.

Notice that it’s springtime, which means it is time for war, a time when the king should leave his home and lead his men into war. As king David should have been leading his army in this war against the Ammonites.

However, on this occasion, David decides to stay at home in Jerusalem but we’re not told why. For whatever reason he stayed at home, his decision is ultimately going to lead him into temptation with Bathsheba. Bathsheba was also called Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel, 1 Chronicles 3:5. The name Ammiel is a variation of the name Eliam, which means ‘the God of my people’ or ‘the people of my God’.

Bathsheba’s father Ammiel is also said to be the son of Ahithophel, 2 Samuel 23:34, which would mean that Bathsheba was the granddaughter of Ahithophel.

Uriah’s name is a compound of ‘Yah’, possibly indicating that he was a worshipper of Jehovah. Both Ammiel and Uriah are seen as ‘mighty men’, 2 Samuel 23:34 / 2 Samuel 23:39.

From the roof of his palace, David notices a woman bathing and it appears that Bathsheba wasn’t too concerned about bathing in the open but because David was higher up on his roof, he could clearly see her and how beautiful she was, Matthew 5:27-32.

Despite finding out that Bathsheba was married, he went ahead and sent for her anyway, this then led to them sleeping together, Genesis 3:6 / James 1:14 / 1 John 2:16.

Uriah was a prominent soldier in David’s army and although he wasn’t an Israelite, but a Hittite, it’s possible that he was a proselyte to the God of Israel. David’s respect for Uriah, who daily risked his life in the service of the king, should have led him to deny the temptation of sleeping with Bathsheba, but it didn’t, he showed no respect for him or God, Exodus 20:14.

Bathsheba purified herself because she was going through her monthly period, it was during a women’s monthly period where they were more able to conceive. However this reference to her purification, if you notice is written in brackets, could be referring to when she was bathing earlier at home, Leviticus 15:19-30.

After being sent home, Bathsheba sends word back to David that she is pregnant.

‘So David sent this word to Joab: ‘Send me Uriah the Hittite.’ And Joab sent him to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, ‘Go down to your house and wash your feet.’ So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master’s servants and did not go down to his house. David was told, ‘Uriah did not go home.’ So he asked Uriah, ‘Haven’t you just come from a military campaign? Why didn’t you go home?’ Uriah said to David, ‘The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord’s men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!’ Then David said to him, ‘Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back.’ So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. At David’s invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master’s servants; he did not go home.’ 2 Samuel 11:6-13

After being informed that Bathsheba was pregnant, David finds himself doing what many people do, where one sin leads to another sin, in an attempt to cover up the first sin, which in David's case was adultery. David requests that Uriah be brought to him but when he arrives, he sleeps at the entrance to the palace.

Remember David should have been out on the battlefield fighting the Ammonites with Uriah. It's here we see the huge difference between Uriah's respect for David as king and David's respect for him as his soldier. Despite being a leader of David's army, he didn't take advantage of the opportunity to be with his wife.

David tried and tried again to encourage Uriah to go home and sleep with his wife, but Uriah had too much respect for his fellow soldiers. The reason David is desperate for him to go home to Bathsheba is simple, if Uriah has sexual relations with his wife, she could pretend that she became pregnant by him.

Uriah valued his fellow soldiers and God far more than he valued having a sexual relationship with his wife during wartime, **1 Samuel 21:5**.

When David asks Uriah why he didn't go home, Uriah told him that the ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents. It became very common for the ark to be taken into wars, as a sign that God was with them, **2 Samuel 15:24**. Uriah didn't think it was right for him to live at home whilst his fellow soldiers were camped outside.

David isn't giving up just yet with his plan to get Uriah to go home to his wife, he invites him to stay another night, feeds him and gets him drunk. This is now David's fifth attempt in trying to get Uriah to get home, **Habakkuk 2:15-16**.

This attempt also failed because Uriah totally refuses to go. This shows us how low David has become, he's gone to all these efforts because of that one act of adultery, **James 1:14-15**.

'In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, 'Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.' So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died. Joab sent David a full account of the battle. He instructed the messenger: 'When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall? Who killed Abimelek son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.' **2 Samuel 11:14-21**

David is getting more and more desperate to cover up his sinful behaviour with Bathsheba and comes up with yet another plan. He's given up on trying to get Uriah to go home and sleep with his wife and resorts to giving Joab orders to send Uriah to the front line and basically leave him there so that he will be killed.

Uriah is killed in the battle by an enemy, but as far as God is concerned David is the guilty one, David is responsible for killing him, **2 Samuel 12:9**.

We must wonder what was going through Joab's mind when he received the letter from David ordering him to leave Uriah on the battlefield alone. I'm sure that he knew what was going on with David and Bathsheba but his loyalty to protect David's reputation led him to follow David's orders to move courageous men close to the wall of the city, where Uriah and others were killed.

The extent of David's sin with Bathsheba is seen in the fact that not only did Uriah die on the battlefield but many of his men died as a result of it.

'The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. The messenger said to David, 'The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance of the city gate. Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.' David told the messenger, 'Say this to Joab: 'Don't let this upset

you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.' Say this to encourage Joab.' When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.' 2 Samuel 11:22-27

When word got back to David that Uriah had been killed on the battlefield, he felt a sense of relief because he thought he had gotten away with his sin with Bathsheba, who was probably around one month pregnant at this time. In his mind, with Uriah out of the way, he's free to marry Bathsheba.

While David felt a sense of relief, Bathsheba mourned the loss of her husband, the mourning time was usually around seven days. After the period of mourning, David takes her as his wife as Bathsheba doesn't appear to waste any time or put up any kind of resistance to the marriage.

It's possible she was acting in fear or maybe she was really ambitious, but more likely because she was pregnant by David. Bathsheba now gives birth to a son to David.

Notice, however, that God wasn't very pleased with David because of what he had done. David's lustful look at the beautiful Bathsheba from his palace roof led to adultery with a married woman, the murder of her husband and the ultimate death of many of his soldiers, **James 1:14-15**.

In the next chapter, we read about how God is going to confront David for his sinful actions using His prophet Nathan. This is certainly one of those dark times in David's life as king of Israel, not only for him but for Israel as a whole.

CHAPTER 12

In this chapter, we read about how the prophet Nathan confronts David for his sinful concerning Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah. We read about God's condemnation of David's actions and motives, whilst at the same time reading about God's love and mercy towards him.

NATHAN REBUKES DAVID

'The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, 'There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. 'Now a traveller came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveller who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.' David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, 'As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.' 2 Samuel 12:1-6

This chapter begins by telling us that the Lord sent Nathan to confront David about his actions, **1 Chronicles 20:1-3**, and we can imagine how apprehensive he would have been about approaching David, the king of Israel with such a condemning message.

When Nathan met David he tells him a parable which would result in David condemning himself as king. The parable speaks about a sin which was committed against a poor man by a rich man. David's reaction to the deed of the ruthless rich man was immediate and according to justice.

This judgment of the king was exactly in keeping with the Law of God, it was punishment by death Exodus 22:1. This tells us that David also knew the law of God regarding adultery and murder, Exodus 20:13-14.

‘Then Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’ ‘This is what the LORD says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’ 2 Samuel 12:7-12

When Nathan told David that he was that man, we can imagine that David would have paused and become stunned. After reminding David of everything God has done for him, Nathan tells him God would have given him even more.

It appears that David hasn’t been counting his blessings but taking them for granted. When he committed adultery with Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 11:3-5, and ordered the murder of her husband Uriah, which also led to many of his own men dying, 2 Samuel 11:14-21, he forgot about his role as king, he forgot that it was God who anointed him as king of Israel.

Notice that God tell David he despises Him because of his sinful actions with Uriah and Bathsheba. This makes it clear that David’s sins were sins committed against God Himself, Uriah’s enemies may have been killed on the battlefield, but God held David personally responsible because he was the one who gave the orders in the first place, 2 Samuel 11:14.

God tells David He would take all of his wives; this is simply because David took Uriah’s wife. God also tells David that the sword will never depart from his house, this was to become a reality very soon, we know that three of his sons would be murdered, Amnon by Absalom, 2 Samuel 13:23-38, Absalom by Joab, 2 Samuel 18:14-15, and Adonijah by Solomon, 1 Kings 2:23-25. Sadly, even as the generations pass, the bloodshed of David’s family doesn’t end but continues, 2 Kings 11:1.

God also tells David, in broad daylight, in front of his very eyes, He will take his wives and give them to someone else close to him and they will sleep with them. This is a reference to Absalom, David’s son, when Absalom tried to take his father’s reign, one of the first things he did was publicly sleep, that is sexually, with David’s concubines, 2 Samuel 16:21-22.

Because David thought what he did with Bathsheba and Uriah was a secret, God tells him he is going to be punished publicly, that is his family will be punished and everyone will know why they were being punished.

David was well aware of what God was telling him, he was going to reap what he sowed and was going to carry this burden and grief for the rest of his life.

We all must learn that when we sin, our sin not only affects us as individuals but it can have serious consequences for others, especially those close to us.

‘Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’ Nathan replied, ‘The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the LORD, the son born to you will die.’ 2 Samuel 12:13-14

David’s response is immediate and sincere, he openly confesses that he has sinned, Psalms 51. He now knows that he can’t hide his sin from God, Psalms 69:5 / Psalms 90:8 / Jeremiah 16:17-18. Notice Nathan’s reply to David, the Lord has taken away your sin, God in His mercy forgave David. This clearly tells us that sins were forgiven even in the

Old Testament period, Leviticus 4:26 / Leviticus 4:31 / Leviticus 4:35 / Leviticus 5:10 / Leviticus 5:13 / Leviticus 5:16 / Numbers 14:18.

David obviously thought that he was going to die as a result of his sinful behaviour and deserved to die because of his sins, Leviticus 20:10, but Nathan tells him he's not going to die. God was going to show him grace and mercy, which in turn he would learn to show grace and mercy to others.

Although David wasn't going to die, the child he had with Bathsheba was going to. It's probably been around a year since David slept with Bathsheba and Nathan confronted him and he probably thought he was getting away with his sinful actions, but his sin finally caught up with him and judgment was going to be done. Once again we're reminded that the innocent may get caught up in our sinful behaviour, here it was to be his son.

'After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them. On the seventh day the child died. David's attendants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, 'While the child was still living, he wouldn't listen to us when we spoke to him. How can we now tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate.' David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. 'Is the child dead?' he asked. 'Yes,' they replied, 'he is dead.' Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate. His attendants asked him, 'Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!' He answered, 'While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.' But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.' 2 Samuel 12:15-23

After Nathan returns home, immediately the Lord struck David's child with an illness. David is clearly devastated and so he fasts and mourns. The elders try to encourage him but he refuses to get up or eat. Although David pleads with the Lord, this is one prayer which won't be answered, the child dies which meant that God's judgment upon David didn't change.

David's attendants were scared to tell David the child was dead but when David notices they were whispering amongst themselves, he knew inside himself that his child was dead.

He asks them if the child is dead, and when they told him, he was dead, David goes head and eats, which confuses everyone present. They thought he would mourn the death of his child but David was demonstrating that he had fully accepted God's judgment and had to move on.

Notice that David says, 'I will go to him, but he will not return to me', this tells us that David knew that one day, he too would die and join his child in the grave.

Concerning life after death, we should remember that, even if Solomon was the wisest man of his day, Solomon was not omniscient. There were things which even he didn't know because God hadn't yet revealed them.

When he wrote, 'for the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing,' Ecclesiastes 9:5, Solomon was merely expressing the view of death commonly held among his people in his day. But, when we examine the Old Testament Scriptures it becomes clear that, even among God's ancient chosen people, Israel, there was no clear understanding of, or belief in, life after death. A clear teaching about life after death came when Christ came, 2 Timothy 1:10.

Although it's difficult to understand why an innocent child had to pay the consequences of David and Bathsheba's sinful behaviour, we can have confidence because of what Jesus brought concerning life and immortality that this child will be in heaven with the Lord, Mark 10:13-15.

And although David didn't know about the afterlife at this point, we can be assured that both him and his child are now together in heaven.

'Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and made love to her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him; and because the LORD loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah. Meanwhile Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and captured the royal citadel. Joab then sent messengers to David, saying, 'I have fought against Rabbah and taken its water supply. Now muster the rest of the troops and besiege the city and capture it. Otherwise I will take the city, and it will be named after me.' So David mustered the entire army and went to Rabbah and attacked and captured it. David took the crown from their king's head, and it was placed on his own head. It weighed a talent of gold, and it was set with precious stones. David took a great quantity of plunder from the city and brought out the people who were there, consigning them to labour with saws and with iron picks and axes, and he made them work at brickmaking. David did this to all the Ammonite towns. Then he and his entire army returned to Jerusalem.' 2 Samuel 12:24-31

After mourning the loss of his child, David goes to his wife Bathsheba and comforts her, he sleeps with her and they have another child and call him Solomon, 1 Chronicles 20:1-3.

They both had no idea that God would bring this child into the world and he would become the most prominent king in Israel's history. They both had no idea that this child would continue to fulfil the seed-line promise which God had begun in Genesis, Genesis 3:15 / Genesis 12:1-3.

David names the child Solomon which means 'peaceable' but the name God gave him through Nathan was Jedidiah, which means 'beloved of the Lord'. Although the Lord took away their first child as a means of punishment, the Lord now blesses them with a second child, Romans 8:28.

As Joab was fighting against Rabbah of the Ammonites he send word back to David about what he's achieved. He had taken the city's water supply which meant the city couldn't function without it. The city of waters was the name of the fortification built to protect the fountain that still flows in Amman the capital of Jordan.

Joab's loyalty to David is very evident here because he could have easily taken the city himself but he wanted David to get involved so that David could receive the glory for taking the city.

David proceeds to take the crown from the king's head, the word king used here has a footnote in most Bibles which informs us it was taken from 'Milcom's' head, which was also the name of the national idol of the Ammonites, Amos 1:15 / Zephaniah 1:5.

Because of the precious stones inlaid on it, the crown itself weighed around 125 pounds, which is quite heavy and I don't believe we are to think that David was going to wear this permanently on his head.

After defeating all the Ammonite towns, David took the spoils of war and then makes them slaves and puts them to work, whilst he and his men return to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 13

In the previous chapter we read about God's judgment on David and his household because of his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah her husband, 2 Samuel 12:7-12, in this chapter we will see God's judgment having an immediate happening. Because David had so many wives, he is now going to reap what he sowed, Galatians 6:7-8, because he had children with different his other wives.

AMNON AND TAMAR

‘In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David. Amnon became so obsessed with his sister Tamar that he made himself ill. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her. Now Amnon had an adviser named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David’s brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man. He asked Amnon, ‘Why do you, the king’s son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won’t you tell me?’ Amnon said to him, ‘I’m in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.’ ‘Go to bed and pretend to be ill,’ Jonadab said. ‘When your father comes to see you, say to him, ‘I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand.’ So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, ‘I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand.’ 2 Samuel 13:1-6

When David was on the run from Saul, he married Maacah and they had two sons together, Absalom and Amnon, 2 Samuel 3:2-3. Because Amnon was the half-brother of Tamar, he wouldn’t be allowed to marry her because the law said he couldn’t, Leviticus 18:9.

Ammon loved Tamar and knows he shouldn’t marry her but Jonadab, his cousin, gives him some advice, he tells him to pretend to be ill, this way Tamar would come to him, especially since David would ask her to go to him.

‘David sent word to Tamar at the palace: ‘Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him.’ So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it. Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat. ‘Send everyone out of here,’ Amnon said. So everyone left him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, ‘Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand.’ And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom. But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, ‘Come to bed with me, my sister.’ ‘No, my brother!’ she said to him. ‘Don’t force me! Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don’t do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you.’ But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.’ 2 Samuel 13:7-14

David informs Tamar that Ammon is ill and tells her to go to him. she makes bread but he refuses to eat and after asking everyone to leave, Tamar enters his bedroom and he grabbed her and tells her to come to bed with him. Tamar immediately knows what he’s trying to do and refuses because she knows it’s immoral and she knows that the practising incest was against God’s law, Leviticus 18:11.

Although Tamar is thinking about God and his laws, Ammon is being completely selfish, all he wanted was his sexual desires to be fulfilled, he didn’t stop to think of the consequences this act would have on his half-sister. His desire to fulfil his own selfish needs was so great, that he refused to listen to anything she said and went on to rape her, which is the lowest of lows for any man to do.

‘Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, ‘Get up and get out!’ ‘No!’ she said to him. ‘Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me.’ But he refused to listen to her. He called his personal servant and said, ‘Get this woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her.’ So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing an ornate robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore.’ 2 Samuel 13:15-18

Interestingly, one minute Ammon loved his half-sister, 2 Samuel 13:1, and the next minute he intensely hates her. The true nature of Ammon’s so-called love for Tamar is shown here, he hated her and treated her badly, and he refuses to listen to her. This was all about him because if he truly did love her, he would have listened to her and never committed such a vile act against her and treated her the way he did, Deuteronomy 22:27.

Tamar wore an ornate robe, Genesis 37:3, which means she was high ranking as a virgin daughter of the king.

‘Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went. Her brother Absalom said to her, ‘Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don’t take this thing to heart.’ And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house, a desolate woman. When King David heard all this, he was furious. And Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar.’ 2 Samuel 13:19-22

It's in these verses we see the effect of Ammon's sin against Tamar, she put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. This shows us how sorrowful she is, she is expressing her complete humiliation, she's overwhelmed with what's happened to her and can't control her emotions.

When her brother Absalom meets her, it appears that he knows what's happened to her but he doesn't help the situation because he more or less tells her to forget about it and so she goes to live in Absalom's house as a desolate woman. This is tragic, the tragic effect that rape had on this innocent woman.

When David got news about what happened, he was furious but notice he did nothing about it. We don't know why he didn't do anything, maybe he remembered his own sinful actions with Uriah, **2 Samuel 11:14-17**, maybe he couldn't bring himself to have his son, Ammon punished, which meant death, **Numbers 35:30-31**.

One thing is clear because David did nothing about Ammon's behaviour, his sorrow over this wasn't going to end well, it was going to lead to more sorrow as Absalom was going to take revenge on Ammon for what he did to his Tamar, his sister.

ABSALOM KILLS AMNON

'Two years later, when Absalom's sheepshearers were at Baal Hazor near the border of Ephraim, he invited all the king's sons to come there. Absalom went to the king and said, 'Your servant has had shearers come. Will the king and his attendants please join me?' 'No, my son,' the king replied. 'All of us should not go; we would only be a burden to you.' Although Absalom urged him, he still refused to go but gave him his blessing. Then Absalom said, 'If not, please let my brother Amnon come with us.' The king asked him, 'Why should he go with you?' But Absalom urged him, so he sent with him Amnon and the rest of the king's sons. Absalom ordered his men, 'Listen! When Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine and I say to you, 'Strike Amnon down,' then kill him. Don't be afraid. Haven't I given you this order? Be strong and brave.' So Absalom's men did to Amnon what Absalom had ordered. Then all the king's sons got up, mounted their mules and fled.' **2 Samuel 13:23-29**

We can imagine throughout those two years that Ammon, would have had his suspicions about what Absalom was thinking because of what Ammon did to Absalom's sister, Tamar. Absalom has been very patient, he's waited two years for an opportunity to get his revenge, **2 Samuel 13:22**.

A festival was planned and Absalom knows that Ammon would be very apprehensive about attending, so he intentionally also invites David, knowing that David wouldn't leave Jerusalem to attend the festival. His plan worked because Ammon believed that David was also going to be at the festival, he decides it would be safe for him to go.

As the party is in full swing and people were drinking wine, notice that Absalom himself didn't murder Ammon, but he ordered his men to do it for him. Absalom was the next oldest son of David, and because Ammon was now dead, this put him first in line to be king after David. It's clear that Absalom's murder of Ammon not only satisfied his revenge, but also set him up to be the next king of Israel.

'While they were on their way, the report came to David: 'Absalom has struck down all the king's sons; not one of them is left.' The king stood up, tore his clothes and lay down on the ground; and all his attendants stood by with their clothes torn. But Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother, said, 'My lord should not think that they killed all the princes; only Amnon is dead. This has been Absalom's express intention ever since the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar. My lord the king should not be concerned about the report that all the king's sons are dead. Only Amnon is dead.' Meanwhile, Absalom had fled. Now the man standing watch looked up and saw many people on the road west of him, coming down the side of the hill. The watchman went and told the king, 'I see men in the direction of Horonaim, on the side of the hill.' Jonadab said to the king, 'See, the king's sons have come; it has happened just as your servant said.' As he finished speaking, the king's sons came in, wailing loudly. The king, too, and all his attendants wept very bitterly. Absalom fled and went to Talmai son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. But King David

mourned many days for his son. After Absalom fled and went to Geshur, he stayed there three years. And King David longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon's death.' 2 Samuel 13:30-39

When word got back to David about how his son Ammon was murdered, I'm sure he would have remembered Nathan's word to him, 2 Samuel 12:10, and I'm sure he would have remembered his orders to have Uriah murdered, 2 Samuel 11:14-17.

Notice that Absalom fled and went to Talmai, the king of Gusher, who was the grandfather of Absalom, 2 Samuel 3:3, we can imagine how welcome he would have been and how the king would have approved of everything Absalom had done.

Geshur was north of Jerusalem in Syria and it was here that Absalom waited until the time when David would be comforted concerning his act of revenge against Amnon.

Notice also that David mourned thinking that all of his sons were dead and he mourned over Absalom, but he quickly forgave him, this is possibly because he understood that his son, Ammon deserved to die. Uriah should never have been murdered because he was innocent, whereas Ammon did deserve to die because of his actions with Tamar, 2 Samuel 13:14.

This was the beginning of God's judgement against David and his household and things were only going to get worse as time goes on.

CHAPTER 14

In the previous chapter we read about Absalom ordering the murder of his brother Ammon because he had raped his half-sister Tamar, 2 Samuel 13:14 / 2 Samuel 13:28-29. In this chapter, we read how Joab hires a woman to confront David with a parable about Absalom, in an effort to encourage David to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem.

ABSALOM RETURNS TO JERUSALEM

'Joab son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart longed for Absalom. So Joab sent someone to Tekoa and had a wise woman brought from there. He said to her, 'Pretend you are in mourning. Dress in mourning clothes, and don't use any cosmetic lotions. Act like a woman who has spent many days grieving for the dead. Then go to the king and speak these words to him.' And Joab put the words in her mouth. When the woman from Tekoa went to the king, she fell with her face to the ground to pay him honour, and she said, 'Help me, Your Majesty!' The king asked her, 'What is troubling you?' She said, 'I am a widow; my husband is dead. I your servant had two sons. They got into a fight with each other in the field, and no one was there to separate them. One struck the other and killed him. Now the whole clan has risen up against your servant; they say, 'Hand over the one who struck his brother down, so that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed; then we will get rid of the heir as well.' They would put out the only burning coal I have left, leaving my husband neither name nor descendant on the face of the earth.' The king said to the woman, 'Go home, and I will issue an order in your behalf.' But the woman from Tekoa said to him, 'Let my lord the king pardon me and my family and let the king and his throne be without guilt.' The king replied, 'If anyone says anything to you, bring them to me, and they will not bother you again.' She said, 'Then let the king invoke the LORD his God to prevent the avenger of blood from adding to the destruction, so that my son will not be destroyed.' 'As surely as the LORD lives,' he said, 'not one hair of your son's head will fall to the ground.' 2 Samuel 14:1-11

It appears that Joab, who was commander of David's army, knew that David longed to see his son Absalom, 2 Samuel 13:39. He goes ahead and hires a woman from Tekoa to go to David to tell him a parable about a brother who murdered his brother. The purpose of the parable is to encourage David to sympathise with Absalom.

Like we saw earlier, when Nathan the prophet, came to David and shared a parable with him, David pronounced just judgment on the ruthless rich man, **2 Samuel 12:1-6**. The result of the woman coming to David and sharing her parable has the same result, David pronounces just judgment. David again, unknowingly pronounced judgment against himself.

The avenger of blood was the nearest relative to the murdered man, **Numbers 35:16-28 / Deuteronomy 19:11-13**. The forgiveness of such a murderer was a violation of God's commandment, a fact which the woman admitted here in volunteering to accept the guilt upon herself.

The parable the woman shared was basically a plea for God's mercy and so, David responds by declaring that mercy should be extended in the case of the offending brother.

‘Then the woman said, ‘Let your servant speak a word to my lord the king.’ ‘Speak,’ he replied. The woman said, ‘Why then have you devised a thing like this against the people of God? When the king says this, does he not convict himself, for the king has not brought back his banished son? Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But that is not what God desires; rather, he devises ways so that a banished person does not remain banished from him. ‘And now I have come to say this to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. Your servant thought, ‘I will speak to the king; perhaps he will grant his servant's request. Perhaps the king will agree to deliver his servant from the hand of the man who is trying to cut off both me and my son from God's inheritance.’ ‘And now your servant says, ‘May the word of my lord the king secure my inheritance, for my lord the king is like an angel of God in discerning good and evil. May the LORD your God be with you.’ **2 Samuel 14:12-17**

After sharing the parable with David, and hearing his judgment upon it, she asks David for permission to continue to speak to him. With permission given, the woman now has David exactly where she wants him to be, she can now apply the parable to David himself.

Cook in his commentary, paraphrases what she said to David in this way.

‘If you have done right as regards my son, how is it that you harbour such a purpose of vengeance against Absalom as to keep him, one of God's people, an outcast in a heathen country, far from the worship of the God of Israel? Upon your own showing, you are guilty of a great fault in not allowing Absalom to return’.

Those who were banished by law but not banished because of grace. Grace is the motivation by which mercy sets aside the just punishment of the law. The banished ones can be brought back only if they forsake their rebellion, otherwise, they must remain banished if they remain rebellious.

Notice the woman gives David a huge compliment, she tells him he is ‘like the angel of God in discerning good and evil’. David's ability to judge came from God and his judgments were God-like, as we shall see in the next few verses with Joab.

‘Then the king said to the woman, ‘Don't keep from me the answer to what I am going to ask you.’ ‘Let my lord the king speak,’ the woman said. The king asked, ‘Isn't the hand of Joab with you in all this?’ The woman answered, ‘As surely as you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything my lord the king says.

Yes, it was your servant Joab who instructed me to do this and who put all these words into the mouth of your servant. Your servant Joab did this to change the present situation. My lord has wisdom like that of an angel of God—he knows everything that happens in the land.’ The king said to Joab, ‘Very well, I will do it. Go, bring back the young man Absalom.’ Joab fell with his face to the ground to pay him honour, and he blessed the king. Joab said, ‘Today your servant knows that he has found favour in your eyes, my lord the king, because the king has granted his servant's request.’ Then Joab went to Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem. But the king said, ‘He must go to his own house; he must not see my face.’ So Absalom went to his own house and did not see the face of the king.’

2 Samuel 14:18-24

After hearing what the woman had to say, it appears that once again David judged wisely, for he knew that Joab was behind this whole thing. She tells him that it was Joab who planned this whole event and so, it's not surprising that she tells him he has 'the wisdom of an angel of God'.

It appears that Absalom has now gained the approval of the people but more importantly he's gained the approval of Joab, David's commander of the army. It's possible that David was aware of some kind of conspiracy in Absalom that no one else noticed but to honour the request of his nephew, Joab, David gave the order that Absalom could return to Jerusalem.

David set out the terms and conditions for Absalom to come back, which were basically restrictions on where he could live. Absalom wasn't permitted to live in the king's court, he was to live in his own house away from the royal family.

It appears that David's feelings as a father overtook his duty as a king, **Numbers 35:30-31**. As we shall see later, David allowing Absalom to return to Jerusalem was going to be a bad mistake. We know later that Joab would regret encouraging David to bring Absalom back as this would eventually lead to Joab killing Absalom because he rebelled against David, **2 Samuel 18:15**.

'In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him. Whenever he cut the hair of his head—he used to cut his hair once a year because it became too heavy for him—he would weigh it, and its weight was two hundred shekels by the royal standard. Three sons and a daughter were born to Absalom. His daughter's name was Tamar, and she became a beautiful woman.' **2 Samuel 14:25-27**

There's no doubt that being handsome in appearance runs in the family, just like his father David, **1 Samuel 16:12**, Absalom is also very handsome. Much like what happens in today's world, being handsome brings its perks, in Absalom's case it appears he used it to win people over to follow him.

His hair was a big part of his features and he only cut it once a year, the weight of his hair was over two kilograms. Absalom had three sons and it also appears that his daughter Tamar was also very beautiful in appearance. Later in **2 Samuel 18:18**, we read that Absalom had 'no sons', this implies that all of his sons died when they were very young, that's why their names are not mentioned here.

'Absalom lived two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king's face. Then Absalom sent for Joab in order to send him to the king, but Joab refused to come to him. So he sent a second time, but he refused to come. Then he said to his servants, 'Look, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire.' So Absalom's servants set the field on fire. Then Joab did go to Absalom's house, and he said to him, 'Why have your servants set my field on fire?' Absalom said to Joab, 'Look, I sent word to you and said, 'Come here so I can send you to the king to ask, 'Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me if I were still there!' Now then, I want to see the king's face, and if I am guilty of anything, let him put me to death.' So Joab went to the king and told him this. Then the king summoned Absalom, and he came in and bowed down with his face to the ground before the king. And the king kissed Absalom.' **2 Samuel 14:28-33**

Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years but never saw David, he tries twice to get Joab to come to him but this failed. He's clearly looking for some kind of attention, and so he orders his men to set fire to Joab's field.

Notice that Absalom pleads his innocence, how on earth he can plead his innocence after he ordered the murder of Ammon is beyond anyone's understanding, **2 Samuel 13:28-29**.

This shows us what kind of character he is; he was devious and ungrateful when it came to dealing with others, therefore he was unfit to be the king of Israel. David should never have trusted him and given him permission to return to Jerusalem.

It appears that Joab didn't fully understand what Absalom's long term plans were, he didn't fully understand that Absalom was planning a rebellion against David in an effort for him to become king himself. After bowing down to David, David kisses Absalom.

We can only imagine what was going through Absalom's mind at this moment, because he never wanted peace with his father, like when Jesus was betrayed with a kiss by Judas, **Luke 22:48**, David here was being betrayed by Absalom.

CHAPTER 15

In the previous chapter, we saw that David was happy to see his son Absalom again and whilst he kissed him, **2 Samuel 14:33**, he was oblivious to what Absalom was planning to do. In this chapter, and the next five chapters, we see that David's troubles and the trouble for his household are being lived out as Nathan the prophet told him earlier, **2 Samuel 12:10**.

ABSALOM'S CONSPIRACY

'In the course of time, Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him.

He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out to him, 'What town are you from?' He would answer, 'Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel.' Then Absalom would say to him, 'Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you.' And Absalom would add, 'If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that they receive justice.' Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the hearts of the people of Israel. At the end of four years, Absalom said to the king, 'Let me go to Hebron and fulfil a vow I made to the LORD. While your servant was living at Geshur in Aram, I made this vow: 'If the LORD takes me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in Hebron.' The king said to him, 'Go in peace.' So he went to Hebron. Then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, 'As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron.' Two hundred men from Jerusalem had accompanied Absalom. They had been invited as guests and went quite innocently, knowing nothing about the matter. While Absalom was offering sacrifices, he also sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, to come from Giloh, his hometown. And so the conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom's following kept on increasing.' **2 Samuel 15:1-12**

Over a period of time Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses, and fifty men, this should have sent alarm bells to David as to his intentions. This is exactly what Samuel warned Israel would happen when they chose a king, **1 Samuel 9:11**.

Absalom's intentions are absolutely clear here, he didn't want to wait until his father died to become king, he wants to take over David's reign as king right now.

Notice Absalom says, 'if only I were appointed judge in the land', his words tell us how arrogant this man really is and his words are ironic because he himself should have been judged to death for murdering Ammon, **2 Samuel 13:28-29**.

He says if he was judged then everyone would come to him for justice, his words again are the words of a man who is delusional, especially when we think about how he dealt with Joab, **2 Samuel 14:28-33**.

Absalom's dealings with people led them to be deceived into following him, the text says that 'he stole the hearts of the men.' His intentions are crystal clear, he wants to take over as king of Israel. He started his political campaign solely to win people over, especially the leaders whilst at the same time lifting himself up as the leader.

The one person he didn't think about during his whole campaign was God, he refuses to accept that God was the One who anointed David as king over Israel in the first place, 1 Samuel 16:13 / 2 Samuel 2:4 / 2 Samuel 5:3. He's more concerned about winning people over for him to be king than he is about God's will for David to be king over Israel. Notice the text says, 'at the end of four years', the K.J.V. and other ancient versions have 'forty years' instead of 'four years' but the N.I.V. and other translations are correct, it was 'four years'. This tells us that it took Absalom four years from the time he was reconciled with David to launch his political campaign against David.

Absalom's rebellion against David began in Hebron, and it was from here that he told messengers to tell the leaders of Israel that he is now reigning as king. He obviously thought that Hebron would be the best place to begin his reign, because this is where David began his reign as king of Israel, 2 Samuel 2:4 / 2 Samuel 5:3.

It's also important to note that Hebron was in the central region of the land of Judah, it appears that Absalom knew that he needs the allegiance of Judah before he could begin to reign over all of Israel.

Although we're not told why it appears that Absalom's conspiracy against David gained strength and he managed to get a large following. We can only imagine that those who were following Absalom wanted the next king of Israel to be like him and not like David. We can imagine they chose to follow him because he would give the people what the people desired and not what God desired of them.

DAVID FLEES

'A messenger came and told David, 'The hearts of the people of Israel are with Absalom.' Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, 'Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin on us and put the city to the sword.' The king's officials answered him, 'Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king chooses.' The king set out, with his entire household following him; but he left ten concubines to take care of the palace. So the king set out, with all the people following him, and they halted at the edge of the city. All his men marched past him, along with all the Kerethites and Pelethites; and all the six hundred Gittites who had accompanied him from Gath marched before the king.' 2 Samuel 15:13-18

When David got news about how Israel was now going to follow Absalom, he once again goes on the run as a fugitive. Although we're not told why he ran away, it's possible that he was simply submitting to God's earlier judgment upon him, 2 Samuel 12:10-12.

The Kerethites, the Pelethites and the Gittites were David's brave men of war who had been with him in his former days as a fugitive from Saul, 2 Samuel 16:6, and they were loyal to David, 2 Samuel 20:7 / 2 Samuel 23:8.

'The king said to Ittai the Gittite, 'Why should you come along with us? Go back and stay with King Absalom. You are a foreigner, an exile from your homeland. You came only yesterday. And today shall I make you wander about with us, when I do not know where I am going? Go back and take your people with you. May the LORD show you kindness and faithfulness.' But Ittai replied to the king, 'As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be.' David said to Ittai, 'Go ahead, march on.' So Ittai the Gittite marched on with all his men and the families that were with him. The whole countryside wept aloud as all the people passed by. The king also crossed the Kidron Valley, and all the people moved on toward the wilderness.' 2 Samuel 15:19-23

Ittai the Gittite was loyal to David and it appears that David didn't want them to go on the run with him, but Ittai, the leader of David's 600 soldiers, **2 Samuel 15:18**, pledged his life in allegiance to David.

Ittai's group also included women, children and his family, it included some powerful soldiers. It's clear that Ittai himself was a very powerful and skilled commander because later we see David placing him in command of a third of the army that defeated Absalom and his army, **2 Samuel 18:2**.

'Zadok was there, too, and all the Levites who were with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had finished leaving the city. Then the king said to Zadok, 'Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favour in the LORD's eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. But if he says, 'I am not pleased with you,' then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him.' The king also said to Zadok the priest, 'Do you understand? Go back to the city with my blessing. Take your son Ahimaaz with you, and also Abiathar's son Jonathan. You and Abiathar return with your two sons. I will wait at the fords in the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.' So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark of God back to Jerusalem and stayed there.' **2 Samuel 15:24-29**

Zadok along with all the Levites also went with David carrying the ark of the covenant. The Levites are mentioned in both 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel. Parallel accounts are also found in Kings and Chronicles and they indicate that the Levites during the reign of David fulfilled their usual purpose regarding the ark of the covenant.

Although the ark was present, it's possible that it was just being used as a lucky charm for protection as it did earlier, **1 Samuel 14:18**. David said that the ark belonged in the tabernacle in Jerusalem and he reassures Zadok and Abiathar that if God's favour was for him, he would again see the ark.

David is clearly more concerned that the will of God be done in his life than for any reassurance that would come from having possession of the ark.

'But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up. Now David had been told, 'Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.' So David prayed, 'LORD, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness.' When David arrived at the summit, where people used to worship God, Hushai the Arkite was there to meet him, his robe torn and dust on his head. David said to him, 'If you go with me, you will be a burden to me. But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, 'Your Majesty, I will be your servant; I was your father's servant in the past, but now I will be your servant,' then you can help me by frustrating Ahithophel's advice. Won't the priests Zadok and Abiathar be there with you? Tell them anything you hear in the king's palace. Their two sons, Ahimaaz son of Zadok and Jonathan son of Abiathar, are there with them. Send them to me with anything you hear.' So Hushai, David's confidant, arrived at Jerusalem as Absalom was entering the city.' **2 Samuel 15:30-37**

The mount of Olives is east of the city of Jerusalem, across the Kidron valley, and it's here that David and his men make their way across the Kidron to the Mount of Olives, **Matthew 24:3 / John 18:1**.

David's prayer that Ahithophel's advice is turned into foolishness was eventually fulfilled. Ahithophel committed treason but Hushai came with great mourning concerning the conspiracy and so, David appointed him as a spy in the presence of those who would stand before Absalom.

The rebellion of Absalom and the humiliating flight of David lets us see the best part of David's character, he truly was a man after God's own heart, **1 Samuel 13:14 / Acts 13:22**.

If we want to know how David felt about Ahithophel's actions we simply have to read **Psalm 41**. If we want to know how David felt when he fled from Absalom, we simply have to read **Psalm 3** and **Psalm 4**.

In **Psalm 27**, we read about the contrast between God's abiding goodness and the inconstancy of man. **Psalm 61** and **Psalm 62** were probably written at Mahanaim when David's anguish of mind had been appeased.

CHAPTER 16

In this chapter, and the next four chapters, we see that David's troubles and the trouble for his household are continued to be lived out as Nathan the prophet told him earlier, **2 Samuel 12:10**.

DAVID AND ZIBA

‘When David had gone a short distance beyond the summit, there was Ziba, the steward of Mephibosheth, waiting to meet him. He had a string of donkeys saddled and loaded with two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred cakes of raisins, a hundred cakes of figs and a skin of wine. The king asked Ziba, ‘Why have you brought these?’ Ziba answered, ‘The donkeys are for the king’s household to ride on, the bread and fruit are for the men to eat, and the wine is to refresh those who become exhausted in the wilderness.’ The king then asked, ‘Where is your master’s grandson?’ Ziba said to him, ‘He is staying in Jerusalem, because he thinks, ‘Today the Israelites will restore to me my grandfather’s kingdom.’ Then the king said to Ziba, ‘All that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.’ ‘I humbly bow,’ Ziba said. ‘May I find favour in your eyes, my lord the king.’ **2 Samuel 16:1-4**

Ziba was a steward of Mephibosheth and it appears he may have been plotting against Mephibosheth so he can find favour with David. He brings donkeys for David and his household to ride, along with some food to eat for his escape from Jerusalem.

When David asks where his grandfather is he tells him he’s staying in Jerusalem because ‘the Israelites will restore to me my grandfather’s kingdom’, this is clearly a lie being told by Ziba. He appears to be plotting to get back what was given to David, which is the property of Mephibosheth.

SHIMEI CURSES DAVID

‘As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul’s family came out from there. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he cursed as he came out. He pelted David and all the king’s officials with stones, though all the troops and the special guard were on David’s right and left. As he cursed, Shimei said, ‘Get out, get out, you murderer, you scoundrel! The LORD has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The LORD has given the kingdom into the hands of your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a murderer!’ Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, ‘Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head.’ But the king said, ‘What does this have to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD said to him, ‘Curse David,’ who can ask, ‘Why do you do this?’ David then said to Abishai and all his officials, ‘My son, my own flesh and blood, is trying to kill me. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the LORD has told him to. It may be that the LORD will look upon my misery and restore to me his covenant blessing instead of his curse today.’ So David and his men continued along the road while Shimei was going along the hillside opposite him, cursing as he went and throwing stones at him and showering him with dirt. The king and all the people with him arrived at their destination exhausted. And there he refreshed himself.’ **2 Samuel 16:5-14**

David approached Bahurim which was a tiny village some distance away from the Mount of Olives, this is the same place where Paltiel was told to leave his wife, Michal, **2 Samuel 3:15-16**. It’s also the same place where the sons of the priests, Jonathan and Ahimaaz were hidden in a well, during their information-gathering mission, **2 Samuel 17:18**. Shimei belonged to the family of Saul, he is possibly Cush the Benjamite, who is described in **Psalms 7**. Here we read about him expressing his anger against David because of all the troubles which happened to the house of Saul.

Shimei tells David he is being paid back by God for all the blood he shed in the house of Saul, there's no doubt that the Benjamites blamed David for the death of Saul and his sons on Mount Gilboa, **1 Samuel 31:1-6**, Abner, **2 Samuel 3:22-39**, Ishbosheth, **2 Samuel 4:5-12**, and particularly, the seven descendants of Saul whom David handed over to the Gibeonites, **2 Samuel 21:1-14**.

He appears to be speaking on behalf of many who were still loyal to Saul, which tells us that those who were loyal to Saul were still loyal to him many years after his death.

This is one reason why God didn't want Israel to have a physical king in the first place because when that king dies, there will always be those who remain loyal to him which in turn would cause trouble for the next king.

He tells David to get out and calls him a murderer, some versions use the words, 'man of blood', which is the same description which God used to describe David, **1 Chronicles 22:8**.

Abishai then speaks to David concerning Shimei and calls him a 'dead dog', it is clear he isn't very happy with what is being said to David and he wants David to give him permission to punish Shimei.

Notice David's reaction, he says to leave him alone, it has nothing to do with anyone else except him. He is perhaps leaving Shimei for God to deal with, **Deuteronomy 32:35**, or more likely David was still thinking that this was happening because of what Nathan told him earlier, **2 Samuel 12:10**. In other words, he still believes he's reaping what he sowed when he ordered the murder of Uriah, **2 Samuel 11:14-15**.

THE ADVICE OF AHITHOPHEL AND HUSHAI

'Meanwhile, Absalom and all the men of Israel came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel was with him. Then Hushai the Arkite, David's confidant, went to Absalom and said to him, 'Long live the king! Long live the king!' Absalom said to Hushai, 'So this is the love you show your friend? If he's your friend, why didn't you go with him?' Hushai said to Absalom, 'No, the one chosen by the LORD, by these people, and by all the men of Israel—his I will be, and I will remain with him. Furthermore, whom should I serve? Should I not serve the son? Just as I served your father, so I will serve you.' Absalom said to Ahithophel, 'Give us your advice. What should we do?' Ahithophel answered, 'Sleep with your father's concubines whom he left to take care of the palace. Then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself obnoxious to your father, and the hands of everyone with you will be more resolute.' So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he slept with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. Now in those days the advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God. That was how both David and Absalom regarded all of Ahithophel's advice.' **2 Samuel 16:15-23**

The reason why Hushai says, 'long live the king!' to Absalom was simply to try again Absalom's favour and to bring about the downfall of Absalom. When Absalom asks for Ahithophel's advice, Ahithophel tells him to sleep with his father's concubines.

If Absalom does this he will achieve two things, first of all, if he sleeps with David's concubines, he would be publicly declaring that he now owns everything which once belonged to David.

Secondly, if he sleeps with David's concubines, he would be publicly declaring that there would be no reconciliation between him and David.

Absalom took Ahithophel's advice and notice that they pitched a tent for Absalom, they pitched it on the roof. This would be the roof of the palace, this is in a very open place, in full view of everyone. This tent was called the 'wedding tent', **Psalm 19:5 / Joel 2:16**. Absalom's plan is very clear, he wanted to publicly humiliate David.

There appears to be no depths of sin to which Absalom won't go, here is a man who murdered his brother for the rape of a half-sister, **2 Samuel 13:1 / 2 Samuel 13:28-29**, and now he himself is guilty on ten counts of incest, which was a capital offence, **Leviticus 20:11 / 1 Corinthians 5:1**.

It's also important to note that what Absalom did here was exactly what the prophet Nathan said to David would happen because of David's sin with Bathsheba, **2 Samuel 12:11**.

Notice that 'the advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God.' Coffman in his commentary says the following concerning these last two verses.

'It is plain enough that this is not an expression of divine approval of Ahithophel's counsel, but a statement of the way it was received in those days, particularly a report of the way in which David and Absalom received it.

Actually, Ahithophel's counsel, from the worldly viewpoint was indeed wise, but in reality, it was the counsel of Satan himself as it regarded Absalom's outrageous incest. In that particular, Ahithophel's cursed counsel was an oracle of the Devil, not of God.

CHAPTER 17

In this chapter, and the next three chapters, we see that David's troubles and the trouble for his household are continued to be lived out as Nathan the prophet told him earlier, **2 Samuel 12:10**.

After all the evil acts that Absalom has done over the years, in his rebellion against his father, David, in this chapter, we read the events building up to Absalom's death.

'Ahithophel said to Absalom, 'I would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. I would attack him while he is weary and weak. I would strike him with terror, and then all the people with him will flee. I would strike down only the king and bring all the people back to you. The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all the people will be unharmed.' This plan seemed good to Absalom and to all the elders of Israel. But Absalom said, 'Summon also Hushai the Arkite, so we can hear what he has to say as well.' When Hushai came to him, Absalom said, 'Ahithophel has given this advice. Should we do what he says? If not, give us your opinion.' Hushai replied to Absalom, 'The advice Ahithophel has given is not good this time. You know your father and his men; they are fighters, and as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Besides, your father is an experienced fighter; he will not spend the night with the troops. Even now, he is hidden in a cave or some other place. If he should attack your troops first, whoever hears about it will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.' Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave. 'So I advise you: Let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba—as numerous as the sand on the seashore—be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle. Then we will attack him wherever he may be found, and we will fall on him as dew settles on the ground. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive. If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not so much as a pebble is left.' Absalom and all the men of Israel said, 'The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel.' For the LORD had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.' **2 Samuel 17:1-14**

It appears that Ahithophel's advice to Absalom to defeat David and his men was far too ambitious, and so Absalom goes to Hushai for his opinion. Hushai then takes this moment to turn the advice of Ahithophel against Absalom.

He then suggests that David's men were far too smart when it comes to war because David and his men would be expecting Absalom and his men to come to them.

The stakes were high here for Absalom because if he lost this battle, then everyone would turn against him and so, Hushai advises Absalom to wait until he got a great army behind him so he would have enough men to defeat David and his men. Absalom decided to take this advice, which as we shall read in a moment was going to lead to his death.

Notice Absalom and his men say, ‘for the LORD had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.’ Ahithophel’s plan was far too ambitious and far from being perfect, and Hushai had exposed some flaws in his plan, but for Absalom, it was the best option he had, **Job 5:13**.

Why did Absalom reject the advice that could have given him the victory? Because it was simply God’s will that he would do so. The advice of Hushai was part of the chain of events that caused it, and David’s earlier prayer was another part, **2 Samuel 15:31**.

‘Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, ‘Ahithophel has advised Absalom and the elders of Israel to do such and such, but I have advised them to do so and so. Now send a message at once and tell David, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords in the wilderness; cross over without fail, or the king and all the people with him will be swallowed up.’ Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En Rogel. A female servant was to go and inform them, and they were to go and tell King David, for they could not risk being seen entering the city. But a young man saw them and told Absalom. So the two of them left at once and went to the house of a man in Bahurim. He had a well in his courtyard, and they climbed down into it. His wife took a covering and spread it out over the opening of the well and scattered grain over it. No one knew anything about it. When Absalom’s men came to the woman at the house, they asked, ‘Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?’ The woman answered them, ‘They crossed over the brook.’ The men searched but found no one, so they returned to Jerusalem. After they had gone, the two climbed out of the well and went to inform King David. They said to him, ‘Set out and cross the river at once; Ahithophel has advised such and such against you.’ So David and all the people with him set out and crossed the Jordan. By daybreak, no one was left who had not crossed the Jordan. When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father’s tomb.’ **2 Samuel 17:15-23**

Hushai warns David not to stay at the night at the fords, it appears that Hushai isn’t aware if Absalom took his advice or the advice of Ahithophel. It also appears that David has secret informants who were keeping him up to date with what Absalom was doing.

Notice that messengers were sent to David but they were kept in hiding by some of those who lived in Jerusalem. This tells us that not everyone favoured Absalom.

David needed time to gather together all those who weren’t a part of Absalom’s rebellion and it’s clear that David had a greater following than Absalom and so because of the delay, this fell to David’s advantage.

We can imagine how much effort, organisation and time it must have taken David to move twelve thousand men with all their supplies and equipment across the Jordan, **Psalms 42:6**. The time and effort were necessary for David and his men to go to war against Absalom and his men.

When Ahithophel came to realise that Hushai’s advice would lead to the victory of David over Absalom, he knew that David would punish him for his betrayal, this is why he commits suicide by hanging himself.

Ahithophel is one of four people who are recorded in the Scriptures to have committed suicide, Judas Iscariot, **Matthew 27:5**, Zimri, **1 Kings 16:18**, and King Saul, **1 Samuel 31:5**.

Some believe because Ahithophel was buried in the family tomb, this meant that the Jews of that period accepted suicide as much as any other form of death, but no one can be sure if that’s what they believed or not.

‘David went to Mahanaim, and Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel. Absalom had appointed Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Amasa was the son of Jether, an Ishmaelite who had married Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruiah the mother of Joab. The Israelites and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead. When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Makir son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim brought bedding and bowls and articles of pottery. They also brought wheat and barley, flour and roasted grain, beans and lentils, honey and curds, sheep, and cheese from cows’ milk for David and his people to eat. For they said, ‘The people have become exhausted and hungry and thirsty in the wilderness.’ **2 Samuel 17:24-29**

As soon as news about what Absalom was doing, David went to Mahanaim, it appears that a large number of people were loyal to David and wanted to support him in his war against Absalom.

David then gets his men to gather east of the Jordan because he knows that Absalom would follow him and attack. Because of the foolish decision of Absalom, a bloody civil war was now about to happen which would involve everyone.

Both Abigail and Zeruiah were David's sisters, daughters of Jesse, **1 Chronicles 2:16-17**, which possibly means that Nahash was Jesse's wife. If Zeruiah and Abigail were David's sisters only by the mother, then Nahash might possibly be the name of her first husband.

All of the men mentioned here were powerful warriors of Israel who graciously supplied David's men with much-needed provisions. Shobi, the Ammonite's father was possibly the king of the Ammonites, who David may have possibly appointed him as governor of Ammon after he took Rabbah, **2 Samuel 12:29**.

Ammiel who was from Lo Debar was the son of Ahithophel and the father of Bathsheba, which makes Machir Bathsheba's brother. Barzillai the Gileadite was from Rogelim, he was an ancestor through a daughter of a family of priests, who were called after him, 'Sons of Barzillai'. They returned from the Babylonian captivity with Ezra, **Ezra 2:61-63 / Nehemiah 7:63**.

CHAPTER 18

In this chapter, and the next two chapters, we see that David's troubles and the trouble for his household are continued to be lived out as Nathan the prophet told him earlier, **2 Samuel 12:10**.

After all the evil acts that Absalom had done over the years, in his rebellion against his father, David, in this chapter, we read Absalom's death.

'David mustered the men who were with him and appointed over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. David sent out his troops, a third under the command of Joab, a third under Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. The king told the troops, 'I myself will surely march out with you.' But the men said, 'You must not go out; if we are forced to flee, they won't care about us. Even if half of us die, they won't care; but you are worth ten thousand of us. It would be better now for you to give us support from the city.' The king answered, 'I will do whatever seems best to you.' So the king stood beside the gate while all his men marched out in units of hundreds and of thousands. The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, 'Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.' And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.' **2 Samuel 18:1-5**

As David and his men are preparing to go to war against Absalom and his men, David divides his men into three groups, one third will be under the command of Joab, another third will be under the command of Abishai and another third will be under the command of Ittai.

This practice of dividing an army into three was fairly common in the Old Testament, **Judges 7:16 / Judges 9:43 / 1 Samuel 11:11 / 1 Samuel 13:17 / 2 Kings 9:5-6**.

However, there was also another good reason for dividing the army into three here, Ittai had brought a group of foreigners with him, and they would have been very reluctant to fight under an Israelite commander, so David placed the foreigners under Ittai and the Israelite troops under his nephews Joab and Abishai.

David was keen to go and fight with his men but his men advised him not to, it's obvious that David's men thought the cause of the nation as a whole was greater than David himself. There's no question that they were loyal to David

as God's anointed king and they understand that Absalom's rebellion wasn't just against his father, David but against the nation of Israel as a whole.

If David had died on the battlefield, then everyone in Israel would have come to the conclusion that God wasn't with him anymore. The commanders of David's army knew that this war was going to be a bloody war, they weren't just fighting for David, they were fighting for the future of Israel as a whole.

David is well aware of this and so commands Joab, Abishai and Ittai to be gentle with his son Absalom after they have won the war. In other words, David wanted to spare Absalom's life.

'David's army marched out of the city to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. There Israel's troops were routed by David's men, and the casualties that day were great—twenty thousand men. The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest swallowed up more men that day than the sword.' 2 Samuel 18:6-8

The battle took place in the forest of Ephraim, **Judges 12:1-6**, although this place is uncertain in its location. Some believe its located on the east side of the Jordan because that's where Absalom and his men crossed over earlier, **2 Samuel 17:24**, and David's men returned to Mahanaim that day after the battle ended and that was east of Jordan, **2 Samuel 17:27**.

The text doesn't tell us who the twenty-thousand were, it doesn't say whether the casualties were from David's men or Absalom's men or both. We can presume that most of the casualties were probably from Absalom's side because as we shall see in a moment, Absalom flees for his life.

'The forest swallowed up more men than the sword' probably refers to the many cliffs and large rocks which were located in the forest where men would have slipped or fallen to their death.

ABSALOM'S DEATH

'Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's hair got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in mid-air, while the mule he was riding kept on going. When one of the men saw what had happened, he told Joab, 'I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree.' Joab said to the man who had told him this, 'What! You saw him? Why didn't you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have had to give you ten shekels of silver and a warrior's belt.' But the man replied, 'Even if a thousand shekels were weighed out into my hands, I would not lay a hand on the king's son. In our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, 'Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.' And if I had put my life in jeopardy—and nothing is hidden from the king—you would have kept your distance from me.' Joab said, 'I'm not going to wait like this for you.' So he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom's heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree. And ten of Joab's armor-bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him and killed him.' 2 Samuel 18:9-15

When Absalom meets David's men accidentally, his only choice was to get away from them in order to save his life, sadly, the only form of transport was a mule, and as he passed under a tree, his hair got caught in a tree, leaving him hanging there, remember he had very long hair, **1 Samuel 14:25-26**.

One of David's men found Absalom hanging there and respected David's earlier words to spare his life, **2 Samuel 18:4**. He then goes on to report this to Joab, it's possible that Joab to remembered the bad advice he gave David earlier when Absalom ran away after killing Ammon, **2 Samuel 14:1-22**.

This time Joab wasn't going to give Absalom another chance to rebel against his father, David, so, he takes three javelins and plunged them into Absalom's heart whilst he was still alive. Ten of Joab's armour-bearers also joined in to make sure Absalom was dead.

‘Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped pursuing Israel, for Joab halted them. They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap of rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes. During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the King’s Valley as a monument to himself, for he thought, ‘I have no son to carry on the memory of my name.’ He named the pillar after himself, and it is called Absalom’s Monument to this day.’ 2 Samuel 18:16-18

Because Joab, sounded the trumpet, this tells us that he was in charge of all three groups of David’s army. After the sounding of the trumpet which announced that Joab had won the victory, they threw Absalom’s body into a big pit in the forest and placed large rocks over him.

The King’s Valley is where Absalom had built his own monument because this was where his three sons died, 2 Samuel 14:27, it’s also the place where Abram met with Melchizedek, Genesis 14:17.

DAVID MOURNS

‘Now Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, ‘Let me run and take the news to the king that the LORD has vindicated him by delivering him from the hand of his enemies.’ ‘You are not the one to take the news today,’ Joab told him. ‘You may take the news another time, but you must not do so today, because the king’s son is dead.’ Then Joab said to a Cushite, ‘Go, tell the king what you have seen.’ The Cushite bowed down before Joab and ran off. Ahimaaz son of Zadok again said to Joab, ‘Come what may, please let me run behind the Cushite.’ But Joab replied, ‘My son, why do you want to go? You don’t have any news that will bring you a reward.’ He said, ‘Come what may, I want to run.’ So Joab said, ‘Run!’ Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and outran the Cushite. While David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked out, he saw a man running alone. The watchman called out to the king and reported it. The king said, ‘If he is alone, he must have good news.’ And the runner came closer and closer. Then the watchman saw another runner, and he called down to the gatekeeper, ‘Look, another man running alone!’ The king said, ‘He must be bringing good news, too.’ The watchman said, ‘It seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok.’ ‘He’s a good man,’ the king said. ‘He comes with good news.’ Then Ahimaaz called out to the king, ‘All is well!’ He bowed down before the king with his face to the ground and said, ‘Praise be to the LORD your God! He has delivered up those who lifted their hands against my lord the king.’ The king asked, ‘Is the young man Absalom safe?’ Ahimaaz answered, ‘I saw great confusion just as Joab was about to send the king’s servant and me, your servant, but I don’t know what it was.’ The king said, ‘Stand aside and wait here.’ So he stepped aside and stood there. Then the Cushite arrived and said, ‘My lord the king, hear the good news! The LORD has vindicated you today by delivering you from the hand of all who rose up against you.’ The king asked the Cushite, ‘Is the young man Absalom safe?’ The Cushite replied, ‘May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man.’ The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: ‘O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!’ 2 Samuel 18:19-33

David had earlier executed the messenger who brought him the news of Saul’s death, 2 Samuel 1:15-16, he also executed the ones who brought him the news of the death of Ishbosheth, 2 Samuel 4:5-12, it appears that Joab wanted to spare Ahimaaz the danger he would encounter if he brought David the news of the death of his son Absalom. Joab decides to send a Cushite, with the news to David which Joab knew would break David’s heart. The race was on to get to David first, when Ahimaaz was asked by David about his son, he deliberately lies, because Joab had plainly told him that Absalom was dead, the reason for him lying is simply, he knew that David might kill him for bringing this kind of news like he did with others before.

When the Cushite arrives, he tells David the truth, and the news of David’s son being dead just devastated him. David wants to be alone to cry and on his way, he says, ‘my son, my son Absalom!’

This is truly a sad moment in the life of David, and it’s no wonder he personally feels responsible for Absalom’s death and feels it should be him who had died because he was the one who ordered the murder of Uriah and he knew that this was a part of God’s punishment, 1 Samuel 12:10 / Psalm 38 / Psalm 40.

CHAPTER 19

In this chapter, and the next chapter, we see that David's troubles and the trouble for his household are continued to be lived out as Nathan the prophet told him earlier, **2 Samuel 12:10**.

After hearing the devastating news about his son, Absalom's death, David is struggling to come to terms with his death. Sadly in doing so, he was neglecting his men who should have been celebrating after winning the war against Absalom and his men, **2 Samuel 18:16-18**, but were becoming discouraged.

'Joab was told, 'The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.' And for the whole army the victory that day was turned into mourning because on that day the troops heard it said, 'The king is grieving for his son.' The men stole into the city that day as men steal in who are ashamed when they flee from battle. The king covered his face and cried aloud, 'O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!' Then Joab went into the house to the king and said, 'Today you have humiliated all your men, who have just saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and the lives of your wives and concubines. You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that the commanders and their men mean nothing to you. I see that you would be pleased if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead. Now go out and encourage your men. I swear by the LORD that if you don't go out, not a man will be left with you by nightfall. This will be worse for you than all the calamities that have come on you from your youth till now.' So the king got up and took his seat in the gateway. When the men were told, 'The king is sitting in the gateway,' they all came before him. Meanwhile, the Israelites had fled to their homes.' **2 Samuel 19:1-8**

When Joab was informed that David was still crying and mourning over the death of his son, Absalom, **2 Samuel 18:32-33**, he was aware that David's men were becoming very discouraged.

A day which should have been filled with celebrations turned into a day of mourning. These brave men who risked their lives for their king should have been shown some kind of appreciation by David, but when they arrived back from the war, they found David crying.

This led David's men to believe that he wasn't very happy with them and as a result, they entered the city feeling ashamed of themselves. However, they shouldn't have felt ashamed of themselves, they should have been ashamed of their king.

It's clear that David's grief over Absalom was sinful because God had warned Samuel earlier that he shouldn't grieve over Saul for too long because God rejected Saul as king, **1 Samuel 16:1**. We also remember when the sons of Aaron the High Priest were killed by God because of their disobedience, Moses tells Aaron not to mourn their loss, **Leviticus 10:6**.

Joab was absolutely right when he told David he was bringing shame on his men. He was basically telling David, that if his son's death is more important than the victory they've just one, this would only cause another rebellion. If Joab didn't kill Absalom, **2 Samuel 18:14-15**, and he was allowed to live, Joab knew he would go on to cause another rebellion.

DAVID RETURNS TO JERUSALEM

'Throughout the tribes of Israel, all the people were arguing among themselves, saying, 'The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies; he is the one who rescued us from the hand of the Philistines. But now he has fled the country to escape from Absalom; and Absalom, whom we anointed to rule over us, has died in battle. So why do you say nothing about bringing the king back?' King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests: 'Ask the elders of Judah, 'Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace, since what is being said throughout Israel has reached the king at his quarters? You are my relatives, my own flesh and blood. So why should you be the

last to bring back the king?’ And say to Amasa, ‘Are you not my own flesh and blood? May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if you are not the commander of my army for life in place of Joab.’ He won over the hearts of the men of Judah so that they were all of one mind. They sent word to the king, ‘Return, you and all your men.’ Then the king returned and went as far as the Jordan. Now the men of Judah had come to Gilgal to go out and meet the king and bring him across the Jordan.’ 2 Samuel 19:9-15

Because of David’s lack of leadership, there was confusion, it’s possible they were blaming one another for all the trouble which had started in Israel, which should have never had started in the first place. Because of all the confusion, David sends word to Zadok and Abiathar that they should bring him back to Jerusalem in a triumphant fashion.

It’s clear that David was still upset with Joab after he rebuked him, and so David decides, to remove Joab as supreme commander of the army, and as one of the incentives offered to Judah for their re-joining David’s cause, he promised that the incompetent traitor-general Amasa would be appointed supreme commander in Joab’s place.

This was a crazy move by David because Joab, even though he had his faults were clearly loyal to David, whereas Amasa was David’s enemy. It may also have been a political move by David so that he could bring all those who had earlier given their allegiance to Absalom, back to David because he had forgiven them all for the sake of Israel as a whole.

Whatever the reason was David wanted to provide an incentive to Judah, he wanted to punish Joab for killing Absalom and he wanted to punish Joab for his stern rebuke.

‘Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, hurried down with the men of Judah to meet King David. With him were a thousand Benjamites, along with Ziba, the steward of Saul’s household, and his fifteen sons and twenty servants. They rushed to the Jordan, where the king was. They crossed at the ford to take the king’s household over and to do whatever he wished. When Shimei son of Gera crossed the Jordan, he fell prostrate before the king and said to him, ‘May my lord not hold me guilty. Do not remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. May the king put it out of his mind. For I your servant know that I have sinned, but today I have come here as the first from the tribes of Joseph to come down and meet my lord the king.’ Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said, ‘Shouldn’t Shimei be put to death for this? He cursed the LORD’s anointed.’ David replied, ‘What does this have to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? What right do you have to interfere? Should anyone be put to death in Israel today? Don’t I know that today I am king over Israel?’ So the king said to Shimei, ‘You shall not die.’ And the king promised him on oath. Mephibosheth, Saul’s grandson, also went down to meet the king. He had not taken care of his feet or trimmed his moustache or washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he returned safely. When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king asked him, ‘Why didn’t you go with me, Mephibosheth?’ He said, ‘My lord the king, since I your servant am lame, I said, ‘I will have my donkey saddled and will ride on it, so I can go with the king.’ But Ziba my servant betrayed me. And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king. My lord the king is like an angel of God; so do whatever you wish. All my grandfather’s descendants deserved nothing but death from my lord the king, but you gave your servant a place among those who eat at your table. So what right do I have to make any more appeals to the king?’ The king said to him, ‘Why say more? I order you and Ziba to divide the land.’ Mephibosheth said to the king, ‘Let him take everything, now that my lord the king has returned home safely.’ Barzillai the Gileadite also came down from Rogelim to cross the Jordan with the king and to send him on his way from there. Now Barzillai was very old, eighty years of age. He had provided for the king during his stay in Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man. The king said to Barzillai, ‘Cross over with me and stay with me in Jerusalem, and I will provide for you.’ But Barzillai answered the king, ‘How many more years will I live, that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king? I am now eighty years old. Can I tell the difference between what is enjoyable and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats and drinks? Can I still hear the voices of male and female singers? Why should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? Your servant will cross over the Jordan with the king for a short distance, but why should the king reward me in this way? Let your servant return, that I may die in my own town near the tomb of my father and mother. But here is your servant Kimham. Let him cross over with my lord the king. Do for him whatever you wish.’ The king said, ‘Kimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him whatever you wish. And anything you desire from me I will do for you.’ So all the people crossed the Jordan, and then the king crossed over. The king kissed Barzillai and bid him farewell, and Barzillai returned to his home.’ 2 Samuel 19:16-39

Shimei is clearly in a hurry to see David and when he meets him, he tells David, he has come first of all to ‘the house of Joseph’, which is a reference to the ten northern tribes of Israel, **Amos 5:6**.

Coffman says, ‘the hatred and jealousy between Judah and northern Israel existed long before the formal division of the Chosen People in the times following the death of Solomon into the separate kingdoms of Judah and Israel. In fact, the rebellion of Absalom was probably fuelled by their fierce jealousy of Judah over the influence of the northern tribes with David’.

Shimei begs for forgiveness because of the way he cursed David earlier, **2 Samuel 16:5-8**, a crime punishable by death, **1 Samuel 24:6 / 1 Samuel 24:10 / 1 Samuel 26:9**. As he is begging for forgiveness, Abishai wanted to kill him because of the way he treated David.

David asks him, ‘what does this have to do with him?’ This was David’s way of saying, ‘get behind me Satan’, **Matthew 16:23**. David once again shows mercy to Shimei and allowed him to live because he knows he would have more support from Shimei.

It should be noted that as long as David was alive he stuck to his word and never put Shimei to death. However later, before he died, he told his son Solomon to take vengeance on Shimei, **1 Kings 2:8-9 / 1 Kings 2:36-46**.

When David came back to Jerusalem he was informed that Ziba had earlier lied concerning Mephibosheth’s loyalty, **2 Samuel 16:1-4**. After being questioned by David, Mephibosheth who is the son of Jonathan and the grandson of Saul showed his humbleness and loyalty to David.

Barzillai, who was eighty-year-old man also showed his loyalty to David because he made sure David got across the Jordan to Mahanaim safely. He was offered a place to live in David’s court but because of his age, he declined the offer and asked if his son, Kimham, could go instead. David accepts his offer and takes his son with him, then they departed the company.

‘When the king crossed over to Gilgal, Kimham crossed with him. All the troops of Judah and half the troops of Israel had taken the king over. Soon all the men of Israel were coming to the king and saying to him, ‘Why did our brothers, the men of Judah, steal the king away and bring him and his household across the Jordan, together with all his men?’ All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, ‘We did this because the king is closely related to us. Why are you angry about it? Have we eaten any of the king’s provisions? Have we taken anything for ourselves?’ Then the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, ‘We have ten shares in the king; so we have a greater claim on David than you have. Why then do you treat us with contempt? Weren’t we the first to speak of bringing back our king?’ But the men of Judah pressed their claims even more forcefully than the men of Israel.’ **2 Samuel 19:40-43**

When David returned to Jerusalem it should have been a time of rejoicing, but it ended up being a time of confusion and division as Northern and Southern Israel, **Judges 8:1-3 / Judges 12:1-6**, become arguing about who had the biggest stake with David as their king.

The division between Judah and Israel had started and would eventually play out throughout the rest of David’s life and his grandson’s lives.

The northern tribes of Israel complained that the tribe of Judah had stolen away from the king, we can understand their argument because David decided to make his capital city in the land of Judah, **2 Samuel 5:7-9**.

It appears in David’s efforts to produce unity, all he managed to achieve was more division, which eventually will lead to the division of the tribes.

Here again, we’re reminded as to why God never wanted an earthly king to rule Israel as a nation, this is a lesson we must all learn from, **1 Corinthians 10:11 / Romans 15:4**.

CHAPTER 20

In this chapter, and the previous four chapters, we see that David's troubles and the trouble for his household are continued to be lived out as Nathan the prophet told him earlier, 2 Samuel 12:10.

SHEBA REBELS AGAINST DAVID

‘Now a troublemaker named Sheba son of Bikri, a Benjamite, happened to be there. He sounded the trumpet and shouted, ‘We have no share in David, no part in Jesse’s son! Every man to his tent, Israel!’ So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bikri. But the men of Judah stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem. When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines he had left to take care of the palace and put them in a house under guard. He provided for them but had no sexual relations with them. They were kept in confinement till the day of their death, living as widows. Then the king said to Amasa, ‘Summon the men of Judah to come to me within three days and be here yourself.’ 2 Samuel 20:1-4

Not long after the death and fall of Absalom and his men, 2 Samuel 18:9-15, another rebellion begins to rise against David and his household. This rebellion is led by Sheba and it's possible he was trying to take advantage of the complaints the northern tribes made, 2 Samuel 19:40-43.

He openly declared that the Benjamites have no share in David, Jesse's son. The good news for David is that his cry for war wasn't going to last very long, 1 Kings 12:16. He appears to have gathered a large number of men behind him, which tells us the men of Judah didn't really appease the complaints against the northern tribes, 2 Samuel 19:40-43.

Notice that David returned to Jerusalem and provided for his concubines all the days of their lives, but he didn't have any kind of sexual relations with them. This is because they had become defiled after Absalom had openly slept with them, 2 Samuel 16:22.

Amasa was a nephew of David, the son of David's sister Abigail, and his father was an Ishmaelite, 1 Chronicles 2:13-17. He was the former rebel commander of Absalom's army, 2 Samuel 17:25.

‘But when Amasa went to summon Judah, he took longer than the time the king had set for him. David said to Abishai, ‘Now Sheba son of Bikri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your master's men and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities and escape from us.’ So Joab's men and the Kerethites and Pelethites and all the mighty warriors went out under the command of Abishai. They marched out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bikri.’ 2 Samuel 20:5-7

For some reason Amasa had been delayed, this is possibly because he knew Sheba and wanted to give him time to escape or gather an army to fight against those who were loyal to David.

There are other possibilities for his delay, maybe he didn't think it was necessary to hurry up, maybe he didn't know how to summon the troops quickly, or maybe the men of Judah had lost confidence in him.

Whatever the reason, David was still reluctant to place Joab in command, and so he summoned Abishai, who quickly gathered an army and sent him after Sheba.

‘While they were at the great rock in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Joab was wearing his military tunic and strapped over it at his waist was a belt with a dagger in its sheath. As he stepped forward, it dropped out of its sheath. Joab said to Amasa, ‘How are you, my brother?’ Then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. Amasa was not on his guard against the dagger in Joab's hand, and Joab plunged it into his belly, and his intestines spilled out on the ground. Without being stabbed again, Amasa died. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bikri. One of Joab's men stood beside Amasa and said, ‘Whoever favours Joab, and whoever is for

David, let him follow Joab!’ Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the middle of the road, and the man saw that all the troops came to a halt there. When he realized that everyone who came up to Amasa stopped, he dragged him from the road into a field and threw a garment over him. After Amasa had been removed from the road, everyone went on with Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bikri.’ 2 Samuel 20:8-13

Because Joab had been relegated when Amasa was appointed as the commander of David’s army, Joab appears to have an opportunity to get rid of Amasa. Joab pretends to be Amasa’s friend and so whilst he’s on his way to meet those who were rebelling, he murders Amasa in the middle of the road, 2 Samuel 3:27.

However, by doing so, Amasa’s dead body lying in the middle of the road became an obstacle for the soldiers who were chasing Sheba. As soon as Amasa’s body is removed from the road, everyone then followed the command of Joab.

‘Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel Beth Maakah and through the entire region of the Bikrites, who gathered together and followed him. All the troops with Joab came and besieged Sheba in Abel Beth Maakah. They built a siege ramp up to the city, and it stood against the outer fortifications. While they were battering the wall to bring it down, a wise woman called from the city, ‘Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come here so I can speak to him.’ He went toward her, and she asked, ‘Are you Joab?’ ‘I am,’ he answered. She said, ‘Listen to what your servant has to say.’ ‘I’m listening,’ he said. She continued, ‘Long ago they used to say, ‘Get your answer at Abel,’ and that settled it. We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the LORD’s inheritance?’ ‘Far be it from me!’ Joab replied, ‘Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy! That is not the case. A man named Sheba son of Bikri, from the hill country of Ephraim, has lifted up his hand against the king, against David. Hand over this one man, and I’ll withdraw from the city.’ The woman said to Joab, ‘His head will be thrown to you from the wall.’ Then the woman went to all the people with her wise advice, and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bikri and threw it to Joab. So he sounded the trumpet, and his men dispersed from the city, each returning to his home. And Joab went back to the king in Jerusalem.’ 2 Samuel 20:14-22

Sheba passed through Beth Maakah, which was a fortified city, near Dan in the land of the Naphtali, in the north of Palestine. It appears that Sheba is running as far north as mobile and as far away as he can from Joab and his army. He appears to be heading towards his father, Bichri who was the father of Sheba, 2 Samuel 20:1.

When Joab’s men reached the city, a wise woman came forward to negotiate terms of peace but there was only one thing which would meet the requirements of Joab and that was the head of Sheba. It was left to the men of Beth Maakah to cut off Sheba’s head and throw it over the wall to Joab.

DAVID’S OFFICIALS

‘Joab was over Israel’s entire army; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; Adoniram was in charge of forced labour; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; Sheva was secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; and Ira the Jairite was David’s priest.’ 2 Samuel 20:23-26

Here we have a list of David’s key people who were in government, 2 Samuel 8:16-18 / 1 Chronicles 18:14-17. It’s with this list that the writer closes the history of David’s reign. The remaining four chapters of 2 Samuel form a kind of appendix.

This list belongs to a later period in David’s reign because David’s use of forced labour didn’t take place in the first part of his reign but the latter part of it.

This use of forced labour by David was adopted by his son Solomon and greatly developed by him, sadly, it would be because of this forced labour that later would cause another rebellion against Solomon’s son, Rehoboam.

Although Joab was loyal to David and a great military commander of his men, David never forgave Joab for the murder of Absalom, Abner and Amasa, and near the end of his life, David left orders for his son Solomon to kill Joab, 1 Kings 2:5-6.

CHAPTER 21

The writer of 2 Samuel closes the history of David's reign in 2 Samuel 20:23-26, and the remaining four chapters of 2 Samuel form a kind of appendix. We read about a series of events, seven of them, of which took place whilst David was still reigning as king but they aren't necessarily in chronological order.

THE GIBEONITES AVENGED

'During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought the face of the LORD. The LORD said, 'It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death.' The king summoned the Gibeonites and spoke to them. (Now the Gibeonites were not a part of Israel but were survivors of the Amorites; the Israelites had sworn to spare them, but Saul in his zeal for Israel and Judah had tried to annihilate them.) David asked the Gibeonites, 'What shall I do for you? How shall I make atonement so that you will bless the LORD's inheritance?' The Gibeonites answered him, 'We have no right to demand silver or gold from Saul or his family, nor do we have the right to put anyone in Israel to death.' 'What do you want me to do for you?' David asked. They answered the king, 'As for the man who destroyed us and plotted against us so that we have been decimated and have no place anywhere in Israel, let seven of his male descendants be given to us to be killed and their bodies exposed before the LORD at Gibeah of Saul—the LORD's chosen one.' So the king said, 'I will give them to you.' The king spared Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the oath before the LORD between David and Jonathan son of Saul. But the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Aiah's daughter Rizpah, whom she had borne to Saul, together with the five sons of Saul's daughter Merab, whom she had borne to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholahite. He handed them over to the Gibeonites, who killed them and exposed their bodies on a hill before the LORD. All seven of them fell together; they were put to death during the first days of the harvest, just as the barley harvest was beginning. Rizpah daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it out for herself on a rock. From the beginning of the harvest till the rain poured down from the heavens on the bodies, she did not let the birds touch them by day or the wild animals by night. When David was told what Aiah's daughter Rizpah, Saul's concubine, had done, he went and took the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from the citizens of Jabesh Gilead. (They had stolen their bodies from the public square at Beth Shan, where the Philistines had hung them after they struck Saul down on Gilboa.) David brought the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from there, and the bones of those who had been killed and exposed were gathered up. They buried the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan in the tomb of Saul's father Kish, at Zela in Benjamin, and did everything the king commanded. After that, God answered prayer in behalf of the land.' 2 Samuel 21:1-14

This chapter begins by telling us that there was a famine for three years in a row as a result of Saul's overzealous actions in putting the Gibeonites to death. He basically tried to wipe out the whole race of the Gibeonites, thinking that God's instructions to Israel regarding their putting the nations of Canaan to death might still be implemented, Joshua 9:24.

However, God's commandment in that instance was to Joshua, not to Saul. It was far too late for Israel to attempt to do that. Saul also ignored a very important fact and that was the Israelites had made a solemn covenant with the Gibeonites that they wouldn't be harmed and that the Gibeonites would be slaves to Israel, Joshua 9:22. In other words, Saul sinned because he broke that covenant agreement with the Gibeonites.

David then calls the Gibeonites and makes the same mistake that Joshua and the elders did, in that they didn't ask God what they should do, **Joshua 9:14**. Instead of asking God what to do, he asked a pagan king, and because he does, he was never going to receive the correct answer.

The Gibeonites were not of Israel, they were the remnant of the Amorites, they were actually Hivites, **Joshua 9:7**. Being called Amorites was a common Old Testament name for anyone who lived in Canaan before Israel moved there, **Genesis 15:16 / Deuteronomy 1:37 / Joshua 5:1 / Joshua 24:15 / 1 Samuel 7:14**.

The Gibeonites didn't want gold or silver and so they ask David for seven of Saul's descendants in order for them to hand them and expose them, **Numbers 35:33 / Deuteronomy 24:16**. Although we're not sure what the word 'hang' means here, it's obvious they wanted to torture them in some form and leave their bodies exposed for some time, **Deuteronomy 21:22-23**.

If you remember, David had promised to be kind to Saul's son Jonathan and his family, **1 Samuel 20:12-17**, this is why he spared Mephibosheth, who was Jonathan's only son, **2 Samuel 9:7**. Rizpah was Saul's concubine, **2 Samuel 3:7** and their son Mephibosheth was the uncle of Jonathan's son who had the same name.

Merab had married Adriel instead of David in **1 Samuel 18:19**, and Adriel's father was Barzillai, but not the same man who earlier helped David, **2 Samuel 19:31-39**.

The Gibeonites put the men's bodies on a hill, by doing this they were displaying that the punishment was complete and as a result, the Lord could bless Israel again. The crops had failed because there had been no rain and as a result, the Israelites had no crops to harvest. Understandably Rizpah was very upset and protects her son's bodies until it rained.

Some Israelites thought that David hated King Saul's family, Shimei accused David of this in **2 Samuel 16:5-8**, but this event shows that the Gibeonites, not David, killed Saul's sons and grandsons. David always gave honour to Saul and his family. It's possible that David felt guilty, thinking he didn't do enough to give enough honour to Saul and Jonathan's bodies.

The citizens of Jabesh Gilead had at some point stolen the bodies of Saul and Jonathon, **1 Samuel 31:8-13**, and so David takes the bones of Saul, Jonathan and the seven members of his family and buries them properly in the grave of Saul's father.

The Israelites had done everything fair and right, hence why God now sends the rain. The prayer of David and the people brought the power of God to preserve the people and the land. When the foreign forces were settled, and under the reign of David, there was peace from those outside the land of Palestine.

WARS AGAINST THE PHILISTINES

'Once again there was a battle between the Philistines and Israel. David went down with his men to fight against the Philistines, and he became exhausted. And Ishbi-Benob, one of the descendants of Rapha, whose bronze spearhead weighed three hundred shekels and who was armed with a new sword, said he would kill David. But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to David's rescue; he struck the Philistine down and killed him. Then David's men swore to him, saying, 'Never again will you go out with us to battle, so that the lamp of Israel will not be extinguished.' In the course of time, there was another battle with the Philistines, at Gob. At that time Sibbekai the Hushathite killed Saph, one of the descendants of Rapha. In another battle with the Philistines at Gob, Elhanan son of Jair the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod. In still another battle, which took place at Gath, there was a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot—twenty-four in all. He also was descended from Rapha. When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of Shimeah, David's brother, killed him. These four were descendants of Rapha in Gath, and they fell at the hands of David and his men.' **2 Samuel 21:15-22**

Here we read about the incredible bravery of Abishai, Sibbechai, Elhanan and Jonathan and how their actions changed the history of Israel. David's deliverance by these four men must have happened early in David's reign when Israel was at war against the Philistines, **1 Chronicles 20:4-8**. Their loyalty to David is clearly seen in their courageous actions.

Notice the text says that 'Elhanan killed Goliath'. For many, this appears to be a contradiction because **1 Samuel 17:50-51** tells us that David killed Goliath.

F Payne in his commentary suggests the following.

1. The parallel account in **1 Chronicles 20:5** states that Elhanan killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath.
2. Elhanan and David were names of the same individual, just as Solomon was also named Jedidiah, **2 Samuel 12:24**.
3. It is also possible that Goliath was a name worn by more than one Philistine giant, or that it was a Philistine title, or that it described a certain type of Philistine soldier.

These four men mentioned here were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants. Significantly, David is mentioned here as one who had a hand in killing these giants, which perfectly harmonises with **1 Samuel 17:50-51**.

CHAPTER 22

This song of praise was recorded and written by David possibly written during David's early days when he was delivered from Saul, it also reflects all the victories he had over the Philistines. The whole chapter can also be read in **Psalms 18:1-50**.

DAVID'S SONG OF PRAISE

'David sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said: 'The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my saviour—from violent people you save me. 'I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and have been saved from my enemies.' **2 Samuel 22:1-4**

In David's song, we see that he uses metaphors such as rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn, stronghold, refuge and saviour to describe how God protected him when he was on the run from Saul.

'The waves of death swirled about me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me. 'In my distress I called to the LORD; I called out to my God. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came to his ears.' **2 Samuel 22:5-7**

David again describes how he was feeling when he was on the run from Saul. He again uses metaphors to describe how much distress and anguish he was in when he was running from the ungodly and everywhere he turned, he was facing death.

'The earth trembled and quaked, the foundations of the heavens shook; they trembled because he was angry. Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his canopy around him—the dark rain clouds of the sky. Out of the brightness of his presence bolts of lightning blazed forth. The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded. He shot his

arrows and scattered the enemy, with great bolts of lightning he routed them. The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of breath from his nostrils. 'He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support.' 2 Samuel 22:8-19

David here remembers the threat of the environment he was in, he remembers the natural forces of nature, like darkness, wind, thunder, and lightning, which God used to save him from death. Although he was going through the greatest of dangers in his life, God protected him and delivered him from them all.

'He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me. 'The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I am not guilty of turning from my God. All his laws are before me; I have not turned away from his decrees. I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin. The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight.' 2 Samuel 22:20-25

David's obedience to the Lord and His will is shown here because God once again delivers him from his trials. No wonder he could write in **Psalm 23:4** 'Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.'

God used all these difficult times in David's life to make him the man he was to become, **1 Samuel 13:14 / Acts 13:22**.

'To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the devious you show yourself shrewd. You save the humble, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them low. You, LORD, are my lamp; the LORD turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.' 2 Samuel 22:26-30

David here tells us if God is going to help anyone, they must be obedient to God's will. When people are obedient to His will, God becomes their Saviour in times of trouble but He also becomes an obstacle for those who are obedient to His will.

He truly is the lamp which lightens up our ways if we are obedient to Him, **Psalm 119:105 / John 8:12**.

'As for God, his way is perfect: The LORD's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him. For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the heights. He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze.' 2 Samuel 22:31-35

David again recognises the importance of obedience to God and His will. When people are obedient to God and His will, God becomes their strength and they receive power from Him, **Ephesians 6:10**, and it's in this way that we become perfect, **Ephesians 4:11-15 / Colossians 1:28 / Hebrews 5:14 / James 1:4**.

'You make your saving help my shield; your help has made me great. You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way. 'I pursued my enemies and crushed them; I did not turn back till they were destroyed. I crushed them completely, and they could not rise; they fell beneath my feet. You armed me with strength for battle; you humbled my adversaries before me. You made my enemies turn their backs in flight, and I destroyed my foes. They cried for help, but there was no one to save them—to the LORD, but he did not answer. I beat them as fine as the dust of the earth; I pounded and trampled them like mud in the streets. 'You have delivered me from the attacks of the peoples; you have preserved me as the head of nations. People I did not know now serve me, foreigners cower before me; as soon as they hear of me, they obey me. They all lose heart; they come trembling from their strongholds.' 2 Samuel 22:36-46

Notice how David gives God the credit for all the victories he had against all those who opposed him. David is well aware that he was God's anointed, **1 Samuel 16:13 / 2 Samuel 2:4 / 2 Samuel 5:3**, which meant if anyone opposed him, they were actually opposing God, **Matthew 5:10-12 / John 15:20**.

David says if people plotted against him, their plots would come to nothing because they weren't obedient to God's anointed king. As long as the anointed walked in the ways of God, God would walk with him and work for him.

'The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be my God, the Rock, my Saviour! He is the God who avenges me, who puts the nations under me, who sets me free from my enemies. You exalted me above my foes; from a violent man you rescued me. Therefore I will praise you, LORD, among the nations; I will sing the praises of your name. 'He gives his king great victories; he shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever.' 2 Samuel 22:47-51

To conclude his song, David praises God and prays that God will continue to help him. He is fully aware that he was only allowed to be king of Israel because God anointed him.

He knows full well, that his authority as king of Israel, solely rested on God's authority. The people may have desired David to be king, but it was God who made him king.

CHAPTER 23

In this chapter, we read David's last words, which are closely related to Balaam's last words relating to the future of Israel, **Numbers 24:3 / Numbers 24:15**. His prophetic words are an extension of Balaam's prophecy of the Star out of Jacob and the Sceptre out of Israel.

'These are the last words of David: 'The inspired utterance of David son of Jesse, the utterance of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, the hero of Israel's songs: 'The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue. The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me: 'When one rules over people in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings grass from the earth.' 'If my house were not right with God, surely he would not have made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part; surely he would not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire. But evil men are all to be cast aside like thorns, which are not gathered with the hand. Whoever touches thorns uses a tool of iron or the shaft of a spear; they are burned up where they lie.' 2 Samuel 23:1-7

DAVID'S LAST WORDS

David says, 'the Spirit of the Lord spoke through him, and His Word was on his tongue.' In other words, these weren't David's own words, the Holy Spirit spoke through him, **Isaiah 1:1-2 / Psalm 95:7-10**.

David recognises that it's not his own words being said and he credits those words to the Holy Spirit. You will notice that when an Old Testament prophet is quoted in the New Testament, it's often stated, 'the Holy Spirit says', **Mark 12:36 / At 1:16 / Acts 28:25 / Hebrews 3:7**.

The Spirit says that anyone who was anointed by God to be king must rule with justice and with the fear of God. They are to be like the light in the morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, in other words, they are to determine the morals of the nation.

We know that the example set by any country must begin at the top, if the rulers are corrupt, then the people will be corrupt. David as king of Israel was humble enough to recognise that he had fallen short morally of God's expectations as a king on many occasions.

Despite falling short of God's expectations, the Holy Spirit reminds Israel of the everlasting covenant God made with them, He will fulfil those promises He made with Israel, **Isaiah 55:3 / Acts 13:34**. However, those who constantly rebel against God and His will are promised to be punished, **Matthew 25:41**.

DAVID'S MIGHTY WARRIORS

'These are the names of David's mighty warriors: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter. Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty warriors, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at Pas Dammim for battle. Then the Israelites retreated, but Eleazar stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead. Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistines banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them. But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the LORD brought about a great victory. During harvest time, three of the thirty chief warriors came down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. At that time David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem. David longed for water and said, 'Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!' So the three mighty warriors broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the LORD. 'Far be it from me, LORD, to do this!' he said. 'Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?' And David would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three mighty warriors. Abishai the brother of Joab son of Zeruiah was chief of the Three. He raised his spear against three hundred men, whom he killed, and so he became as famous as the Three. Was he not held in greater honour than the Three? He became their commander, even though he was not included among them. Benaiah son of Jehoiada, a valiant fighter from Kabzeel, performed great exploits. He struck down Moab's two mightiest warriors. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. And he struck down a huge Egyptian. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty warriors. He was held in greater honour than any of the Thirty, but he was not included among the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard.' 2 Samuel 23:8-23

This list of David's mighty warriors is also recorded in **1 Chronicles 11:10-41**, although there are some variations between the two. The reason for the variations is possibly because they were written at different times and since language and pronunciation change with time, it appears that the names of this list changed from the time 2 Samuel and the Chronicles were written.

These mighty warriors were the very men who were loyal to David as God's anointed king of Israel. They successfully brought David to the throne and helped him remain his reign as king. History teaches us if any king wants to be successful, they must not only have the support of God but must also have the loyalty of brave people behind them.

The truth is, if it wasn't for these mighty warriors, who trusted in God and God's anointing of David, Israel wouldn't have had a king. They were loyal and supported David because David was loyal and supported God. They were loyal and supported God, they understood that because they supported David, they were supporting God.

'Among the Thirty were: Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem, Shammah the Harodite, Elikai the Harodite, Helez the Paltite, Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa, Abiezer from Anathoth, Sibbekai the Hushathite, Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, Heled son of Baanah the Netophathite, Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah in Benjamin, Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai from the ravines of Gaash, Abi-Albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan son of Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite, Eliphelet son of Ahasbai the Maakathite, Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, Igal son of Nathan from Zobah, the son of Hagri, Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the

Beerothite, the armour-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah, Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite and Uriah the Hittite. There were thirty-seven in all.' 2 Samuel 23:24-39

Again, we find a similar list of names recorded in 1 Chronicles 11:26-47, but not exactly. It's highly probable that these men changed through David's forty-year reign, which would explain the differences in records. The following thoughts concerning each of these men have been adapted from Coffman's commentary of this chapter.

Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty, he was one of the three sons of Zeruiah, David's sister, who lost his life when he tried to kill Abner, 2 Samuel 2:18-23. Joab avenged Asahel's death by murdering Abner, 2 Samuel 3:26-30.

Elhanan the son of Dodo from Bethlehem, shouldn't be confused with Eleazer the son of Dodo, 2 Samuel 23:9. He is a different person. Shammah the Harodite, some commentators suggest that this Shammah is the one mentioned in 2 Samuel 23:11, however, 1 Chronicles 11:10-47 ascribes that deed of bringing David the water from Bethlehem to Eleazer the son of Dodo. It appears that Shammah was a common name as we read in 2 Samuel 23:33.

We are given no information about Elikah the Harodite, except that he was one of the thirty mighty warriors of David. Helez the Paltite was an Ephraimite and commander of 24,000 men, 1 Chronicles 11:27 / 1 Chronicles 27:10. Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa is also mentioned in 1 Chronicles 11:28.

Abiezer from Anathoth was a Benjaminite with twenty-four thousand men under his command, 1 Chronicles 27:12. Sibbekai the Hushathite is in some translations named Mebunnai, or Sibbekai, 2 Samuel 21:18 / 1 Chronicles 20:4 / 1 Chronicles 11:29 / 1 Chronicles 27:11.

Zalmon the Ahohite may have been named Zalmon to indicate his strength but he is also called Ilai in 1 Chronicles 11:29. His name means shady or ascent. Maharai the Netophathite was one of the twelve monthly captains in David's reign, 1 Chronicles 11:30, he came from the family of Zerah from Netophah in Judah, and was commander of over 24,000 men, 1 Chronicles 27:13.

Heled son of Baanah the Netophathite, this man is called Heled in 1 Chronicles 11:30 and Heldai in 1 Chronicles 27:15. He was also the commander of 24,000 men. Ithai the son of Ribai from Gibeah in Benjamin, his name means ploughman or living and he is called Ithai in 1 Chronicles 11:31.

Benaiah the Pirathonite, his name means Jehovah has built or is intelligent. He belonged to the tribe of Ephraim and was commander of 24,000 men, 1 Chronicles 11:31 / 1 Chronicles 27:14.

Hiddai from the ravines of Gaash, Gaash was in Ephraim. The name Hiddai means mighty or joyful. Abi-Albon the Arbathite is one of David's heroes, he is mentioned in the Chronicles list under the name of Abiel, 1 Chronicles 11:32. His name may mean father of strength and he's possibly from Beth Arabah, Joshua 15:6 / Joshua 15:61 / Joshua 18:22.

Azmaveth the Barhumite, his name may mean counsel, and his name appears in 1 Chronicles 11:33. Some commentators identify him as the Azmaveth whom David placed over his treasures, 1 Chronicles 27:25. Eliahba the Shaalbonite is also mentioned in 1 Chronicles 11:33, and his name means whom God hides.

The son of Jashen, Jonathan, the name Jonathan was very common in the Old Testament and the name means God gave. In 1 Chronicles 11:34, he is identified as a son of Shagee the Hararite. Shammah the Hararite, in 1 Chronicles 11:27 he named Shammoth and in 1 Chronicles 27:8 he is named Shamhuth, he was also the commander of 24,000 men.

Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite is called the son of Sakar in 1 Chronicles 11:35. Eliphelet son of Ahasbai the Maakathite was special to David because he named one of his sons born in Jerusalem Eliphelet, 1 Chronicles 3:8. Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite was the father of Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 11:3, who stood in relation to David as a father-in-law. He is called Amiel in other passages, which is a variation of Eliam, 1 Chronicles 3:5. His name means, my God is a kinsman.

The presence of Bathsheba's father in the list of David's thirty heroes adds further to David's shame in violating her. Her grandfather Ahithophel was David's main counsellor; her father and her husband, Uriah were both among his thirty mighty men.

Hezro the Carmelite is also mentioned in **1 Chronicles 11:37** and his name means enclosed or beautiful. Paarai the Arbite, his name means a devotee of Peor, he is also called Naarai in **1 Chronicles 11:37**.

Igal son of Nathan from Zobah, his name means God redeems and as Zobah was a part of Syria it's highly possible that he was one of the foreigners who supported David.

The N.I.V has the name 'the son of Hagri' whereas the K.J.V. uses the name 'Bani the Gadite'. This name isn't mentioned anywhere in **1 Chronicles 11**. We do know that Bani was of the tribe of Gad. Zelek the Ammonite was another foreigner on David's list of mighty warriors.

Naharai the Beerothite, the armour-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah, Beeroth was one of the four cities of the Hivites who deluded Joshua into a treaty of peace with them, **Joshua 9:17**.

He was Joab's armour-bearer, although Joab isn't mentioned as a mighty warrior in his own right, he is the only man who is mentioned three times throughout this list, **2 Samuel 23:18 / 2 Samuel 23:24 / 2 Samuel 23:37**, which tells us he was a mighty warrior for David.

Ira the Ithrite, and Gareb the Ithrite, Ithrites was the name given to one of the families descended from Kiriath-Jearim, **1 Chronicles 2:53**. Two members of David's mighty warriors, and bodyguard, Ira and Gareb, came from this family, **2 Samuel 23:38 / 1 Chronicles 11:40**, and may have originated from the town of Jattir, **1 Samuel 30:27**.

Uriah the Hittite was the Hittite husband of Bathsheba, **2 Samuel 11:2-3**, whom David ordered to be murdered by the hand of Joab, **2 Samuel 11:15**, in a vain effort to hide David's adultery with Uriah's wife, **2 Samuel 11:4-5**.

These thirty-seven men were courageous and mighty warriors of David who help bring David to the throne and helped him reign as king of Israel.

It's clear that when we combine all these men, they would have put fear in the hearts of anyone who choose to rebel against David and or challenge his throne. With mighty warriors like this behind David, it would certainly help David maintain peace throughout the land.

CHAPTER 24

'Again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, 'Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.' So the king said to Joab and the army commanders with him, 'Go throughout the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba and enrol the fighting men, so that I may know how many there are.' But Joab replied to the king, 'May the LORD your God multiply the troops a hundred times over and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king want to do such a thing?' The king's word, however, overruled Joab and the army commanders; so they left the presence of the king to enrol the fighting men of Israel. After crossing the Jordan, they camped near Aroer, south of the town in the gorge, and then went through Gad and on to Jazer. They went to Gilead and the region of Tahtim Hodshi, and on to Dan Jaan and around toward Sidon. Then they went toward the fortress of Tyre and all the towns of the Hivites and Canaanites. Finally, they went on to Beersheba in the Negev of Judah. After they had gone through the entire land, they came back to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. Joab reported the number of the fighting men to the king: In Israel there were eight hundred thousand able bodied men who could handle a sword, and in Judah five hundred thousand.' **2 Samuel 24:1-9**

DAVID ENROLS THE FIGHTING MEN

In this final chapter, we read that the Lord's anger burned against Israel once again, 1 Chronicles 21:1-17. We know when God's anger is let loose, then the consequences for those on the receiving end wasn't going to end well. Notice how God incited David against Israel, we must be careful how we interpret this because if we are to understand this to mean that God incited David to do something sinful to punish Israel for some sin which isn't mentioned.

However when we read 1 Chronicles 21:1 where it says, 'Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel', along with what is written here we can understand that this means that God allowed Satan to tempt David as He allowed Satan to tempt Job, Job 1:8-12.

David tells Joab and the commanders of his army to take a census and count how many people there were among Israel and Judah, from Dan to Beersheba, Judges 20:1 / 1 Samuel 3:20 / 2 Samuel 3:20 / 2 Samuel 17:11.

The reason for the counting of people was possibly a lack of faith in God, on David's part, and so God was going to teach Israel not to trust in the strength of their army but to trust in God who was working through their army. God was angry with Israel because they didn't trust that He was working in and through their army.

They began at Aroer, south of the town in the gorge, and then went through Gad and on to Jazer, these places are mentioned in Deuteronomy 2:36, they formed the southern boundary of the land taken by Israel from Sihon.

Joab found David's commands repulsive, 1 Chronicles 21:6, and although Joab and his men went almost everywhere in Israel, they didn't fully obey David's commands, because they left out the tribes of Levi and Benjamin from the census.

'David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the LORD, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, LORD, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing.' Before David got up the next morning, the word of the LORD had come to Gad the prophet, David's seer: 'Go and tell David, 'This is what the LORD says: I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you.' So Gad went to David and said to him, 'Shall there come on you three years of famine in your land? Or three months of fleeing from your enemies while they pursue you? Or three days of plague in your land? Now then, think it over and decide how I should answer the one who sent me.' David said to Gad, 'I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into human hands.' So the LORD sent a plague on Israel from that morning until the end of the time designated, and seventy thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died. When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, 'Enough! Withdraw your hand.' The angel of the LORD was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the LORD, 'I have sinned; I, the shepherd, have done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall on me and my family.' 2 Samuel 24:10-17

It appears that David came to his senses after he had counted the fighting men. He didn't need to be rebuked and told he had sinned by a prophet as he did earlier with Nathan, 2 Samuel 12:7-14. He openly confesses his sin to God but he knows he has to pay the consequences of his actions.

David's seer, Gad, tells him he has three choices, either Israel as a nation could endure seven years of famine, or David himself could endure three months as a fugitive, or Israel could suffer three days of plagues, and so, he chooses the three days of plagues.

As a result of David's sin and his choice, 70,000 people died and the plague came to end by God's command when it reached Jerusalem at the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite.

DAVID BUILDS AN ALTAR

‘On that day Gad went to David and said to him, ‘Go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.’ So David went up, as the LORD had commanded through Gad. When Araunah looked and saw the king and his officials coming toward him, he went out and bowed down before the king with his face to the ground. Araunah said, ‘Why has my lord the king come to his servant?’ ‘To buy your threshing floor,’ David answered, ‘so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped.’ Araunah said to David, ‘Let my lord the king take whatever he wishes and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. Your Majesty, Araunah gives all this to the king.’ Araunah also said to him, ‘May the LORD your God accept you.’ But the king replied to Araunah, ‘No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.’ So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them. David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD answered his prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.’ 2 Samuel 24:18-25

Gad, David’s seer, told David to build an altar to the Lord, so David buys the threshing floor from Araunah as the place to build the altar, this is the very place where God stopped the plague. The altar was built in order to thank God for sparing the nation of Israel, 1 Chronicles 21:18-26.

Although Araunah wanted to give his threshing floor to David for free, David insist on paying for it and he pays fifty shekels not only for the land but also for the oxen and the threshing sledges and ox yokes of wood.

1 Chronicles 21:25 says that David paid 600 shekels, this would be the price for the entire surrounding area. Some believe that this site is where the temple was going to be eventually built.

After building the altar and sacrificing a burnt offering and fellowship offering, the Lord answered David’s prayer and stopped the plague completely.