



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 forty-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, 2 Samuel 11:1-27 / 1 Chronicles 14-15 / Psalms 32.

We also read about how David's own son, Absalom, fought against David and wanted to become king, 2 Samuel 15, and how, time and time again, 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 / 1 Chronicles 9.

SAUL, ISRAEL'S FIRST KING

You will remember that for about three hundred 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, [1 Samuel 8](#).

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,' [1 Samuel 15:8](#). 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

To try and understand why David was a man 'after God's own heart', we need to contrast the character of Saul, who was Israel's first king, with the character of David, their second king.

It wasn't long after Saul had become king that we began to see what was really going on in his heart. If you remember, Saul and his army were about to go into battle against the Philistines, and he wanted God's blessings to be with him and his army.

I guess there was nothing wrong with wanting God's blessings before going into a war. However, the problem came because he became impatient; he was told to wait seven days for the prophet Samuel to arrive, but his patience ran out.

So, he decided to go ahead and present a burnt offering to the Lord himself, [1 Samuel 13:1-9](#). Like most of us who are impatient, he came out with an excuse when Samuel finally arrived and asked him what he had done.

Saul's excuse was that he 'felt compelled' to offer the burnt offering, when in fact he deliberately chose to offer the sacrifice knowing that this could only be done by the priests, [1 Samuel 13:12](#).

Saul was then told by Samuel that he would no longer be king and his kingdom would be taken from him because of his actions. Saul was a character who only thought about himself; he totally ignored God's commandments and God's direction.

He totally disobeyed God, and as a result, this demonstrated that he certainly wasn't a man after God's own heart, [1 Samuel 13:13-14](#). Notice that Samuel mentions that God was looking for a man after His own heart, a man who would become the new leader of Israel. A little later, God sent Samuel to Jesse the Bethlehemite to find the next king from among his sons, [1 Samuel 16:1](#).

When Samuel arrived, he was impressed with several of the sons of Jesse, but God didn't want them, and so He helped Samuel to choose the right person. We read here that God doesn't judge people on their external appearance, but He looks at their hearts, [1 Samuel 16:7](#).

In other words, God doesn't fall for the façade that many people have today, with their false words and actions. God knew Saul's heart and rejected him, and then He looked at David's heart and chose him, [1 Samuel 16:10-13](#).

WHAT MADE DAVID DIFFERENT FROM SAUL?

1. God chose David because He knew David would obey Him and do what God commands.

Saul did his own thing, what he wanted to do, [Jeremiah 7:21-23](#), but David was obedient to God and His commands, [Acts 13:21-22](#). Notice that God says that David, 'will do everything I want him to do', this implies obedience. Saul did his own thing and didn't want to obey God because he wanted to please himself, but David felt compelled to obey God in order to please God.

In other words, David cared about what God cared about, he desired what God desired, and his heart sought after the things that God sought after. This is exactly what we see in Christ when He lived His life, [Luke 2:49](#) / [Luke 22:42](#). No one can have the heart of God if they don't obey God and carry out His commands.

2. God chose David because He knew David would love Him more than anything else.

This was something else which Saul lacked. We can't tell God that we love Him if we're not willing to obey Him, [John 14:15](#). These simple words of Jesus are very clear, but many people struggle to keep His commands. Many people claim that they love God but totally ignore His commandments. Maybe the reason they struggle to keep His commands is simply that they struggle to truly love God in the first place.

David loved Saul, but he loved God more, hence why he obeyed God rather than obeying Saul. We only have to turn to the Psalms to find that many of them were written by David, not Saul. Many of the Psalms which David wrote were all about God; there are many which are love songs, which reveal his heart's desire and love for God.

Many of the Psalms were written by David, and they reveal that David had a real passion for God; he really wanted to know God, [Psalm 42:1-2](#). It's clear that David only wanted to worship God, whilst Saul just wanted to worship himself, [1 Samuel 18:8](#).

3. God chose David because He knew David would lead people and not follow people as Saul did.

We can always tell what kind of relationship a person has with God by the way, they interact with others around them. We see this difference in the character of Saul and David.

Saul wanted nothing more than to be praised by those around him, and as a result, he ended up following people, rather than leading them; he ended up obeying people rather than obeying God, [1 Samuel 15:24](#).

While Saul desired the praise of men, David was the absolute opposite; he successfully led people because he was following God's lead and was obedient to Him. As a result of following and obeying God, he successfully encouraged people to do what was good and right in the eyes of God.

We see this on one occasion when he had an opportunity to kill Saul because His men were encouraging him to do so, but David encouraged them not to do so because he wanted to please God instead, [1 Samuel 24:4-7](#).

It's in these verses that we see that David 'persuaded his men' while Saul was persuaded by men, we see that Saul wanted to carry out his own vengeance, but David left the matter in God's hands, [1 Samuel 24:12](#).

David never tries to win the hearts of people, he only wants to win the heart of God and as a result, he became a great leader because he not only loved God more than anything else but he also fully obeyed Him.

4. God chose David because He knew David would come to hate sin as He hates sin.

People often wonder how David could be a 'man after God's own heart' when he sinned many times against the Lord. The two most memorable sins were when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah, murdered on the battlefield, [2 Samuel 11:1-16](#).

David didn't live a sinless life, but as His love for God grew stronger, he came to hate sin as God hates sin. [Psalm 32](#) tells us of David's repentance and sorrow over his sin.

We see this especially in [Psalm 51](#), after the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, [2 Samuel 12:1-23](#), David is clearly repenting of his sin with Bathsheba.

While being a man after God's own heart is about obeying God, having the same desires as God's heart, and seeking to please God rather than people, a man after God's own heart also repents deeply when he knows he's failed.

WHY WAS DAVID A MAN 'AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART'?

David deeply loved God more than anything else, and he obeyed His commands, [Jeremiah 9:23-24](#). He learned to hate sin as God hates sin, [Romans 6:23](#), he grieved over his sin as God grieves when we sin, [Genesis 6:6](#). He wanted to lead people in the ways of God, rather than allowing people to lead him into sin.

CONCLUSION

God knows that none of us can live a perfect life like His Son Jesus did, [1 Peter 2:22-24](#), but He still desires that His people will have hearts 'after His own heart.' He still desires that we love God more than anything else, [1 John 5:3](#). He still desires that we obey His commands, [John 14:21](#). He still desires that we hate sin and refrain from sinning, [Romans 6:1-14](#).

He still desires that we lead people to Him and encourage them to obey His commands, [Matthew 28:18-20](#). He still desires that we live a holy life because He is a holy God, [1 Peter 1:15-16](#). The question is, do you desire what God desires? [Ecclesiastes 12:13](#).

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, he was rewarded with all three. Solomon's wisdom is known to all.

Three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five 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 fourteen hundred chariots, twelve thousand horsemen, and an annual income of six hundred threescores and six talents of gold. And he didn't have to pay 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 one-hundred and eighty-three thousand 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 seven hundred wives and three hundred 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

INTRODUCTION

‘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

What is recorded in this chapter is a continuation of 1 Samuel. After the death of Saul, David returned from striking down the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days, and on the third day a man arrived from Saul’s camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head, 2 Samuel 1:1-2. When the man arrived, he fell at David’s feet to pay him honour, 2 Samuel 1:2.

When news concerning Saul and Johnathon’s death got back to David, notice that the Amalekite reported to David what had happened, 2 Samuel 1:3-6. 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, 2 Samuel 1:7-9. 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, 2 Samuel 1:9-10. The man says he took the crown that was on Saul’s head and the band on his arm and brought them here to his lord, 2 Samuel 1:10.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Amalekite was one of those who came ‘to strip the slain’ on ‘the morrow’ after the battle, 1 Samuel 31:8, and had the luck to find Saul and possess himself of his crown and bracelet. He probably started off immediately to seek

David, and invented the above story, possibly having heard from some Israelite prisoner an account of what really did happen.’

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 that 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 mourning and deep remorse, [2 Samuel 1:11-12](#), 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, [2 Samuel 1:13](#). 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, [2 Samuel 1:14](#).

This was the reason why David ordered the Amalekite to be killed, [2 Samuel 1:15-16](#). 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](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘David might well think his sentence just though severe, for he had more than once expressed the deliberate opinion that none could lift up his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless, [1 Samuel 24:6](#) / [1 Samuel 26:9](#) / [1 Samuel 26:11](#) / [1 Samuel 26:16](#).’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If he killed Saul, as he said he did, then he deserved death; at that time it was not known to the contrary, and this man was executed on his own confession.’

‘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 Jasher, 2 Samuel 1:17-18.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the word bow.

‘The word kasheth is to be understood of the title of the song which immediately follows, and not of the use of the bow, as our translation intimates.’

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.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It has been further suggested that in the Book of Jasher, there was, among other things, a collection of poems, in which special mention was made of the bow. This was one of them. 1 Samuel 2:1-10, was another, Numbers 21:27-30, was another; Lamentations 2, was another, Lamentations 3, was another; Jacob’s blessing, Genesis 49, Moses’ song, Deuteronomy 32, perhaps his Blessing, Deuteronomy 33, and such Psalms as Psalms 44 / Psalms 46:1-11 / Psalms 76:1-12 / Habakkuk 3, and Zechariah 9:9-17, also belonged to it.’

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 Jonathan, and he highlights the fact that it is God who is working through Israel. He says a gazelle lies slain on your heights, Israel. How the mighty have fallen! 2 Samuel 1:19.

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, 2 Samuel 1:20.

Gath and Ashkelon were the two main cities of the Philistines that in the text stand for the entire country of Philistia, 1 Samuel 21:10 / 1 Samuel 27:2 / 1 Samuel 31:10.

Mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, may no showers fall on your terraced fields, Job 3:3-10 / Jeremiah 20:14-18. For there the shield of the mighty was despised, the shield of Saul, no longer rubbed with oil, 2 Samuel 1:21 / Isaiah 21:5.

Gilboa was the place where Israel was defeated and both Saul and Jonathan killed, 1 Samuel 31:1. 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, 2 Samuel 1:22.

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. Notice the respect he has for Saul and Jonathan when he says, 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, 2 Samuel 1:23. Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold, 2 Samuel 1:24.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The women of Israel are most happily introduced. They who had come out to meet King Saul with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music” in the day of victory, are now called to weep over him.’

David ends his lament with some beautiful words about his dear friend Johnathon. How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights, 2 Samuel 1:25.

He calls Jonathan his brother, who was very dear to him, and he says Jonathon’s love for him was wonderful, more wonderful than that of a woman, 2 Samuel 1:26. David ends by saying how the mighty have fallen! 2 Samuel 1:27 / 2 Samuel 1:19 / 2 Samuel 1:25. The weapons of war have perished! 2 Samuel 1:27.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘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, [2 Samuel 2:1](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘By means of Abiathar the priest; for he did not know whether the different tribes were willing to receive him, though he was fully persuaded that God had appointed him king over Israel.’

God tells him to go to Hebron, a town of Judah, [2 Samuel 2:1](#). David, his two wives and his men then go to Hebron and settle there, [2 Samuel 2:2-3](#). It’s here that David is anointed as king of Israel, [2 Samuel 2:4](#).

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 has 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](#).

The third anointing is found in [2 Samuel 5:1-5](#), following a civil war, the elders of all the tribes of Israel anointed David as king over the whole nation, recognizing him as king of all God’s people. As God’s anointed king, the first thing David does is show kindness to those who respected Saul, [2 Samuel 2:5-6](#), 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](#). David’s messengers tell the men to be strong and brave, for Saul their master is dead, and the people of Judah have anointed David king over you, [2 Samuel 2:7](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘David certainly wished to attach the men of Jabesh to his interest; he saw that they were generous and valiant, and must be of great service to him whose part they espoused and he was no doubt afraid that they would attach themselves to the house of Saul, in consideration of the eminent services Saul had rendered them in rescuing them from Nahash, king of the Ammonites.’

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, [2 Samuel 2:8-9](#) / [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, [2 Samuel 2:10](#). 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.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning [2 Samuel 2:10](#).

‘It is well observed that Ish-Bosheth reigned all the time that David reigned in Hebron, which was seven years and six months. Perhaps the meaning of the writer is this: Ish-Bosheth reigned two years before any, but the tribe of Judah had attached themselves to the interest of David. Some think that Abner in effect reigned the last five years of Ish-Bosheth, who had only the name of king after the first two years. Or the text may be understood thus: When Ish-Bosheth had reigned two years over Israel, he was forty years of age.’

After the death of Ish-Bosheth, David stayed in Hebron. Afterwards, he went 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 2:11](#) / [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, [2 Samuel 2:12-13](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This expedition to Gibeon may have been for the purpose of shifting his metropolis to his own tribe of Benjamin, and to his family place, ‘Gibeah of Saul, close to Gibeon, with the further purpose of attacking the kingdom of David. ‘To go out’, 2 Samuel 2:12-13, is a technical phrase for going out to war, 1 Samuel 18:30.’

He suggests that they choose twelve men from both armies and have a fight, 2 Samuel 2:14-15. 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, 2 Samuel 2:16. Because of this aggressive move by Abner, a fierce battle took place between both armies, 2 Samuel 2:17. This battle then set the stage for Joab, David’s nephew, 1 Chronicles 2:15-16, to develop a quarrel with Abner.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Neither side had the advantage in the combat of twelve a side; hence, the quarrel was fought out with great fierceness by the two armies, and the victory was won by David.’

The three sons of Zeruah were Joab, Abishai and Asahel, 2 Samuel 2:18. Zeruah was a sister of King David. Asahel is described as being as fleet-footed as a wild gazelle, 2 Samuel 2:18. Zeruah 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.

Asahel chased Abner, turning neither to the right nor to the left as he pursued him, and when Abner looked behind him, he asked, Is that you, Asahel? And he replied it is, 2 Samuel 2:19-20.

Abner tells him to turn aside to the right or to the left, take on one of the young men and strip him of his weapons. Asahel would not stop chasing him, 2 Samuel 2:21. Abner warned Asahel to stop chasing him and asked why he should strike him down. How could he look his brother Joab in the face? 2 Samuel 2:22.

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, 2 Samuel 2:23.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It seems Asahel wished to get the armour of Abner as a trophy; this also was greatly coveted by ancient heroes. Abner wished to spare him, for fear of exciting Joab’s enmity; but as Asahel was obstinate in the pursuit, and was swifter of foot than Abner, the latter saw that he must either kill or be killed, and therefore he turned his spear and ran it through the body of Asahel. This turning about that he might pierce him is what we translate ‘the hinder end of his spear.’ This slaying of Asahel cost Abner his life, as we shall find in the next chapter.’

Every man stopped when he came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, 2 Samuel 2:23. This ended the 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 realise 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, [2 Samuel 2:24](#). Joab's men gathered together again to get ready for another battle with Abner's men, including the men of Benjamin, [2 Samuel 2:25](#). Abner calls out to Joab and asks, Must the sword devour forever? Don't you realise that this will end in bitterness? How long before you order your men to stop pursuing their fellow Israelites? [2 Samuel 2:26](#). In other words, Abner asks for a truce.

Joab replies as surely as God lives, if he hadn't spoken, the men would have continued pursuing them until morning, [2 Samuel 2:27](#). 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.

As a result, Joab blew the trumpet, and all the troops came to a halt and no longer pursued Israel, nor did they fight anymore, [2 Samuel 2:28](#). Abner and his men marched through the Arabah all night long, they crossed the Jordan, continued through the morning hours, and came to Mahanaim, [2 Samuel 2:29](#).

Joab stopped pursuing Abner and assembled the whole army, besides Asahel, nineteen of David's men were found missing, [2 Samuel 2:30](#). We are told that David's men had killed three hundred and sixty Benjamites who were with Abner, [2 Samuel 2:31](#) / [2 Samuel 2:25](#). 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, [2 Samuel 2:32](#). Then Joab and his men marched all night and arrived at Hebron by daybreak, [2 Samuel 2:32](#). 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 began 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

INTRODUCTION

'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, [2 Samuel 3:1](#). 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, [2 Samuel 3:1](#), which would fulfil Samuel's prophecy, [1 Samuel 15:28](#).

One of the main problems David had was having too many wives, [2 Samuel 3:2-5](#), although it was very common in those 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, 2 Samuel 3:3, raped his half-sister Tamar, the full sister of Absalom, 2 Samuel 3:4 / 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 Kileab, 2 Samuel 3:3, 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, 2 Samuel 3:4-5.

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 offence 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, 2 Samuel 3:6.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This strengthening of himself, and going into the late king’s concubine, were most evident proofs that he wished to seize upon the government, 1 Kings 2:21-22 / 1 Kings 12:8 / 1 Kings 16:21.’

He was certainly looking out for himself because he went to those who were in allegiance with Saul, 2 Samuel 3:7. 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 3:7-8 / 2 Samuel 3:21, who was one of Saul’s concubines.

This was probably Abner’s intention from the very beginning, as he himself longed to be king even though he made Ish-Bosheth king, 2 Samuel 2:8-10. Notice Abner asks Ish-Bosheth, Am I a dog’s head, on Judah’s side? 2 Samuel 3:8.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Dost thou treat a man with indignity who has been the only prop of thy tottering kingdom, and the only person who could make head against the house of David?’

He goes on to explain that he has been loyal to the house of Saul and to his family and friends. He hasn’t handed him over to David, and yet Ish-Bosheth accuse him of an offence involving this woman, 2 Samuel 3:8.

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, 2 Samuel 3:9-11. This would mean that all of Israel would be under David’s reign.

Abner goes ahead and sends messengers to David, **2 Samuel 3:12**, which tells us he wants the power to shift from Ish-Bosheth to David as soon as possible. Abner's messengers ask David, Whose land is it? Make an agreement with Abner, and he will help you bring all Israel over to you.

However, David says he will make an agreement with him; however, David demands one thing: do not come into his presence unless Abner brings Michal, the daughter of Saul, when he comes to see him, **2 Samuel 3:13-14**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘David had already six wives at Hebron, and none of them could have such pretensions to legitimacy as Michal, who had been taken away from him and married to Paltiel. However distressing it was to take her from a husband who loved her most tenderly, **2 Samuel 3:16**, yet prudence and policy required that he should strengthen his own interest in the kingdom as much as possible; and that he should not leave a princess in the possession of a man who might, in her right, have made pretensions to the throne. Besides, she was his own lawful wife, and he had a right to demand her when he pleased.’

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, **2 Samuel 3:14**.

Although here it states that David paid one hundred foreskins, **1 Samuel 18:24-25**, and **1 Samuel 18:27**, mentions that David paid 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 that 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. 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**.

So Ish-Bosheth gave orders and had Michal taken away from her husband Paltiel, **2 Samuel 3:15**. Notice that Michal's husband, Paltiel is weeping behind her, **2 Samuel 3:16**. 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, **2 Samuel 3:17**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was only by Abner's great influence that the elders of Israel had been restrained hitherto from declaring for David, and this accounts for Ish-Bosheth's helpless submission to his uncle's dictation.’

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, **2 Samuel 3:18**. 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, **2 Samuel 3:19**. Abner had twenty men with him, and he comes to David at Hebron because David prepared a feast for him and his men, **2 Samuel 3:20**.

Abner asks David to let him go and assemble all Israel for David, his lord and king, so that they may make a covenant with David, and that David may rule over all that his heart desires and David sends him away and notice he went in peace, **2 Samuel 3:21**.

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**

David’s men and Joab returned from a raid and brought with them a great deal of plunder, **2 Samuel 3:22**. Abner was no longer with David in Hebron because David had sent Abner away in peace, **2 Samuel 3:23 / 2 Samuel 3:21**. Joab tells David that Abner has come to deceive him, **2 Samuel 3:24-25**.

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 and when they caught him they killed him because he killed their brother, **2 Samuel 3:26-27**.

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, **2 Samuel 3:28**, but also declared a judgment against the household of Joab because he murdered an innocent man, **2 Samuel 3:29**.

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, **2 Samuel 3:29**.

Willis, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These five curses were gonorrhoea, leprosy, effeminacy, untimely death and hunger.’

We are told that Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon, **2 Samuel 3:30**. 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 realise 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, 2 Samuel 3:31 / 2 Samuel 1:17. They buried Abner in Hebron, and David wept aloud at Abner’s tomb as did everyone else, 2 Samuel 3:32.

David sang this lament for Abner, which says, 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, 2 Samuel 3:33-34.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The great and noble and valiant Abner had died as ignobly and as helplessly as the meanest churl!’

Once again everyone wept over the death of Abner, 2 Samuel 3:34 / 2 Samuel 3:32. It appears that David didn’t feel like eating and so, everyone comes to him to encourage him to eat but David takes an oath and says, may God deal with him, be it ever so severely, if he tastes bread or anything else before the sun sets, 2 Samuel 3:35.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Fasting was a sign of the deepest mourning, 2 Samuel 1:12. The fast lasted until the sun set.’

All the people took note and were pleased, in fact, they were pleased with everything David did, 2 Samuel 3:36. They also come to the conclusion that David had no part in the death of Abner, 2 Samuel 3:37. 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 tells asks his men, if they realize that a commander and a great man has fallen in Israel this day? 2 Samuel 3:38. He says although he is the anointed king and very weak, these sons of Zeruiah are too strong for him, 2 Samuel 3:39. Zeruiah was David’s sister, 1 Chronicles 2:16. He says may the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds, 2 Samuel 3:39.

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

INTRODUCTION

‘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’, [2 Samuel 4:1](#), 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. Saul’s son had two men who were leaders of raiding bands, [2 Samuel 4:2](#).

The sons of Rimmon, Baanah and Rekab, [2 Samuel 4:3](#), 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, [2 Samuel 4:3](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘From [Joshua 9:17](#), it might have been expected that the population of Beeroth would be Canaanite. But from some unknown cause, the Canaanite inhabitants of Beeroth had fled to Gittaim, perhaps the same as Gath and continued there as sojourners. If this flight of the Beerothites took place at the time of Saul’s cruel attack upon the Gibeonites, [2 Samuel 21:1-2](#), Baanah and Rekab may have been native Beerothites, and have been instigated to murder the son of Saul by a desire to avenge the blood of their countrymen. The fact of their being reckoned as Benjamites is quite compatible with their being Canaanites by blood.’

‘(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

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This mention of Mephibosheth seems to be inserted here partly to show that with the death of Ish-Bosheth the cause of the house of Saul became hopeless, and partly to prepare the way for the subsequent mention of him, [2 Samuel 9:1-13](#) / [2 Samuel 16:1-4](#) / [2 Samuel 19:25](#).’

Mephibosheth was Johnathon’s son, the only surviving heir of Saul’s family, and here it describes his fate. [2 Samuel 4:4](#) 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 4:4](#) / [2 Samuel 9:13](#).

Rekab and Baanah 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, and then they went into the inner part of the house to present some wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach, and then Rekab and his brother Baanah slipped away, [2 Samuel 4:5-6](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As these men were accustomed to bring wheat from these stores, from which it appears there was an easy passage to the king’s chamber, especially if we consider this a summer-house, as it most probably was, no man would suspect their present errand, as they were in the habit of going frequently to that place.’

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, [2 Samuel 4:7](#). 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 that they wanted a reward for killing one of David’s rival kings, [2 Samuel 4:7-8](#).

‘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 4:9-10](#) / [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, [2 Samuel 4:11](#), which means he wants to hold the murderers guilty and execute them, [Genesis 9:51](#) / [Genesis 42:22](#) / [Psalm 9:12](#).

We must remember that God commanded murderers 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](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Here are several things which aggravated the guilt of those wicked men.

1. Ish-Bosheth was an innocent man, and therefore none could have any ground of quarrel against him.
2. He was in his own house, which was his sanctuary, and none but the worst of men would disturb him there.
3. He was upon his bed, resting in the heat of the day, and so free from suspicion that he was not even attended by his guards, nor had he his doors secured. To take away the life of such a man, in such circumstances, whom also they professed to hold as their sovereign, was the most abandoned treachery.’

David wastes no time here in putting Rekab and Baanah to death, [2 Samuel 4:12](#). 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 4:12](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Their hands and feet were hung up in a place of public resort, both to deter others and also to let all Israel know that David was not privy to the murder of Ish-Bosheth.’

David didn’t really have any other choice, because if he allowed them to live, then people might 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

INTRODUCTION

‘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 told David that they were his own flesh and blood, [2 Samuel 5:1](#). 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, [2 Samuel 5:2](#).

Although we don’t know the details, David made a covenant with the people, [2 Samuel 5:3](#), and told 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.

This is now the third time David has been anointed as king, [2 Samuel 5:3](#). 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](#).

It was now that David began his unchallenged reign over Israel at the age of thirty, [2 Samuel 5:4-5](#), which was the normal age at which a Levite priest assumed his duties.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [2 Samuel 5:4-5](#).

‘The age of David is conclusive as to the fact that the earlier years of Saul’s reign (during which Jonathan grew up to be a man) are passed over in silence, and that the events narrated from [1 Samuel 13](#) to the end of the book did not occupy more than 10 years. If David was 20 years old at the time he killed Goliath, four years in Saul’s service, four years of wandering from place to place, one year and four months in the country of the Philistines, and a few months after Saul’s death, would make up the 10 years necessary to bring him to the age of 30.’

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, 2 Samuel 5:6, 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, 2 Samuel 5:6. As the text tells us, they were very arrogant and proud of their fortified city, thinking it was impenetrable, 2 Samuel 5:6. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the lame and the blind, 2 Samuel 5:6.

‘From the general face of the text, it appears that the Jebusites, vainly confiding in the strength of their fortress, placed lame and blind men upon the walls, and thus endeavoured to turn into ridicule David’s attempt to take the place’

This is the first reference to Zion in the Bible, 2 Samuel 5:7. This was the hill where the Jebusites’ fortified city was built. It was now going to be called the city of David, 2 Samuel 5:7, which, as we now know, is also called Jerusalem. There is mention of a water shaft, 2 Samuel 5:8, but 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.

The N.I.V tells us that David built up the area around the city from the ‘terraces inward’, 2 Samuel 5:9 / 1 Chronicles 11:8. 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. Notice, David became more and more powerful, because the LORD God Almighty was with him, 2 Samuel 5:10.

‘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, which included building him a palace, 2 Samuel 5:11 / 1 Kings 5:1 / 1 Kings 9:10-14.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He was a very friendly man, and no doubt a believer in the true God. He was not only a friend to David, but also of his son Solomon, to whom, in building the temple, he afforded the most important assistance.’

It appears that David not only wanted to have a strong city, but he also wanted to make allies with those around him, 2 Samuel 8:9. Later, when David wanted to make an alliance with the Ammonites, they rejected it; this rejection led to a war with the Arameans, 2 Samuel 10:1-19.

David is fully aware that, for Israel’s sake, God anointed him to be king of His people after Saul’s sinning got out of control, 2 Samuel 5:12 / 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.

Here again, we read about how David took more concubines and wives, 2 Samuel 5:13. Although it was common practice in Old Testament times, this was a sin on David’s part, Deuteronomy 17:17.

Shammua, 2 Samuel 5:14, 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, 2 Samuel 5:14, were born to Bathsheba, the daughter of Ammiel, 1 Chronicles 3:5.

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 that 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, 2 Samuel 5:17 / 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. When David heard about it, he went down to the stronghold, 2 Samuel 5:17. The Philistines spread out in the Valley of Rephaim, 2 Samuel 5:18, 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.

David now inquires of the LORD, 2 Samuel 5:19, and after inquiring of the Lord and the Lord gives him the go-ahead, 2 Samuel 5:19. We read that the waters broke out, and that place was called Baal Perazim, 2 Samuel 5:20, which means ‘the LORD who breaks 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 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, 2 Samuel 5:21. We know that later David ordered his men to burn the idols, 1 Chronicles 14:12 / Deuteronomy 7:5 / Deuteronomy 7:25.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was the custom of most nations to carry their gods with them to battle: in imitation of this custom, the Israelites once took the ark and lost it in the field, 1 Samuel 4:10-11.’

‘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 decided to give it another go, 2 Samuel 5:22.

David once again inquires of the LORD, 2 Samuel 5:23, and under God’s command, circles behind the Philistine army to finish them off, 2 Samuel 5:23-25.

Notice how God brought about this victory for Israel: the noise of marching on the tops of the poplar trees made the Philistines panic, 2 Samuel 5:23-24, and so David and his men killed them all, 2 Samuel 5:25.

This is very similar to what we read about concerning the way Gideon defeated the Midianites, Judges 7:15-23. Gibeon, 2 Samuel 5:25, was a small city near Jerusalem and Gezer, 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

INTRODUCTION

‘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 anoint 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, [2 Samuel 6:1-2](#) / [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](#). Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning ‘Baale of Judah’, KJV.

‘This is supposed to be the same city which, in [Joshua 15:60](#), is called Kirjah-baal or Kirjath-Jearim, [1 Chronicles 13:6](#), or Baalah, [Joshua 15:9](#).’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the Name, [2 Samuel 6:2](#).

‘The literal rendering is, ‘Upon which is called the Name, the Name of Yahweh of Hosts, who sits upon the cherubim,’ i.e. the ark which is called after the Lord of Hosts and bears His Name, [Deuteronomy 28:10](#) / [1 Kings 8:43](#) / [Isaiah 4:1](#).’

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 decides 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, [2 Samuel 6:3](#). 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 that the Ark was always to be covered in goatskin, [Numbers 4:6](#).

David knew exactly what he was doing here, and so, 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](#). 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, [2 Samuel 6:3-4](#).

David and all of Israel began celebrating before the Lord, [2 Samuel 6:5](#) / [1 Chronicles 13:8](#), 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 6:6-11](#)

When they reached Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the Ark of God to stop it from falling as the oxen stumbled, [2 Samuel 6:6](#). 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, [2 Samuel 6:7](#) / [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 now gets angry too because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah, [2 Samuel 6:7](#), which means ‘outbreak against Uzzah’.

David asks how the Ark of the Lord ever came to him, on the surface, [2 Samuel 6:9](#). 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 weren't blessed, and when David took the Ark to the house of Obed-Edom, God blessed him and his household, [2 Samuel 6:10-11](#).

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 6:11](#) / [2 Samuel 6:12](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Obed-Edom was a Levite of the family of Merari, being, [1 Chronicles 15:18-24](#) / [1 Chronicles 16:38](#), a son of Jeduthun, who was a Merarite. He was a porter, a player on the harp, and was one of the Levites especially designated to take part in the musical services on the occasion of bringing up the ark to Zion, and to minister before it when brought up. He is called a Gittite, perhaps from Gath-Rimmon, in Manasseh, which belonged to the Kohathites, [Joshua 21:25](#). Marriage with a Kohathite, or some other cause, would account for his dwelling in a Kohathite city.’

‘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, 2 Samuel 6:12, he decides he wants to move the Ark of God again to the city of David, 2 Samuel 6:12 / 1 Chronicles 15:25, that is, Jerusalem. Those who carried the Ark took six steps, then David sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf, 2 Samuel 6:13 / 1 Chronicles 15:1-16:43.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the ‘six steps’, 2 Samuel 6:13.

‘The meaning is, not that they sacrificed oxen and fatlings every six steps, which would have been impossible, but that when after the arrangement made by David for the Levites to carry the ark, 1 Chronicles 15:2 / 1 Chronicles 15:12 / 1 Chronicles 15:15, they had borne it successfully and with visible tokens of God’s favour, out of the house of Obed-Edom and six ‘steps’ on the road to the city of David to the sound of the musical instruments then they stopped and offered solemn sacrifices. Possibly ‘the step’ may have had a technical sense, and denoted a certain distance, say a stadium. Six such distances would have been nearly a mile, and if the ground was difficult and steep, the successful progress of ‘those that bear the ark,’ so far, would have been a fit cause for a thanksgiving sacrifice.’

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 moved it properly. The Levitical priests must have moved it on poles, Exodus 25:14-15 / Numbers 4:15 / Numbers 4:20.

Notice he was wearing an ephod, 2 Samuel 6:14, and 1 Chronicles 15:27, tells us he was also wearing a robe. The ephod was made of linen and was worn by a priest; it was a small apron used on ceremonial occasions. Notice also that David was dancing, 2 Samuel 6:14 / 1 Chronicles 15:27, which was basically moving around in circles in an out-of-control fashion.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Dancing is a religious ceremony among the Hindus, and they consider it an act of devotion to their idols. It is evident that David considered it in the same light. What connection dancing can have with devotion I cannot tell. This, I know that unpremeditated and involuntary skipping may be the effect of sudden mental elation.’

This was obviously a religious ceremony because David danced before the Lord when the Ark arrived safely, 2 Samuel 6:16. 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, 2 Samuel 6:14, and 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, [2 Samuel 6:16](#), 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, [2 Samuel 6:17](#). 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, [2 Samuel 6:17](#). This isn't the original tabernacle, which was made at Mount Sinai, that was made around four hundred years before what's happening here, [1 Chronicles 17:4-6](#).

What David did here was make 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. Notice David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the LORD, [2 Samuel 6:17](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'David acted here as priest, for it was the general prerogative of the priests to bless the people, but it appears, by both David and Solomon, that it was the prerogative of the kings also.'

After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty, [2 Samuel 6:18](#) / [1 Kings 8:14](#).

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 6:19](#).

'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 [2 Samuel 6:20](#).

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 the Lord chose him before He chose Saul, her father, [2 Samuel 6:21](#). He tells her 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, [2 Samuel 6:21](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'He humbles Michal's pride by the allusion to her father's rejection, and shows by Saul's example how little pride contributes to the stability of greatness. Therefore, for his part, he will not think anything done for the glory of God too mean for him; and if he cannot have honour from Saul's daughter, he will be content to be honoured by the maid-servants.'

As a result of Michal's resentment towards David, she was punished by not being able to have any children, [2 Samuel 6:23](#), which was shameful for an Israelite, [1 Samuel 1:5-7](#).

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

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; 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

When we read 1 Chronicles 17:1-29, we read the parallel account. There are small variations in the two accounts, but nothing significant. God's prohibition against David's intention of building God a house was stated in the form of a question in 2 Samuel, but appears here as a positive commandment forbidding it; the meaning is the same either way. After settling into his palace and having peace from his enemies, 2 Samuel 8:1-14, 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, 2 Samuel 7:1-2 / 1 Chronicles 17:1 / Exodus 26:14, that is, a tabernacle. Nathan goes ahead and tells David to do whatever he had planned because God is with him, 2 Samuel 7:3 / 1 Chronicles 17:2.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Nathan.

'Here is Nathan is first mentioned, but playing an important part afterwards, 2 Samuel 12:1 / 1 Kings 1:10 / 1 Chronicles 29:29 / 2 Chronicles 9:29. From the two last passages, it appears that he wrote the history of David's reign, and a part at least of Solomon's. His distinctive title is the prophet, that of Gad the seer, 1 Samuel 9:9. He was probably much younger than David. In 2 Samuel 7:3, he spoke his own private opinion; in 2 Samuel 7:4, this was corrected by the word of the Lord.'

'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, 2 Samuel 7:4 / 1 Chronicles 17:3, and tells him to go and rebuke David for having such an idea. God says that He had moved in a tent for over four hundred years with Israel, 2 Samuel 7:4-6 / 1 Chronicles 17:4-6.

He asked, ‘Should a house of cedar be built for Him?’ [2 Samuel 7:7](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:4](#) / [1 Kings 7:2-3](#) / [1 Kings 10:17](#) / [1 Kings 10:21](#) / [Jeremiah 22:14](#) / [Jeremiah 22:23](#). In other words, if God could move in a tent for four hundred years, then why couldn’t He continue to do so?

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Beams of cedar marked a costly building. The cedar of Lebanon is a totally different tree from what we improperly call the red or Virginian cedar, which supplies the sweet-scented cedar wood, and is really a kind of juniper. The cedar of Lebanon is a close-grained, light-coloured, yellowish wood, with darker knots and veins.’

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, [2 Samuel 7:8](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:8](#). God was the One who protected him and will give him a great name and God says that He will give David a house, and rest from his enemies, [2 Samuel 7:9-11](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:9-10](#).

In the context, 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’, [2 Samuel 7:11](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:11](#).

The reason why God was against having a temple built was that 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 that it was never a part of His plans to do so.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Did the Jewish temple have God’s approval? 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, [2 Samuel 7:12](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:11](#). 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, [2 Samuel 7:12](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:11](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'In one sense, this manifestly refers to Solomon, David's successor, and the builder of the temple. But we have the direct authority of Peter, [Acts 2:30](#), for applying it to Christ the seed of David, and His eternal kingdom and the title the Son of David given to the Messiah in the rabbinical writings, as well as its special application to Jesus in the New Testament, springs mainly from the acknowledged Messianic significance of this prophecy, [Isaiah 55:3](#) / [Acts 13:34](#).' God says He, that is, Solomon 'will build a house for His Name', [2 Samuel 7:13](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:12](#) / [1 Chronicles 22:8](#). 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, [2 Samuel 7:13](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:12](#).

The use of the words 'his' and 'he', [2 Samuel 7:13-14](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:11-12](#), 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, [1 Kings 8:16-20](#), but the fuller fulfilment is found in Christ, [John 1:12](#) / [Ephesians 1:20-22](#) / [1 Timothy 3:15](#) / [Hebrews 3:6](#) / [Zechariah 6:12-13](#).

This reference to 'I will be his father, and he will be my son', [2 Samuel 7:14](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:13](#), also speaks about the Messiah who would come in the future, [Psalm 2:7](#) / [Psalm 89:26-27](#) / [Acts 13:33](#) / [Hebrews 1:5-7](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The words forever, emphatically twice repeated in [2 Samuel 7:16](#), show very distinctly that this prophecy looks beyond the succession of the kings of Judah of the house of David, and embraces the throne of Christ according to the Angel's interpretation given in [Luke 1:31-33](#), where the reference to this passage cannot be mistaken. This is also brought out fully in [Psalms 89:29](#) / [Psalms 89:36-37](#). See also [Daniel 7:13-14](#) / [Isaiah 9:6-7](#) / [Jeremiah 23:5-6](#) / [Jeremiah 33:14-21](#) / [Ezekiel 34:24](#) / [Zechariah 12:7-8](#) / [Hosea 3:5](#), etc.'

Notice that God says, 'when he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands', [2 Samuel 7:14](#). These words are applied to David, but in [Hebrews 1:5](#), this text is applied to Christ.

In [1 Chronicles 17:13](#) / [1 Chronicles 22:9-10](#) / [1 Chronicles 28:6](#), it is expressly appropriated to Solomon.

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](#). God says His love will never be taken away from him, as He took it away from Saul, whom He removed from before David, [2 Samuel 7:15](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:13](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The family of Saul became totally extinct, the family of David remained till the incarnation. Joseph and Mary were both of that family; Jesus was the only heir to the kingdom of Israel; he did not choose to sit on the secular throne, he ascended the spiritual throne, and now he is exalted to the right hand of God, a PRINCE, and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, [2 Samuel 7:25](#).'

Notice God also said, 'your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever,' [2 Samuel 7:16](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:14](#). 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 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, [Psalm 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](#). We are told that Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation, [2 Samuel 7:17](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:15](#).

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 while sitting, [2 Samuel 7:18](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:16](#) / [Exodus 17:12](#) / [1 Kings 8:22](#) / [1 Kings 8:54-55](#). Notice he uses the words, 'Sovereign LORD' on several occasions. He begins by asking, 'Who am I?' [2 Samuel 7:18](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:16](#).

This tells us that David fully understood the enormity of the prophecy concerning his house. 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, [2 Samuel 7:18-19](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:17](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following, concerning [1 Chronicles 17:17](#) / [2 Samuel 7:19](#).

'Does he refer to the promise made to Adam, The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent? From my line shall the Messiah spring, and be the spiritual and triumphant King, forever and ever, [2 Samuel 7:25](#).'

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, [2 Samuel 7:20-21](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:18-19](#).

He says there is no God like Him, [2 Samuel 7:22](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:20](#), and there is no other nation like Israel, whom God redeemed from Egypt, [2 Samuel 7:23](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:21-22](#). It was God who established them as His people, and He has become their God, [2 Samuel 7:24](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:23](#).

He boldly prayed to God from his heart and asked God to just do what He promised He would do, [2 Samuel 7:25-26](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:23-24](#). Because God said He will build a house for him, David too courage to pray to God the way he did, [2 Samuel 7:27](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:25](#).

He knew that God was God, 2 Samuel 7:28 / 1 Chronicles 17:26, and that every word which comes from His mouth are true, 2 Samuel 7:29 / 1 Chronicles 17:27 / Psalms 119:160 / Proverbs 30:5 / John 17:17, David knew that God can be trusted.

Coffman, in his commentary, 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 of 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', 2 Samuel 7:29 / 1 Chronicles 17:27, 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

INTRODUCTION

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; they are written to let us know about the events which happened after the Ark was brought to Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 6:12-15.

Henry, in his commentary, gives us a useful summary of this chapter.

'David's piety and his prayer we had an account of in the foregoing chapter; here follows immediately that which one might reasonably expect, an account of his prosperity; for those that seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, as David did, shall have other things added to them as far as God sees good for them. Here is 1. His prosperity abroad. He conquered the Philistines, 1 Chronicles 18:1, the Moabites, 1 Chronicles 18:2, the king of Zobah, 1 Chronicles 18:3-4, the Syrians, 1 Chronicles 18:5-8, made the king of Hamath his tributary, 1 Chronicles 18:9-11, and the Edomites, 1 Chronicles 18:12-13. 2. His prosperity at home. His court and kingdom flourished, 1 Chronicles 18:14-17. All this we had an account of before, 2 Samuel 8.'

DAVID'S VICTORIES

‘In the course of time, David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and he took Metheg Ammah 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 hamstringed 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

The first thirteen verses are parallel with [1 Chronicles 18:1-13](#), but here, there is no mention of David’s extreme cruelty to the Moabites; otherwise, there are few variations.

This chapter begins with the words, ‘in the course of time’, [2 Samuel 8:1](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:1](#), 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, [2 Samuel 8:1](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:1](#), who 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, [2 Samuel 8:2](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:2](#). He made them lie down on the ground and measured them off with a length of cord and every two lengths of them were put to death, and the third length was allowed to live and so, the Moabites became subject to David and brought him tribute, [2 Samuel 8:2](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:2](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The cause of the war with the Moabites, who had been very friendly with David, [1 Samuel 22:3-4](#), and of this severe treatment, is not known. But it seems likely, from the tone of [Psalms 60:1-12](#), that David had met with some temporary reverse in his Syrian wars, and that the Moabites and Edomites had treacherously taken advantage of it, and perhaps tried to cut off his retreat.’

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.

Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah, when he went to restore his monument at the Euphrates River, [2 Samuel 8:3](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:3](#), was caught by David, and David captured a thousand of his chariots, seven thousand charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers, [2 Samuel 8:4](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:4](#).

Notice that David hamstrung all the chariot horses, [2 Samuel 8:4](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:4](#) / [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.

When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer, king of Zobah, David struck down twenty-two thousand of them, [2 Samuel 8:5](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:5](#). He put garrisons in the Aramean kingdom of Damascus, and the Arameans became subject to him and brought tribute, [2 Samuel 8:6](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:6](#).

Notice it was the LORD who gave David victory wherever he went, [2 Samuel 8:6](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:6](#) / [2 Samuel 8:12](#). David took the gold shields that belonged to the officers of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem, [2 Samuel 8:7](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:7](#). The shields of gold, [2 Samuel 8:7](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:7](#), were possibly valuable ornaments worn by the Syrian soldiers, [1 Kings 10:16](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the shields.

‘We know not what these were. Some translate arms, others quivers, others bracelets, others collars, and others shields. They were probably costly ornaments by which the Syrian soldiers were decked and distinguished. And those who are called servants here were probably the choice troops or body-guard of Hadadezer, as the argyraspides were of Alexander the Great.’

David now takes a great quantity of bronze from Tebah and Berothai, towns that belonged to Hadadezer, [2 Samuel 8:8](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:8](#). 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, [2 Samuel 8:9-10](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:9-10](#).

Hamath was the north-eastern stronghold of the Solomonic Empire, [2 Kings 14:25](#). The people of Hamath were descendants of Ham and Canaan, [Genesis 10:18](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Hamath.

‘This appears as an independent kingdom so late as the time of Sennacherib, [Isaiah 37:13](#). But in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, both Hamath and Arpad appear to have been incorporated in the kingdom of Damascus, [Jeremiah 49:23](#).’

Joram brought David a lot of valuable gifts, [2 Samuel 8:10](#) / [Psalms 18:43-44](#). [1 Chronicles 18:10](#) says it was Hadoram who brought David the gifts.

The Pulpit Commentary says the following.

‘In [1 Chronicles 18:10](#), he is called Hadoram, and this was apparently his real name, Joram being merely the substitution of the nearest Hebrew word for something foreign and therefore unintelligible.’

David dedicated all of Tou’s gifts to the LORD, as he had done with the silver and gold from all the nations he had subdued, [2 Samuel 8:11](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:11](#). David continues his conquest by killing eighteen thousand Edomites, [2 Samuel 8:12-14](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:11-13](#) / [1 Chronicles 19:16-18](#) / [1 Kings 11:15-16](#).

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 [Psalm 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](#). Notice again, it was the LORD who gave David victory wherever he went, [2 Samuel 8:14](#) / [1 Chronicles 18:13](#) / [2 Samuel 8:6](#).

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

These last verses are parallel with 1 Chronicles 18:14-17. Unlike Saul before him, David, as king of Israel, treated people justly and right; he treated them fairly, 2 Samuel 8:15 / 1 Chronicles 18:14.

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, 2 Samuel 8:16-18 / 1 Chronicles 18:15-17, 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’.

Smith, in his commentary, says the following about the word ‘priests’ used here, 1 Chronicles 18:16 / 2 Samuel 8:18.

‘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

INTRODUCTION

‘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, David asks is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake? [2 Samuel 9:1](#). 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, [2 Samuel 9:2](#).

There was a servant of Saul's household named Ziba, and so he was summoned to appear before David, and when he did, David asked him, Are you Ziba? And Ziba replied, at your service, [2 Samuel 9:2](#).

David asks Ziba if there is anyone still alive from the house of Saul so he can show God's kindness? And Ziba tells him about a son of Jonathon who was a five-year-old and lame in both feet, [2 Samuel 9:3](#) / [2 Samuel 4:4](#).

Ziba appears to be in full possession of all the properties of the former king, Saul, but as Machir had been caring for Mephibosheth, [2 Samuel 9:4](#). It seems likely that Ziba had made himself quite wealthy in those intervening years after Saul's death.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [2 Samuel 9:4](#).

'According to [1 Chronicles 3:5](#), Ammiel, called inversely Eliam, [2 Samuel 11:3](#), was the father of Bath-sheba. If this is the same Ammiel, Machir would be Bathsheba's brother. However, the name is not a very uncommon one, [Numbers 13:12](#) / [1 Chronicles 26:5](#).'

Lo Debar, [2 Samuel 9:4-5](#), 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.

Mephibosheth's [2 Samuel 9:6](#), real name was Meribbaal or Meribaal, [1 Chronicles 8:34](#) / [1 Chronicles 9:40](#). It's clear that when Mephibosheth appeared in front of David, he was fearful for his life, as he bowed down, [2 Samuel 9:6](#).

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

This was an occasion when David remembered his covenant with Jonathan, [2 Samuel 9:7](#) / [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.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning [2 Samuel 9:7](#).

'This was kindness, (the giving up the land was justice,) and it was the highest honour that any subject could enjoy, as we may see from the reference made to it by our Lord, [Luke 22:30](#), That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. For such a person, David could do no more. His lameness rendered him unfit for any public employment.' It appears that Makir was a very wealthy person because he loved Saul's family, took Mephibosheth into his home, and cared for him, [2 Samuel 9:8](#). This tells us that Makir was a very faithful and generous person, and later helped David when Absalom rebelled against him, [2 Samuel 17:27-29](#).

Mephibosheth calls himself a dead dog, [2 Samuel 9:8](#), which was used as an exaggeration of the truth, [1 Samuel 24:14](#). 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, [2 Samuel 9:9-10](#).

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, [2 Samuel 9:10](#).

In other words, everything which belonged to Jonathan was to be returned to Mephibosheth. Notice that Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants, [2 Samuel 9:10](#) / [2 Samuel 19:17](#). Mephibosheth is very humbled by all this; he knows he doesn't deserve mercy, but he receives it.

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, [2 Samuel 9:11](#), it wouldn't be too long before he betrays David and rebels against him, [2 Samuel 16-20](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The promises of Ziba were fair and specious, but he was a traitor in his heart, as we shall see in the rebellion of Absalom, and David's indulgence to this man is a blot in his character; at this time, however, he suspected no evil; circumstances alone can develop the human character. The internal villain can be known only when circumstances occur which can call his propensities into action; till then, he may be reputed an honest man.'

By this time, Mephibosheth had grown up, got married and had become the father of a young son named Mika, [2 Samuel 9:12](#) / [2 Samuel 9:4-5](#) / [1 Chronicles 8:34](#) / [1 Chronicles 9:40](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Mephibosheth was five years old at Saul's death. He may have been thirteen at David's accession to the throne of Israel. In the eighth year of David's reign over all Israel, he would have been twenty-one. His having a son at this time indicates that we are about the 10th year of David's reign.'

Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem because he always ate at the king's table, and we are reminded that he was lame in both feet, [2 Samuel 9:13](#).

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

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](#).

DAVID DEFEATS THE AMMONITES

'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](#)

In this chapter, we read about the war between David and the Ammonites, which explains [2 Samuel 8:12](#). We can also read more about this in [2 Samuel 10](#). The parallel passages to these verses are found in [2 Samuel 10:1-5](#).

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, [2 Samuel 10:1](#) / [1 Chronicles 19:1](#), but David thought he would show him kindness, [2 Samuel 10:2](#) / [1 Chronicles 19:2](#).

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, 1 Samuel 22:3.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The history does not record any instance of Nahash's kindness to David, but the enmity of the house of Nahash against Saul may have disposed him favourably toward Saul's enemy David, and if there was any family connection between David's house and Nahash, 2 Samuel 17:25, this may have increased the friendship.'

It's clear that David's intentions were honourable, 2 Samuel 10:2 / 1 Chronicles 19:2, but the Ammonite commanders aren't so sure, they think he's spying out on the land to take it over, 2 Samuel 10:3 / 1 Chronicles 19:3.

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 / 1 Chronicles 18:1-2.

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, 2 Samuel 10:3 / 1 Chronicles 19:4. 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, 2 Samuel 10:4 / 1 Chronicles 19:4, which would mean they would be exposed, Isaiah 20:4.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 2 Samuel 10:4 / 1 Chronicles 19:4.

'In 1 Chronicles 19:4, more concisely 'shaved.' Cutting off a person's beard is regarded by the Arabs as an indignity equal to flogging and branding among ourselves. The loss of their long garments, so essential to Oriental dignity, was no less insulting than that of their beards.'

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, 2 Samuel 10:5 / 1 Chronicles 19:5. He didn't want them to feel undignified, embarrassed, or humiliated by anyone.

'When the Ammonites realised 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

Parallel passages to these verses are found in 1 Chronicles 19:6-13. The Ammonites realised that they had become obnoxious to David, and so 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, 2 Samuel 10:6 / 1 Chronicles 19:6-7.

When David hears about what is happening he sends out Joab out with the entire army of fighting men, 2 Samuel 10:7 / 1 Chronicles 19:8. 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 10:8 / 1 Chronicles 19:9.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning 2 Samuel 10:8 / 1 Chronicles 19:9.

'From their city, Rabbah, Deuteronomy 3:11 / Deuteronomy 3:15, or 20 miles from Medeba, where, 1 Chronicles 19:7, the Syrian army was encamped. Medeba was taken from Sihon, Numbers 21:30, and fell to Reuben, Joshua 13:9 / Joshua 13:16. In the reign of Ahaz, it seems to have returned to Moab, Isaiah 15:2, and in the time of the Maccabees to the Amorites, 1 Maccabees 9:36-37.'

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, and he knew that David would retaliate, so he prepared 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 realised 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, 2 Samuel 10:9-10 / 1 Chronicles 19:10-11.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It is probable that one of the armies was in the field, and the other in the city, when Joab arrived. When he fronted this army, the other appears to have issued from the city, and to have taken him in the rear; he was therefore obliged to divide his army as here mentioned; one part to face the Syrians commanded by himself, and the other to face the Ammonites commanded by his brother Abishai.'

Joab says if the Arameans are too strong for him, then Abishai is to come and help him but if the Ammonites are too strong for Abishai, then Joab will come and help him, 2 Samuel 10:11 / 1 Chronicles 19:12.

They were willing to fight because they believed that God was going to fight with them because this war was not justified and unwarranted, 2 Samuel 10:12 / 1 Chronicles 19:13. After the Ammonites and the Syrians ran away, 2 Samuel 10:13 / 1 Chronicles 19:14, Joab returned to Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 10:14 / 1 Chronicles 19:15.

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

The parallel passages to this verse can be found in 1 Chronicles 19:16-19. After fleeing from Joab and his brother Abishai, the Arameans decide to regroup, 2 Samuel 10:15 / 1 Chronicles 19:16.

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, 2 Samuel 10:16 / 1 Chronicles 19:16.

This time, David would personally lead his men, 2 Samuel 10:17 / 1 Chronicles 19:17, and the Arameans once again lost and fled, 2 Samuel 10:18 / 1 Chronicles 19:18. David killed seven hundred of their charioteers and forty thousand of their foot soldiers, 2 Samuel 10:18 / 1 Chronicles 19:18.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning 2 Samuel 10:18.

‘In the parallel place, 1 Chronicles 19:18, it is said, David slew of the Syrians seven thousand men, who fought in chariots. It is difficult to ascertain the right number in this and similar places. It is very probable that, in former times, the Jews expressed, as they often do now, their numbers, not by words at full length, but by numeral letters; and, as many of the letters bear a great similarity to each other, mistakes might easily creep in when the numeral letters came to be expressed by words at full length. This alone will account for the many mistakes which we find in the numbers in these books, and renders a mistake here very probable.’

David also killed Shobak, the commander of their army, 2 Samuel 10:18 / 1 Chronicles 19:18. The Arameans now know they can't defeat Israel, so they offer to make peace with them, and they became subject to Israel, 2 Samuel 10:19 / 1 Chronicles 19:19. The good news is that they were also now afraid to help the Ammonites in the future, 2 Samuel 10:19 / 1 Chronicles 19:19.

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

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 2 Samuel 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, 2 Samuel 11:1, 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, he sent Joab out with David's men and the whole Israelite army, and they destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah, 2 Samuel 11:1.

For some reason, David decided to stay at home in Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 11:1, but we're not told why. 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, 2 Samuel 11:2. Because David was higher up on his roof, he could clearly see her and how beautiful she was, 2 Samuel 11:2 / Matthew 5:27-32.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘How could any woman of delicacy expose herself where she could be so fully and openly viewed? Did she not know that she was at least in view of the king’s terrace? Was there no design in all this? In a Bengal town, pools of water are to be seen everywhere, and women may be seen morning and evening bathing in them, and carrying water home. Thus David might have seen Bath-Sheba, and no blame attaches to her.’

David sent someone to find out about her, and the man said, She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite, 2 Samuel 11:3. 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. 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.

Despite finding out that Bathsheba was married, he went ahead and sent for her anyway. This then led to them sleeping together, 2 Samuel 11:4 / Genesis 3:6 / James 1:14 / 1 John 2:16.

Bathsheba purified herself, 2 Samuel 11:4, because she was going through her monthly period. It was during a woman’s monthly period that she was more able to conceive.

However, this reference to her purification, if you notice, is written in brackets, which 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, 2 Samuel 11:5.

‘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. 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, 2 Samuel 11:6, and David asks about Joab, his soldiers and how the war is going, 2 Samuel 11:7. David tells Uriah to go down to his house and wash his feet, and so he leaves the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him, 2 Samuel 11:8.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Uriah had come off a journey and needed this refreshment, but David’s design was that he should go and lie with his wife, that the child now conceived should pass for his, the honour of Bath-sheba be screened, and his own crime concealed. At this time, he had no design of the murder of Uriah, nor of taking Bath-Sheba to wife.’

Notice that Uriah doesn’t go home; he sleeps at the entrance to the palace with all his master’s servants, 2 Samuel 11:9. Remember, David should have been out on the battlefield fighting the Ammonites with Uriah.

It’s here that 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.

When David asks Uriah why he didn’t go home, 2 Samuel 11:10, Uriah told him that the ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, 2 Samuel 11:11.

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, 2 Samuel 11:11.

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, 2 Samuel 11:10-11. 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. 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, 2 Samuel 11:12-13.

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, 2 Samuel 11:13. 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, 2 Samuel 11:14-15. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was the sum of treachery and villainy. He made this most noble man the carrier of letters which prescribed the mode in which he was to be murdered.’

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, 2 Samuel 11:14-15.

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, 2 Samuel 11:16-17.

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. 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.

Joab sent David a full account of the battle, and he instructed the messenger, when he has 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 11:16-21](#).

'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 Joab's messenger set out, he met David and told him everything that Joab told him to say, [2 Samuel 11:22-24](#) / [2 Samuel 11:16-21](#). 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.

To encourage Joab, David tells the messenger to tell Joab not to let this upset him; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it, [2 Samuel 11:25](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'What abominable hypocrisy was here! He well knew that Uriah's death was no chance-medley; he was by his own order thrust on the edge of the sword.'

While David felt a sense of relief, Bathsheba mourned the loss of her husband, [2 Samuel 11:26](#). The mourning time was usually around seven days, [1 Samuel 25:39-42](#).

After the period of mourning, David takes her as his wife, [2 Samuel 11:27](#), no doubt to cover the pregnancy on both sides. 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 with David. Bathsheba now gives birth to a son for David.

Notice, however, that God wasn't very pleased with David because of what he had done, [2 Samuel 11:27](#). 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

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we read about how the prophet Nathan confronts David for his sin 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, [2 Samuel 12:1](#) / [1 Chronicles 20:1-3](#). We can imagine how apprehensive he would have been about approaching David, the king of Israel, with such a condemning message.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Nathan came to David as if to ask his judicial decision on the case about to be submitted to him, [2 Samuel 14:2-11](#) / [1 Kings 20:35-41](#). The circumstances of the story are exquisitely contrived to heighten the pity of David for the oppressed, and his indignation against the oppressor, [1 Samuel 25:13](#) / [1 Samuel 25:22](#).’

When Nathan met David, he told 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.

Nathan's parable begins by telling us about two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor, [2 Samuel 12:1](#). 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, [2 Samuel 12:2-3](#).

The poor man raised the ewe lamb; it grew up with him and his children, and it shared his food, drank from his cup, and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him, [2 Samuel 12:3](#).

A traveller comes 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, and so, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him, [2 Samuel 12:4](#).

David's reaction to the deed of the ruthless rich man was immediate and according to justice, [2 Samuel 12:5](#). This tells us that David knew the law of God regarding adultery and murder, [Exodus 20:13-14](#).

David says that the rich man must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity, [2 Samuel 12:5](#) / [Proverbs 6:31](#). This judgment of the king was exactly in keeping with the Law of God, [Exodus 22:1](#).

‘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, [2 Samuel 12:7](#), we can imagine that David would have paused and become stunned. After reminding David of everything God has done for him, [2 Samuel 12:7-8](#), Nathan tells him God would have given him even more, [2 Samuel 12:8](#). 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, [2 Samuel 12:9](#). 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 that the sword will never depart from his house, [2 Samuel 12:10](#). 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 that He would take all of his wives, [2 Samuel 12:11](#). This is simply because David took Uriah's wife. 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, [2 Samuel 12:11](#).

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, [2 Samuel 12:12](#), 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, [2 Samuel 12:13](#) / [Psalm 51](#) / [Psalms 32:1-11](#). He now knows that he can't hide his sin from God, [Psalm 69:5](#) / [Psalm 90:8](#) / [Jeremiah 16:17-18](#).

Notice Nathan's reply to David, The Lord has taken away your sin, [2 Samuel 12:13](#). 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, [2 Samuel 12:13](#).

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, [2 Samuel 12:14](#).

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 realised 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 worshipped. 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, the Lord struck David’s child with an illness, [2 Samuel 12:15](#). David is clearly devastated, and so he fasts and mourns, [2 Samuel 12:16](#). The elders try to encourage him, but he refuses to get up or eat, [2 Samuel 12:17](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The death of the infant child of one of the numerous harem of an Oriental monarch would, in general, be a matter of little moment to the father. The deep feeling shown by David on this occasion is both an indication of his affectionate and tender nature, and also a proof of the strength of his passion for Bathsheba. He went into his most private chamber, his closet, [Matthew 6:6](#), and ‘lay upon the earth,’ [2 Samuel 13:31](#), rather ‘the ground,’ meaning the floor of his chamber as opposed to his couch.’

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, [2 Samuel 12:18](#), but when David noticed they were whispering amongst themselves, he knew inside himself that his child was dead, [2 Samuel 12:19](#).

He asks them if the child is dead, and when they told him, he was dead, David goes head and eats, [2 Samuel 12:19-20](#), which confuses everyone present, [2 Samuel 12:21](#).

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, [2 Samuel 12:22](#).

Notice that David says, ‘I will go to him, but he will not return to me’, [2 Samuel 12:23](#). 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 he 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, 2 Samuel 12:24.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'His extraordinary attachment to this beautiful woman was the cause of all his misfortunes.'

David, after committing Bathsheba, sleeps with her, and they have another child and call him Solomon, 2 Samuel 12:24 / 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, 2 Samuel 12:25, 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 sent word back to David about what he had achieved, 2 Samuel 12:26. He had taken the city's water supply, 2 Samuel 12:27, 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.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The lower town of Rabbah (the modern Amman), so called from a stream which rises within it and flows through it. The upper town with the citadel lay on a hill to the north of the stream, and was probably not tenable for any length of time after the supply of water was cut off.'

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, 2 Samuel 12:28.

David proceeds to take the crown from the king's head, 2 Samuel 12:29-30. 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, Jeremiah 49:1 / Jeremiah 49:3 / Amos 1:15 / Zephaniah 1:5.

Because of the precious stones inlaid on it, the crown itself weighed around seventy-five pounds, 2 Samuel 12:30, 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 made them slaves and put them to work, whilst he and his men returned to Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 12:30-31 / 1 Chronicles 20:3.

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

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 effect. 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 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. Over a period of time, David's son, Amnon, fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of David's other son, Absalom, 2 Samuel 13:1.

Amnon became so obsessed with his sister Tamar that he made himself ill, and because she was a virgin, it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her, 2 Samuel 13:2.

Delaney, in his commentary, says the following.

'It has been well remarked that 'the passion of love is nowhere so wasting and vexatious, as where it is unlawful. A quick sense of guilt, especially where it is enormous, as in the present instance, strikes the soul with horror; and the impossibility of an innocent gratification loads that horror with desperation, a conflict too cruel and too dreadful for human bearing.'

Amnon goes to his adviser, named Jonadab, son of Shimeah, who was David's brother, and we are told that Jonadab was a very shrewd man, 2 Samuel 13:3. He asks Amnon, why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me? And Amnon tells him, he's in love with Tamar, his brother Absalom's sister, 2 Samuel 13:4.

Amnon loved Tamar and knew 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, 2 Samuel 13:5. And so, Amnon took his advice and did just that, 2 Samuel 13:6.

'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 now sent word to Tamar and tells her to go to Ammon and prepare some food for him, 2 Samuel 13:7. Tamar goes to Ammon, who was lying down and she makes some bread in front of him, 2 Samuel 13:8.

She then takes a pan and served Ammon the bread, but he refused to eat but he demands that everyone else leaves the room, 2 Samuel 13:9. Tamar enters his bedroom, and he grabs her and tells her to come to bed with him, 2 Samuel 13:10-11.

Tamara immediately knows what he's trying to do and refuses because she knows it's immoral, Genesis 34:7, and she knows that the practice of incest was against God's law, 2 Samuel 13:12-13 / Leviticus 18:11. She even begs Ammon to speak to David, suggesting that David would allow the marriage, 2 Samuel 13:13.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'So it appears that she thought that the king, her father, would give her to him as wife. This is another strong mark of indelicacy in those simple but barbarous times. There might have been some excuse for such connections under the patriarchal age, but there was none now. But perhaps she said this only to divert him from his iniquitous purpose, that she might get out of his hands.'

Because Ammon was the half-brother of Tamar, he wouldn't be allowed to marry her because the law said he couldn't, Leviticus 18:9 / Deuteronomy 17:17. 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, 2 Samuel 13:14, which is the lowest of lows for any man to do.

'Then Ammon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Ammon 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, 2 Samuel 13:15. Tamar tells him that sending her away would be a greater wrong than what he has already done to her, 2 Samuel 13:16. The true nature of Ammon's so-called love for Tamar is shown here.

He hated her and treated her badly, and he refused to listen to her, 2 Samuel 13:16. 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.

Now he asks his servants to remove 'this woman' from his presence and bolt the door when she's out, 2 Samuel 13:17. Notice that Tamar wore an ornate robe, 2 Samuel 13:18 / 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 Ammon, 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 Ammon, either good or bad; he hated Ammon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar.' 2 Samuel 13:19-22

It's in these verses that we see the effect of Ammon's sin against Tamar. She put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing, 2 Samuel 13:19. 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, 2 Samuel 13:19.

When her brother Absalom meets her, it appears that he knows what's happened to her, but he doesn't help the situation. He more or less tells her to forget about it, and so she goes to live in Absalom's house as a desolate woman, [2 Samuel 13:20](#). This is tragic, the tragic effect that rape had on this innocent woman.

When David got news about what happened, he was furious, [2 Samuel 13:21](#), 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, Amnon, punished, which meant death, [Numbers 35:30-31](#).

Notice also that Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad, but he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar, [2 Samuel 13:22](#). One thing is clear: because David did nothing about Amnon'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 Amnon 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, [2 Samuel 13:23](#), that Amnon would have had his suspicions about what Absalom was thinking because of what Amnon 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](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Sheepshearing was always a time of feasting.'

A festival was planned, and Absalom knew that Amnon would be very apprehensive about attending, so he intentionally also invited David, [2 Samuel 13:23-24](#), knowing that David wouldn't leave Jerusalem to attend the festival. His plan worked because Amnon believed that David was also going to be at the festival; he decided it would be safe for him to go, [2 Samuel 13:25-27](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'He urged this with the more plausibility, because Amnon was the first-born, and presumptive heir to the kingdom, and he had disguised his resentment so well before, that he was not suspected.'

As the party is in full swing and people are drinking wine, [2 Samuel 13:28](#), notice that Absalom himself didn't murder Amnon, but he ordered his men to do it for him, [2 Samuel 13:28-29](#).

Absalom was the next oldest son of David, and because Amnon was now dead, this put him first in line to be king after David. It's clear that Absalom's murder of Amnon 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 Amnon was murdered, [2 Samuel 13:30](#), 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 David's reaction, he stands up, tears his clothes, and lies down on the ground, and all his attendants stood by with their clothes torn, [2 Samuel 12:31](#). Jonadab, David's brother David that he shouldn't think that they killed all the princes, only Amnon is dead, [2 Samuel 12:32](#).

He also says that this has been Absalom's express intention ever since the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar, [2 Samuel 12:32](#). He goes on and repeats what he just said about the king's sons and Amnon, [2 Samuel 12:33](#). While Absalom fled, a watchman spots the king's sons coming towards them, [2 Samuel 12:34](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The watchman, as his duty was, had sent immediate notice to the king that he saw a crowd approaching, [2 Kings 9:17-20](#). Jonadab, who was with the king, was prompt to give the explanation.'

Jonadab tells him that he was right about what he said about them, [2 Samuel 12:35](#). When he finished speaking, the king's sons came in, wailing loudly, even the David and all his attendants wept very bitterly, [2 Samuel 12:36](#).

Absalom fled and went to Talmai, the king of Gusher, [2 Samuel 12:37](#), 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.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'As he had committed wilful murder, he could not avail himself of a city of refuge, and was therefore obliged to leave the land of Israel, and take refuge with Talmai, king of Geshur, his grandfather by his mother's side, [2 Samuel 3:3](#).'

Notice also that David mourned, thinking that all of his sons were dead, and he mourned over Absalom, [2 Samuel 12:37-38](#), but he quickly forgave him, [2 Samuel 12:39](#).

This is possibly because he understood that his son, Amnon, deserved to die. Uriah should never have been murdered because he was innocent, whereas Amnon did deserve to die because of his actions with Tamar, [2 Samuel 13:14](#).

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, [2 Samuel 12:39](#). This was the beginning of God's judgement against David and his household, and things were only going to get worse as time went on.

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

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 14:1](#) / [2 Samuel 13:39](#). He goes ahead and hires a woman from Tekoa to pretend she is in mourning and tells her to dress in mourning clothes, and don’t use any cosmetic lotions and she is to act like a woman who has spent many days grieving for the dead, [2 Samuel 14:2](#). She then is to go to David and speak what he is about to tell her to speak, [2 Samuel 14:3](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The king as a judge was accessible to all his subjects, [2 Samuel 15:2](#), compare [1 Kings 3:16](#).’

She goes 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.

When the woman goes to David, she asks for help, and David asks her what’s troubling her, and she replies and says she is a widow because her husband is dead, [2 Samuel 14:4-5](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There are several circumstances relative to this woman and her case which deserve to be noticed.

1. She was a widow, and therefore her condition of life was the better calculated to excite compassion.
2. She lived at some distance from Jerusalem, which rendered the case difficult to be readily inquired into; and consequently, there was the less danger of detection.
3. She was advanced in years, as Josephus says, that her application might have the more weight.
4. She put on mourning to heighten the idea of distress.
5. She framed a case similar to that in which David stood, in order to convince him of the reasonableness of sparing Absalom.

6. She did not make the similitude too plain and visible, lest the king should see her intention before she had obtained a grant of pardon.

Thus, her circumstances, her mournful tale, her widow's needs, her aged person, and her impressive manner all combined to make one united impression on the king's heart.'

She says she had two sons who got into a fight with each other in a field, and no one was there to separate them and so, one struck the other and killed him, 2 Samuel 14:6.

She says the whole clan has risen up against her and they 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, 2 Samuel 14:7.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the whole clan rising up against her, 2 Samuel 14:7.

'This indicates that all the king's sons, and the whole court, were against Absalom, and that the knowledge of this was what hindered David from yielding to his affection and recalling him.'

She says they would put out the only burning coal she had left, leaving her husband neither name nor descendant on the face of the earth, 2 Samuel 14:7. David tells the woman to come home and he will issue an order in her behalf, 2 Samuel 14:8. The woman says to David, let my lord the king pardon me and my family, and let the king and his throne be without guilt, 2 Samuel 14:9.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'She intimates that, if the king should suppose that not bringing the offender to the assigned punishment might reflect on the administration of justice in the land, she was willing that all blame should attach to her and her family, and the king and his throne be guiltless.'

David tells her that if anyone says anything to her, then she should bring them to him, and they will not bother her again, 2 Samuel 14:10. She pushed David and asked him to invoke the LORD his God to prevent the avenger of blood from adding to the destruction, so that her son will not be destroyed, 2 Samuel 14:11.

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.

David says, as surely as the LORD lives, not one hair of her son's head will fall to the ground, 2 Samuel 14:11. 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.

As 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.

'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

After sharing the parable with David and hearing his judgment upon it, she asks David for permission to continue to speak to him, [2 Samuel 14:12](#). With permission given, the woman now has David exactly where she wants him to be; she can now apply the parable to David himself.

The woman asks David, 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? [2 Samuel 14:13](#).

Those who were banished were banished by law but not banished because of grace, [2 Samuel 14:14](#) / [2 Samuel 12:13](#).

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.

She says she has come to say this to David, because the people have made her afraid, [2 Samuel 14:15](#). She thought she will speak to the king and perhaps he will grant her request, [2 Samuel 14:15](#). She says perhaps David will agree to deliver her from the hand of the man who is trying to cut off both her and her son from God's inheritance, [2 Samuel 14:16](#).

Cook, in his commentary, paraphrases what she said to David as follows.

'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'.

Notice the woman gives David a huge compliment, she tells him he is 'like the angel of God in discerning good and evil', [2 Samuel 14:17](#). 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, [2 Samuel 14:18-19](#).

She tells him that it was Joab who planned this whole event, [2 Samuel 14:19](#), and so, it's not surprising that she tells him he has 'the wisdom of an angel of God', [2 Samuel 14:20](#).

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, [2 Samuel 14:21](#).

Joab fell with his face to the ground to pay David honour, and he blessed David, saying 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, [2 Samuel 14:22](#).

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. 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, [2 Samuel 14:23-24](#). 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's 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, 2 Samuel 14:25.

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 and the weight of his hair was over two kilograms, 2 Samuel 14:26.

Absalom had three sons and it also appears that his daughter Tamar was also very beautiful in appearance, 2 Samuel 14:27. 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.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These probably died in infancy. From Tamar must have been born Maachah, the mother of Abijah, and the favourite wife of Rehoboam, 1 Kings 15:2 / 2 Chronicles 11:20-22.’

‘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, 2 Samuel 14:28. He tries twice to get Joab to come to him but this failed, 2 Samuel 14:29. He's clearly looking for some kind of attention, and so he orders his men to set fire to Joab's field, 2 Samuel 14:30. Joab now goes to Absalom's house and ask why has his servants set his field on fire? 2 Samuel 14:31.

Notice that Absalom pleads his innocence, 2 Samuel 14:32. 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.

Absalom tells Joab that he wants to see David's face, and if he is guilty of anything, let David put him to death, 2 Samuel 14:32. This shows us what kind of character Absalom 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 summing Absalom and bowing down to David, David kisses Absalom, 2 Samuel 14:32-33 / Genesis 45:15.

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

INTRODUCTION

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, 2 Samuel 15:1, which 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.

He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate, and 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?

And they would answer, from one of the tribes of Israel, 2 Samuel 15:2 / Ruth 4:1. Then Absalom would say, Your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you, 2 Samuel 15:3.

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', 2 Samuel 15:4. 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 Amnon, 2 Samuel 13:28-29.

He says if he were judged, then everyone would come to him for justice, 2 Samuel 15:4. 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, [2 Samuel 15:5](#). The text says that 'he stole the hearts of the men,' [2 Samuel 15:6](#) / [Genesis 31:20](#) / [Genesis 31:26](#).

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', [2 Samuel 15:7](#). 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 asks David to allow him to go to Hebron and fulfil a vow he made to the LORD, [2 Samuel 15:7](#).

He says while he was living at Geshur in Aram, he made a vow saying if the LORD takes him back to Jerusalem, he will worship the LORD in Hebron and so, David tells him to go in peace, [2 Samuel 15:8-9](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following, concerning Absalom's words.

'Here he pretended to be a strict follower of Jehovah, even while he was in a heathen country, and now he desires liberty to go and perform a vow at Hebron, which he pretends to have made while he was resident at Geshur. And all this was the more perfectly to organise his system of rebellion against his venerable father.'

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, [2 Samuel 15:10](#).

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 needed 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, [2 Samuel 15:11-12](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning Ahithophel, [2 Samuel 15:12](#).

'It has been with great probability supposed that Ahithophel was estranged from David by personal resentment for his conduct in the matter of Bath-Sheba and Uriah, [2 Samuel 11:3](#).'

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, [2 Samuel 15:13](#), he once again went on the run as a fugitive, [2 Samuel 15:14](#). 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](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'David's kind nature induced him to spare Jerusalem the horrors of a siege and the risk of being taken by assault. He had no standing army with which to resist this sudden attack from so unexpected a quarter. Possibly, too, he remembered Nathan's prophecy, [2 Samuel 12:10-12](#).'

David's officials tell him they are ready to do whatever David says, and so David set out, with his entire household following him, but he left ten concubines to take care of the palace, [2 Samuel 15:15-16](#). David set out, with all the people following him, and they halted at the edge of the city, [2 Samuel 15:17](#).

The Kerethites, the Pelethites and the Gittites, [2 Samuel 15:18](#), 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, [2 Samuel 15:19-20](#), but Ittai, the leader of David's six-hundred soldiers, [2 Samuel 15:18](#), pledged his life in allegiance to David, [2 Samuel 15:21](#).

David tells him to go ahead and march on, [2 Samuel 15:22](#). Ittai's group also included women, children, and his family, it included some powerful soldiers, [2 Samuel 15:22](#).

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](#).

The whole countryside wept aloud as all the people passed by and we are told that David also crossed the Kidron Valley, [John 18:1](#), and all the people moved on toward the wilderness, [2 Samuel 15:23](#).

'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, [2 Samuel 15:24](#). They set down the ark of God, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had finished leaving the city, [2 Samuel 15:24](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Abiathar was high priest, [1 Kings 2:35](#). Perhaps Zadok is addressed by David, [2 Samuel 15:25](#), as the chief of those who were actually bearing the ark.'

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, [2 Samuel 15:25](#), and he reassures Zadok and Abiathar that if God's favour was for him, he would again see the ark, [2 Samuel 15:25](#).

However, if God says He isn't pleased with David, then he is ready, let God do to him whatever seems good to him, [2 Samuel 15:26](#). 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.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'David shows here great confidence in God, and great humility. The ark was too precious to be exposed to the dangers of his migrations; he knew that God would restore him if he delighted in him, and he was not willing to carry off from the city of God that without which the public worship could not be carried on. He felt, therefore, more for this public worship and the honour of God than he did for his own personal safety.'

David also asks Zadok if he understands, he is to go back to the city with David's blessing, [2 Samuel 15:27](#). He is to take his son Ahimaaz with him, and also Abiathar's son Jonathan, [2 Samuel 15:27](#).

David says he will wait at the fords in the wilderness until word comes from Zadok to inform him, [2 Samuel 15:28](#). So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark of God back to Jerusalem and stayed there, [2 Samuel 15:29](#).

'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, [2 Samuel 15:30](#) / [Matthew 24:3](#) / [John 18:1](#).

Notice they everyone was weeping as they went and everyone's head was covered including David's head was covered, [Jeremiah 14:3-4](#) / [Ezekiel 24:17](#), and he was barefoot, [2 Samuel 15:30](#).

David's prayer that Ahithophel's advice is turned into foolishness was eventually fulfilled, [2 Samuel 15:31](#).

Ahithophel committed treason, but Hushai came with great mourning concerning the conspiracy, [2 Samuel 15:32](#).

And so, David appointed him as a spy in the presence of those who would stand before Absalom, [2 Samuel 15:33-36](#).

So Hushai, David's confidant, arrived at Jerusalem as Absalom was entering the city, [2 Samuel 15:37](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It appears that Hushai was not a warrior, but was a wise, prudent, and discreet man, who could well serve David by gaining him intelligence of Absalom's conspiracy; and he directs him to form a strict confederacy with the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and to make use of their sons as couriers between Jerusalem and David's place of retreat.'

The rebellion of Absalom and the humiliating flight of David let 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](#) / [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

INTRODUCTION

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 could find favour with David, [2 Samuel 16:1](#). He brings donkeys for David and his household to ride, along with some food to eat for his escape from Jerusalem, [2 Samuel 16:1-2](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This is the Eastern method of speaking when anything is presented to a great man: 'This and this is for the slaves of the servants of your majesty,' when at the same time the presents are intended for the sovereign himself, and are so understood. It is a high Eastern compliment: These presents are not worthy of your acceptance; they are only fit for the slaves of your slaves.'

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', [2 Samuel 16:3](#). 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, [2 Samuel 16:4](#).

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 Zeruah, 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 Zeruah? 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, 2 Samuel 16:5, 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.

David approached Bahurim, a man called Shimei, who belonged to the family of Saul, 2 Samuel 16:5. He is possibly Cush the Benjamite, who is described in Psalms 7.

Here we read about him expressing his anger against David, 2 Samuel 16:6, because of all the troubles that had happened to the house of Saul. He tells David to get out and calls him a murderer, 2 Samuel 16:7. Some versions use the words, ‘man of blood’, which is the same description which God used to describe David, 1 Chronicles 22:8.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Lord’s word to David, 1 Chronicles 22:8, was probably known to Shimei and now cast in David’s teeth by him, with special reference to the innocent blood of Uriah.’

Shimei tells David he is being paid back by God for all the blood he shed in the house of Saul, 2 Samuel 16:8.

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, Ish-Bosheth, 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.

Abishai then speaks to David concerning Shimei and calls him a ‘dead dog’, 2 Samuel 16:9 / 2 Samuel 9:8. 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, 2 Samuel 16:9. Notice David’s reaction, he says to leave him alone, it has nothing to do with anyone else except him, 2 Samuel 16:10-11.

He is perhaps leaving Shimei for God to deal with, 2 Samuel 16:12 / 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.

David and his men continued along the road while Shimei continued to demonstrate his disapproval of David by cursing him, throwing stones at him, and showering him with dirt, 2 Samuel 16:13. No wonder David and all the people arrived at their destination exhausted, and David refreshed himself, 2 Samuel 16:14.

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

Absalom and all the men of Israel came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel was with him, 2 Samuel 16:15. The reason why Hushai says, ‘long live the king!’ to Absalom, 2 Samuel 16:16, was simply to try Absalom’s favour again and to bring about the downfall of Absalom.

Absalom asks Hushai, so this is the love he shows David, his friend? If David is his friend, why didn’t he go with him? 2 Samuel 16:17, and so, Hushai tells him, 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, 2 Samuel 16:19.

He asks, whom should I serve? Should I not serve the son? Just as I served David, so he will serve Absalom, 2 Samuel 16:19. When Absalom asks for Ahithophel’s advice, 2 Samuel 16:20, Ahithophel tells him to sleep with his father’s concubines, 2 Samuel 16:21 / Leviticus 20:11.

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.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Taking possession of the harem was the most decided act of sovereignty, 1 Kings 2:22. It was also the greatest offence and insult that could be offered. Such an act on Absalom’s part made reconciliation impossible. A further motive has been found in this advice, namely, the desire on the part of Ahithophel to make David taste the bitterness of that cup which he had caused others (Uriah and all Bath-Sheba’s family) to drink, and receive the measure which he had meted withal.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It may be remembered that David left ten of them behind to take care of the house, 2 Samuel 15:16. Ahithophel advised this infernal measure, in order to prevent the possibility of a reconciliation between David and his son, thus was the prophecy to Nathan fulfilled, 2 Samuel 12:11. And this was probably transacted in the very same place where David’s eye took the adulterous view of Bath-Sheba, 2 Samuel 11:2.’

Absalom took Ahithophel’s advice, 2 Samuel 16:22, and notice that they pitched a tent for Absalom; they pitched it on the roof, 2 Samuel 16:22. 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’, Psalms 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,’ 2 Samuel 16:23.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning 2 Samuel 16:22-23.

‘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

INTRODUCTION

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**

Ahithophel suggests to Absalom, that he would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David, **2 Samuel 17:1**. He suggests that he would attack David while he is weary and weak and strike him with terror, and then all the people with him will flee, **2 Samuel 17:2**.

He suggest that he would strike down only David and bring all the people back to Absalom because the death of David will mean the return of all, all the people will be unharmed, **2 Samuel 17:2-3**. It appears that Ahithophel’s ideas were met with approval, **2 Samuel 17:4**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Had this counsel been followed, David and his little troop would soon have been destroyed; nothing but the miraculous interposition of God could have saved them. Twelve thousand chosen troops coming against him, in his totally unprepared state, would have soon settled the business of the kingdom. Ahithophel well saw that, this advice neglected, all was lost.’

However, it appears that Ahithophel's advice to Absalom to defeat David and his men was far too ambitious, and so Absalom went to Hushai the Arkite for his opinion, **2 Samuel 17:5**.

When Hushai came to him, Absalom said, Ahithophel has given this advice, should we do what he says? If not, give us your opinion, **2 Samuel 17:6**. Hushai now gives his advice, and he starts by telling Absalom that the advice Ahithophel has given is not good this time, **2 Samuel 17:7**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'He contrasts it with that given before, **2 Samuel 16:21**, which was good. This gave an appearance of candour to his conduct, and so gave weight to his dissent. Observe the working of David's prayer, **2 Samuel 15:31**.'

He says David and his men are fighters, and as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Besides, David is an experienced fighter and he will not spend the night with the troops, **2 Samuel 17:8**.

He says, even now, David is hidden in a cave or some other place and if he should attack Absalom's troops first, whoever hears about it will say, there has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom, **2 Samuel 17:9**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Hushai's argument is that there was no chance of seizing David by surprise as Ahithophel suggested. There was sure to be sharp fighting, and the terror of the names of David, Joab, Abishai, Ittai, and their companions would magnify the first few blows received into a victory, and Absalom's men would flee in panic. It is likely that Absalom was not a man of courage, and Hushai, knowing this, adroitly magnified the terror of the warlike prowess of David and his mighty men.'

He says if that happens then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that David is a fighter and that those with him are brave, **2 Samuel 17:10**.

Hushai then advises Absalom to let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, as numerous as the sand on the seashore, be gathered to him, with Absalom himself leading them into battle, **2 Samuel 17:12**.

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, **2 Samuel 17:12**.

He says if David 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, **2 Samuel 17:13**.

Basically, he 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, **2 Samuel 17:14**, 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,' **2 Samuel 17:14**.

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 night at the fords, 2 Samuel 17:15-16. It appears that Hushai isn't aware whether 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, 2 Samuel 17:17. A young man saw them and told Absalom and so, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, left at once and went to the house of a man in Bahurim who had a well in his courtyard, and so, they climbed down into it, 2 Samuel 17:18.

The young man's wife takes the time to cover the entrance of the well, and no one knew anything about it, 2 Samuel 17:19. When Absalom's men came to the woman at the house, they asked her where Ahimaaz and Jonathan were.

And the woman tells them, they crossed over the brook, 2 Samuel 17:20.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'As soon as ever she had hid the men, she went into the house, as if busy about her usual occupations. Had Absalom's servants, who had had information from some of the people of Bahurim that the men had come to this house, found her in the court, it might have directed their attention to the peeled barley.'

The men searched but found no one, so they returned to Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 17:20. This tells us that not everyone favoured Absalom. After they had gone, Ahimaaz and Jonathan climbed out of the well and went to inform King David and tell him to set out and cross the river at once because Ahithophel had advised such and such against him, 2 Samuel 17:21.

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, 2 Samuel 17:22 / 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, 2 Samuel 17:23.

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.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This self-murder could not be called lunacy, as every step to it was deliberate. He foresaw Absalom's ruin, and he did not choose to witness it, and share in the disgrace, and he could expect no mercy at the hands of David. He was a very bad man, and died an unprepared and accursed death.'

Some believe that because Ahithophel was buried in the family tomb, 2 Samuel 17:23, 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, 2 Samuel 17:24. 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, 2 Samuel 17:25. Note that Abigal in Hebrew is a variant of Abigail.

Both Abigal, says that some and Zeruah, 2 Samuel 17:25, were David's sisters, daughters of Jesse, 1 Chronicles 2:16-17, which possibly means that Nahash was Jesse's wife.

If Zeruah and Abigal were David's sisters only by the mother, then Nahash might possibly be the name of her first husband. We are told that the Israelites and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead, 2 Samuel 17:26. Because of the foolish decision of Absalom, a bloody civil war was now about to happen, which would involve everyone.

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, 2 Samuel 17:27, was possibly the king of the Ammonites, who David may have appointed as governor of Ammon after he took Rabbah, 2 Samuel 12:29.

Ammiel, who was from Lo Debar, 2 Samuel 17:27, was the son of Ahithophel and the father of Bathsheba, which makes Machir Bathsheba's brother. Barzillai the Gileadite, 2 Samuel 17:27, 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.

All of these people brought much needed supplies for David and his men, because they knew that the people had become exhausted and hungry and thirsty in the wilderness, 2 Samuel 17:28-29.

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.

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION

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 Zeruah, 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, [2 Samuel 18:1-2](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘By this time, David’s small company was greatly recruited; but what its number was we cannot tell. Josephus says it amounted to four thousand men. Others have supposed that they amounted to ten thousand, for thus they understand a clause in [2 Samuel 18:3](#), which they think should be read, We are now ten thousand strong.’

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, [2 Samuel 18:2](#), but his men advised him not to, [2 Samuel 18:3](#). 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 understood 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, [2 Samuel 18:4](#), and so commands Joab, Abishai and Ittai to be gentle with his son Absalom after they have won the war, [2 Samuel 18:5](#). 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, [2 Samuel 18:6](#) / [Judges 12:1-6](#), although this place is uncertain in its location. Some believe it’s 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, [2 Samuel 18:7](#). 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’, [2 Samuel 18:8](#), 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.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [2 Samuel 18:8](#).

‘Probably Absalom’s forces were far more numerous than David’s, but, most likely by Joab’s skilful generalship, the field of battle was such that numbers did not tell, and David’s veteran troops were able to destroy Absalom’s rabble in detail. The wood entangled them, and was perhaps full of pits, precipices, and morasses, [2 Samuel 18:17](#).’

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 armour-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, [2 Samuel 18:9](#). Remember he had very long hair, [1 Samuel 14:25-26](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It has been supposed that Absalom was caught by the hair, but no such thing is intimated in the text. Probably his neck was caught in the fork of a strong bough, and he was nearly dead when Joab found him; for it is said, [2 Samuel 18:14](#), he was yet alive, an expression which intimates he was nearly dead.’

One of David’s men found Absalom hanging there, [2 Samuel 18:10](#). Joab couldn’t understand why he left him alive and even offered to pay him ten shekels of silver, [Genesis 20:16](#) / [Genesis 37:28](#) / [Exodus 38:24](#), and a warrior’s belt to kill Absalom, [2 Samuel 18:11](#).

It’s possible that Joab remembered the bad advice he gave David earlier when Absalom ran away after killing Ammon, [2 Samuel 14:1-22](#). However, the man respected David’s earlier words to spare his life, [2 Samuel 18:12](#) / [2 Samuel 18:4](#). The man tells Joab that if he had put his life in jeopardy and nothing is hidden from the king, Absalom would have kept your distance from him, [2 Samuel 18:13](#).

This time, Joab wasn’t going to give Absalom another chance to rebel against his father, David, so he took three javelins and plunged them into Absalom’s heart whilst he was still alive, [2 Samuel 18:14](#). Ten of Joab’s armour-bearers also joined in to make sure Absalom was dead, [2 Samuel 18:15](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Joab should have obeyed the king’s commandment, and yet the safety of the state required the sacrifice of Absalom. But independently of this, his life was quadruply forfeited to the law.

1. In having murdered his brother Amnon.
2. In having excited an insurrection in the state.
3. In having taken up arms against his own father, [Deuteronomy 21:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 21:21](#).
4. In having lain with his father’s concubines, [Leviticus 18:29](#). Long ago, he should have died by the hand of justice; and now all his crimes are visited on him in his last act of rebellion. Yet, in the present circumstances, Joab’s act was base and disloyal, and a cowardly murder.’

‘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, [2 Samuel 18:16](#), 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, [2 Samuel 2:28](#) / [2 Samuel 20:22](#). They threw Absalom's body into a big pit in the forest and placed large rocks over him, [2 Samuel 18:17](#). The King's Valley, [2 Samuel 18:18](#), 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](#). Notice it is called Absalom's Monument to this day, [2 Samuel 18:18](#) / [1 Samuel 15:12](#).

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](#), and he also executed the ones who brought him the news of the death of Ish-Bosheth, [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, [2 Samuel 18:19](#). Joab decides to send a Cushite, [2 Samuel 18:20-21](#), with the news to David, which Joab knew would break David's heart. The race was on to get to David first, [2 Samuel 18:21-23](#). Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The floor of the valley through which the Jordan runs. The Cushite did not run by that road, but took the road over the hills, which may well have been the shorter but also the more difficult road. The two roads would probably meet a short distance from Mahanaim. These words, which have been thought to prove that the battle took place on the west of Jordan, are a clear proof that it took place on the east, because if the runners had had to cross the Jordan, they must both have come by the same road, which it is clear they did not.'

While David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall, and as he looked out, he saw a man running alone, [2 Samuel 18:24](#). The watchman then calls out and reports it to David, and David assumes that if he is alone, he must have good news, and we are told that the runner came closer and closer, [2 Samuel 18:25](#).

Then the watchman saw another runner, and he called down to the gatekeeper and told him there was another man running alone, and David once again assumed that he must be bringing good news, too, [2 Samuel 18:26](#).

The watchman identifies the first runner as one who runs like Ahimaaz, son of Zadok, and David says he's a good man who comes with good news, [2 Samuel 18:27](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Ahimaaz was a well-known runner, [2 Samuel 18:27](#). Speed was a heroic virtue in those simple times, [2 Samuel 2:18](#). In Hezekiah's reign, [2 Chronicles 30:6](#) / [2 Chronicles 30:10](#), we find an establishment of running post-men and the same name ('runners') is given, [Esther 3:13](#), to the Persian posts, though at that time they rode on mules and camels.' Ahimaaz calls out to David and says, all is well and then he bowed down before David 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, [2 Samuel 18:28](#).

When Ahimaaz was asked by David about his son, he deliberately lied, [2 Samuel 18:29](#), because Joab had plainly told him that Absalom was dead. The reason for his lying is simply that he knew that David might kill him for bringing this kind of news, as he had done with others before. David then tells him to stand aside and wait here, and he did so, [2 Samuel 18:30](#).

When the Cushite arrives, he tells David to hear the good news. The LORD has vindicated David today by delivering him from the hand of all who rose up against him, [2 Samuel 18:31](#).

He tells David the truth concerning Absalom, [2 Samuel 18:32](#), and the news of David's son being dead just devastated him, [2 Samuel 18:33](#). David wants to be alone to cry, and on his way, he says, 'my son, my son Absalom!' [2 Samuel 18:33](#).

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

INTRODUCTION

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 struggles 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 19:1 / 2 Samuel 18:32-33, he was aware that David’s men were becoming very discouraged, 2 Samuel 19:2.

A day which should have been filled with celebrations turned into a day of mourning. 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, 2 Samuel 19:3.

However, they shouldn’t have felt ashamed of themselves; they should have been ashamed of their king. 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, 2 Samuel 19:4.

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 won, 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, 2 Samuel 19:5-6.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Joab’s speech to David on his immoderate grief for the death of his rebellious son is not only remarkable for the insolence of office, but also for good sense and firmness. Every man who candidly considers the state of the case must allow that David acted imprudently at least and that Joab’s firm reproof was necessary to arouse him to a sense of his duty to his people. But still, in his manner, Joab had far exceeded the bounds of that reverence which a servant owes to his master, or a subject to his prince. Joab was a good soldier, but in every respect a bad man, and a dangerous subject.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Had Absalom gained the victory, it is likely that, according to the manner of Oriental despots, he would have sought to secure his throne by killing all possible competitors, Judges 9:5 / 1 Kings 15:29.’

Joab tells David to go out and encourage your men, and he swears by the LORD that if he doesn’t go out, not a man will be left with him by nightfall; it will be worse for David than all the calamities that have come on him from your youth till now, 2 Samuel 19:7.

David listened to him and went out and took his seat in the gateway, and when the men were told he was there, they all came before him, 2 Samuel 19:8. Meanwhile, the Israelites had fled to their homes, 2 Samuel 19:8.

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, 2 Samuel 19:9-10. It’s possible they were blaming one another for all the trouble which had started in Israel, which should never have 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, 2 Samuel 19:11-12.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘David was afraid to fall out with this tribe: they were in possession of Jerusalem, and this was a city of great importance to him. They had joined Absalom in his rebellion, and doubtless were now ashamed of their conduct. David appears to take no notice of their infidelity, but rather to place confidence in them, that their confidence in him might be naturally excited: and, to oblige them yet farther, purposes to make Amasa captain of the host in the place of Joab.’

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, 2 Samuel 19:13. This was a crazy move by David because Joab, even though he had his faults, was 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.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is very plain that David felt the weight of Joab’s overbearing influence to be very oppressive, 2 Samuel 19:22 / 2 Samuel 3:39 / 2 Samuel 16:10. He was, at this time, very angry with Joab for killing Absalom and so, thinking it of vital importance to win over Amasa and the army of Judah, he did not scruple to offer him Joab’s high post.’ He won over the hearts of the men of Judah so that they were all of one mind and they sent word to David to return with all of his men, 2 Samuel 19:14. David returns and went as far as the Jordan and we are told that the men of Judah had come to Gilgal to go out and meet him and bring him across the Jordan, 2 Samuel 19:15.

‘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, 2 Samuel 19:16, and with him were a thousand Benjamites, along with Ziba, the steward of Saul's household, and his fifteen sons and twenty servants, 2 Samuel 19:17.

They rushed to the Jordan, where the king was and crossed at the ford to take David's household over and to do whatever he wished, 2 Samuel 19:18. When Shimei, son of Gera, crossed the Jordan, he fell prostrate before David and said, 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, 2 Samuel 19:18-19. Shimei begs for forgiveness because of the way he cursed David earlier, 2 Samuel 19:20 / 2 Samuel 16:5-8, a crime punishable by death, 1 Samuel 24:6 / 1 Samuel 24:10 / 1 Samuel 26:9.

He tells David he has come as the first from the tribes of Joseph, which is a reference to the ten northern tribes of Israel; some translations have the words, 'house of Joseph', Amos 5:6, to come down and meet his lord the king, 2 Samuel 19:20.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'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.'

As he is begging for forgiveness, Abishai wanted to kill him because of the way he treated David, 2 Samuel 19:21. David asks him, 'What does this have to do with him?' 2 Samuel 19:22.

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 2 Samuel 19:22-23, because he knew 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, 2 Samuel 19:24.

Notice that Mephibosheth hadn't 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, 2 Samuel 19:25.

When he came from Jerusalem to meet David, David asked him, why didn't he go with him? 2 Samuel 19:25.

Mephibosheth tells David that since he is lame, he will have his donkey saddled and will ride on it, so he can go with the king, but Ziba betrayed me and he has slandered him to David, 2 Samuel 19:26-27.

Notice he says David is like an angel of God, so do whatever he wishes, 2 Samuel 19:27. In other words, David understands and has the wisdom to do what is right.

Mephibosheth continues and says all his grandfather's descendants deserved nothing but death from David, but David gave Mephibosheth a place among those who eat at his table, so what right does he have to make any more appeals to David, 2 Samuel 19:28.

David then orders him to divide the land between himself and Ziba, 2 Samuel 19:29, but notice that Mephibosheth is happy to give Ziba everything because David is not back home, 2 Samuel 19:30.

Barzillai, who was an eighty-year-old man, also showed his loyalty to David, 2 Samuel 19:31, because he made sure David got across the Jordan to Mahanaim safely, 2 Samuel 19:32.

He was offered a place to live in David's court, 2 Samuel 19:33, but because of his age, he declined the offer, 2 Samuel 19:34-36, and asked if his son, Kimham, could go instead, 2 Samuel 19:37.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It is generally understood that this was Barzillai's son; and this is probable from 1 Kings 2:7, where, when David was dying, he said, Show kindness to the sons of Barzillai and it is very probable that this Chimham was one of them. In Jeremiah 41:17, mention is made of the habitation of Chimham, which was near to Bethlehem; and it is reasonably conjectured that David had left that portion, which was probably a part of his paternal estate, to this son of Barzillai.' David accepts his offer and takes his son with him, then they depart the company, 2 Samuel 19:38-39.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The 'people' is the term especially applied in this narrative to David's followers, 2 Samuel 15:17 / 2 Samuel 16:14 / 2 Samuel 17:2 / 2 Samuel 18:1-2 / 2 Samuel 19:2-3. They crossed by the ford, while David and his household, accompanied by Barzillai and Chimham, came over in the ferry.'

'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, argue about who had the biggest stake with David as their king.

The northern tribes of Israel complained that the tribe of Judah had stolen away from the king, 2 Samuel 19:40-41.

We can understand their argument because David decided to make his capital city in the land of Judah, 2 Samuel 5:7-9.

The men of Judah tell the men of Israel that Judah did this because David is closely related to Judah, and then they ask, Why are you angry about it? Have we eaten any of David's provisions? Have we taken anything for ourselves? 2 Samuel 19:42.

Then the men of Israel now tell the men of Judah that Israel has ten shares in the king, so Israel has a greater claim on David than they have, and they too ask some questions.

Why then does Judah treat them with contempt? Wasn't Israel the first to speak of bringing back David? 2 Samuel 19:43. Notice that the men of Judah pressed their claims even more forcefully than the men of Israel, 2 Samuel 19:43. It appears that 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. 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.

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

INTRODUCTION

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, 2 Samuel 20:1, 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, 2 Samuel 20:1. 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, 2 Samuel 20:2, 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, 2 Samuel 20:3. This is because they had become defiled after Absalom had openly slept with them, 2 Samuel 16:22.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'He could not well divorce them, he could not punish them, as they were not in the transgression, he could no more be familiar with them, because they had been defiled by his son; and to have married them to other men might have been dangerous to the state, therefore he shut them up and fed them, made them quite comfortable, and they continued as widows to their death.'

David now tells Amasa to summon the men of Judah to come to him within three days and be here himself, 2 Samuel 20:4. 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, 2 Samuel 20:5. 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, 2 Samuel 20:6-7.

'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 realised 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, 2 Samuel 20:7, Joab appears to have an opportunity to get rid of Amasa.

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, 2 Samuel 20:8. Joab pretends to be Amasa's friend, 2 Samuel 20:9. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 2 Samuel 20:8-9.

'It appears that this was not a military garment and that Joab had no arms but a short sword, which he had concealed in his girdle; and this sword, or knife, was so loose in its sheath that it could be easily drawn out. It is thought farther, that Joab, in passing to Amasa, stumbled, (for so some of the versions, and able critics, understand the words it fell out.) and that the sword fell down when he stumbled; that he took it up with his left hand as if he had no bad intention and then, taking Amasa by the beard with his right hand, pretending to kiss him, he, with his sword in his left hand, ripped up his bowels. This seems to be the meaning of this very obscure verse. It is worthy of remark that in the Eastern country it is the beard, not the man, which is usually kissed.'

Whilst he's on his way to meet those who were rebelling, he murders Amasa in the middle of the road, 2 Samuel 20:10 / 2 Samuel 3:27. One of Joab's men stood beside Amasa and says, whoever favours Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab, 2 Samuel 20:11.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'This speech, addressed to Amasa's followers as well as Joab's, shows very distinctly that the rivalry between Joab and Amasa, and David's purpose to make Amasa captain in Joab's room, were well known; and shows also the real reason why Joab killed Amasa. What is added, 'and he that is for David,' was intended to identify Joab's cause with David's, and also to insinuate that Amasa had not been loyal to David, 2 Samuel 20:5.'

Because Amasa's dead body was lying in the middle of the road, it became an obstacle for the soldiers who were chasing Sheba, [2 Samuel 20:12](#). As soon as Amasa's body was removed from the road, everyone then followed the command of Joab, [2 Samuel 20:13](#).

'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, [2 Samuel 20:14](#), which was a fortified city, near Dan in the land of Naphtali, in the north of Palestine.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning Abel.

'This is supposed to have been the capital of the district called Abilene in St. Luke's Gospel, [Luke 3:1](#).'

It appears that Sheba is running as far north as possible and as far away as he can from Joab and his army. He appears to be heading towards his father, Bikri who was the father of Sheba, [2 Samuel 20:22](#) / [2 Samuel 20:1](#).

All the troops with Joab came and besieged Sheba in Abel Beth Maakah and they built a siege ramp up to the city, and it stood against the outer fortifications, [2 Samuel 20:15](#). When Joab's men were battering the wall to bring it down a wise woman came forward to negotiate terms of peace, [2 Samuel 20:15-16](#).

Joab goes to the woman, and she asks him if he is Joab. And he says yes. Then she asks him to listen to what she has to say, and Joab is prepared to listen to her, [2 Samuel 20:17](#). She tells him that long ago they used to say, get your answer at Abel, and that settled it, [2 Samuel 20:18](#). Apparently, these words were a proverb.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'This was an old proverb. Abel, like Teman, and some other places, was once famous for the wisdom of its inhabitants, [1 Kings 4:30-31](#). The wise woman was herself a remnant of this traditional wisdom.'

She says we are the peaceful and faithful in Israel, and you are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the LORD's inheritance? [2 Samuel 20:19](#).

Joab tells her far be it from him to swallow up or destroy, [2 Samuel 20:20](#) / [2 Samuel 2:27-30](#). He says that's not the case, a man named Sheba son of Bikri, has lifted up his hand against the king, against David, and if she hands over Sheba, Joab will withdraw from the city, [2 Samuel 20:21](#).

But there was really only one thing which would meet the requirements of Joab and that was the head of Sheba, [2 Samuel 20:21](#). It was left to the men of Beth Maakah to cut off Sheba's head and throw it over the wall to Joab, [2 Samuel 20:22](#).

When this was done Joab 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 20:22](#).

‘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

Although Joab was loyal to David and a great military commander of his men, 2 Samuel 20:23-26 / 1 Kings 4:2-6, 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. 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 in 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.

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION

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, 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 Meholathite. 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, [2 Samuel 21:1](#).

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 that 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.

The Gibeonites were not of Israel; they were the remnant of the Amorites, [2 Samuel 21:2](#). 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](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Gibeonites were Hivites, [Joshua 9:7](#) / [Joshua 11:19](#), and in many enumerations of the Canaanite nations, the Hivites are distinguished from the Amorites. But "Amorite" is often used in a more comprehensive sense, equivalent to 'Canaanite', as [Genesis 15:16](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:27](#), and denoting especially that part of the Canaanite nation which dwelt in the hill country, [Numbers 13:29](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:7](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:20](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:24](#), and so includes the Hivites.'

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, [2 Samuel 21:3](#), and because he did, he was never going to receive the correct answer.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It is very strange that a choice of this kind should be left to such people. Why not ask this of God himself?'

The Gibeonites didn't want gold or silver, [2 Samuel 21:4](#) / [Numbers 35:31-32](#), and so, when David asks them what they want, they ask David for seven of Saul's descendants in order for them to hand them and expose them, [2 Samuel 21:5-6](#) / [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](#). David agrees with them and says he will give them to the Gibeonites, [2 Samuel 21:6](#).

If you remember, David had promised to be kind to Saul's son Jonathan and his family, [2 Samuel 21:7](#) / [1 Samuel 20:12-17](#), this is why he spared Mephibosheth, who was Jonathan's only son, [2 Samuel 9:7](#).

David then takes 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 Meholathite, [2 Samuel 21:8](#).

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, [2 Samuel 21:9](#), and 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 protected her son's bodies until it rained, [2 Samuel 21:10](#) / [Matthew 24:28](#).

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, [2 Samuel 21:11-14](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The reader will recollect that the men of Jabesh-Gilead burned the bodies of Saul and his sons, and buried the remaining bones under a tree at Jabesh, [1 Samuel 31:12-13](#). These David might have dug up again, in order to bury them in the family sepulchre.'

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 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, [2 Samuel 21:14](#). 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, [2 Samuel 21:15](#) / [1 Chronicles 20:4-8](#). Their loyalty to David is clearly seen in their courageous actions.

We are told that David went down with his men to fight against the Philistines, and he became exhausted, [2 Samuel 21:15](#). We are told that 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, [2 Samuel 21:16](#).

However, Abishai son of Zeruiah came to David's rescue, he struck the Philistine down and killed him, [2 Samuel 21:17](#). David's men now swear to David and say, Never again will he go out with them to battle, so that the lamp of Israel will not be extinguished, [2 Samuel 21:17](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘David is here considered as the lamp by which all Israel was guided, and without whom all the nation must be involved in darkness. The lamp is the emblem of direction and support.’

Then there was another battle with the Philistines, at Gob and at that time Sibbekai the Hushathite killed Saph, one of the descendants of Rapha, [2 Samuel 21:18](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In the parallel passage, ‘Gezer’ is named as the field of this battle. However, Gath is named, [2 Samuel 21:20](#) / [2 Samuel 21:22](#), in a way to make it probable that Gath was the scene of all the battles. The Septuagint in this verse has ‘Gath.’

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, [2 Samuel 21:19](#).

Notice the text says that ‘Elhanan killed Goliath’, [2 Samuel 21:19](#). For many, this appears to be a contradiction because [1 Samuel 17:50-51](#), tells us that David killed Goliath.

Payne, in his commentary, says 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.

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, and when he taunted Israel, Jonathan, son of Shimeah, David’s brother, killed him, [2 Samuel 21:20-21](#).

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, [2 Samuel 21:22](#). 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

INTRODUCTION

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 [Psalm 18:1-50](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This song, which is found with scarcely any material variation as [Psalm 18](#), and with the words of this first verse for its title, belongs to the early part of David’s reign when he was recently established upon the throne of all Israel, and when his final triumph over the house of Saul, and over the pagan nations, [2 Samuel 22:44-46](#), Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, and Edomites, was still fresh [2 Samuel 21](#).’

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 Psalm 18, David begins by saying, ‘I love you, LORD, my strength’ Psalm 18:1. Here, David begins by declaring his love for God, and he uses eight metaphors to describe his relationship with God.

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, 2 Samuel 22:1.

He is his rock, 2 Samuel 23:2-3 / Psalm 18:2 / 2 Samuel 22:47. He is his fortress, 2 Samuel 22:2 / Psalm 18:2. He is his deliverer, 2 Samuel 22:2 / Psalm 18:2. He is his refuge, 2 Samuel 22:3 / Psalm 18:2 / 2 Samuel 22:31 / 2 Samuel 22:33.

He is his shield, 2 Samuel 22:3 / Psalm 18:2 / Psalm 33:20. He is his horn, 2 Samuel 22:3 / Psalm 18:2 / 1 Samuel 2:10. He is his stronghold, 2 Samuel 22:3 / Psalm 18:2. God is his saviour, 2 Samuel 22:3 / Psalm 18:2. God really is worthy of our praise, 2 Samuel 22:4 / Psalm 18:3.

‘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. David clearly put the security of his life in God’s hands and he was confident that God would save him from the hands of his enemies, 1 Samuel 27:1.

David is obviously fearing for his life, 2 Samuel 22:5-6 / Psalm 18:4-5, and so, in his distress, he cries out to God for help, Jonah 2:2, and is confident that God heard his prayer. He called out to God while he was in distress and God heard him, 2 Samuel 22:7 / Psalm 18:6.

We must note that the word ‘temple’ used here, can also be translated as the word ‘tabernacle’, 2 Samuel 22:7 / Psalm 18:6 / Exodus 25:9 / Exodus 25:40 / 1 Samuel 1:9 / 1 Samuel 3:3, which would make a lot more sense because as we know the temple hadn’t been built yet, 2 Samuel 5:6-10 / 1 Kings 5-7.

‘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 remembers the threat to 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.

David describes God’s deliverance using metaphors of natural phenomena, 2 Samuel 22:8-16 / Psalm 18:7-15, which are used to demonstrate that God is taking action, Exodus 19:16-18 / Judges 5:4-5 / Job 38:1 / Isaiah 29:6 / Zephaniah 1:2.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This highly imaginative section suggests to this writer nothing quite so vividly as it does the final judgment of mankind. The Theophany, the coming of God Himself, the mighty earthquake, the mountains being moved, [Revelation 6:12-15](#), the great hail, [Revelation 16:21](#), the darkness, [Revelation 6:12](#), the death of the wicked, as indicated by God’s arrows, the salvation of the righteous, mentioned a little later, all of these things are undoubtedly characteristic of the Final Judgment on the Great Day of God’s wrath, [Revelation 6:17](#).’

David is greatly encouraged because he knows God has the power to control everything, and he knows God has the power to deliver him from his enemies. Although he was going through the greatest of dangers in his life, God protected him and delivered him from them all, [2 Samuel 22:17-19](#) / [Psalm 18:16-18](#).

‘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. He also acknowledges that his enemies were way too strong for him and his army, hence why he relied on the Lord’s strength to deliver him, [2 Samuel 22:20](#) / [Psalm 18:19](#) / [Psalm 23:4](#).

Because David was righteous and his hands were cleansed, [2 Samuel 22:21](#) / [Psalm 18:20](#), which refers to forgiveness, [Romans 3:25](#) / [Colossians 1:28](#) / [1 John 1:7](#). He had kept the ways of God; he didn’t ignore the will of God, [2 Samuel 22:22-23](#) / [Psalm 18:21-22](#), which speaks about his obedience to God.

David says he was ‘blameless’, [2 Samuel 22:24](#) / [Psalm 18:23](#); to be blameless doesn’t mean sinless. When Paul is arguing with the legalizers in Philippi, he tells them he was blameless, [Philippians 3:6](#); however, he was blameless in the sense that he did everything he had to do to be right with God according to the Law.

The law of Moses demanded that a person had to offer the appropriate sacrifice to be right with God, but now, under the law of Christ, a person needs to be baptised and confess their sins to God. God was obviously pleased with David’s humble and godly character, [1 Samuel 13:14](#) / [Acts 13:22](#), and so He rewarded him, [2 Samuel 22:25](#) / [Psalm 18:24](#).

‘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 reminds us of God’s mercies. God will show mercy to those who have shown mercy to others, [2 Samuel 22:26](#) / [Psalm 18:25](#) / [Matthew 7:2](#) / [James 2:13](#). He will forgive those who forgive others, [Matthew 5:7](#) / [Matthew 6:14-15](#) / [Matthew 18:23-25](#).

It’s only those who have a pure heart, [2 Samuel 22:27](#) / [Psalm 18:26](#), who can really understand just how pre God Himself is, [Matthew 5:8](#) / [1 John 3:3](#). A devious person is a perverse person, [2 Samuel 22:27](#) / [Psalm 18:26](#) / [Leviticus 26:23-24](#) / [Proverbs 3:32](#) / [Job 5:12](#). Perhaps the greatest illustration of this was how God used the shrewd Laban to educate the devious Jacob, [Genesis 27-28](#).

Those who are humble will be saved by God, [2 Samuel 22:28](#) / [Psalm 18:27](#). The humble are those in society who have little or no power, [Psalm 10:2](#) / [Psalm 22:24](#) / [Psalm 35:10](#) / [Psalm 68:10](#). God will bring down the proud, [2 Samuel 22:28](#) / [Psalm 18:27](#) / [Luke 18:14](#) / [James 4:6](#) / [1 Peter 5:5](#).

David says the Lord keeps his ‘lamp burning’, [2 Samuel 22:29](#) / [Psalm 18:28](#), which means his obedience to God would be a light to those who walked in darkness, [John 1:5](#) / [John 8:12](#) / [1 John 1:5-7](#) / [Matthew 5:14-16](#) / [Philippians 2:14-15](#).

In the context here, this implies that God was going to make it known through David that He was working through him so that he would become the king of Israel.

David was confident that with God’s help, he would be victorious over his enemies, [2 Samuel 22:30](#) / [Psalm 18:29](#). 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. David declares God’s ways are perfect, and this is proven through His flawless word, [2 Samuel 22:31](#) / [Psalm 18:30](#) / [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) / [Hebrews 4:12](#). He says that God is a shield to all those who take refuge in Him, [2 Samuel 22:31](#) / [Psalm 18:30](#), that is, He protects them, [Proverbs 30:5](#).

Notice he asks, ‘For who is God, besides the LORD?’ [2 Samuel 22:32](#) / [Psalm 18:31](#). David knows full well who the one and only True Living God is compared to all those false gods of the Philistines, the Moabites and the Edomites. It was the God of heaven who took David as a shepherd boy and made him the king of Israel, [2 Samuel 2-5](#). David again uses metaphors of war to describe how he could never be king of Israel without God’s help, [2 Samuel 22:32-35](#) / [Psalm 18:32-34](#) / [Revelation 6:16](#).

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](#)

David again uses metaphors of war to describe how he could never be king of Israel without God’s help, [2 Samuel 22:36](#) / [Psalm 18:35](#) / [Revelation 6:16](#). Notice how David gives God the credit for all the victories he had against all those who opposed him, [2 Samuel 22:36-43](#) / [Psalm 18:37-42](#).

The very fact that he became king of Israel was proof that God was working in and through him. David was well aware that if he was to become king of Israel, it would involve more than just removing Saul as king; he would also have to remove all of his enemies.

When David became the ‘head of the nations’, [2 Samuel 22:44](#) / [Psalm 18:43](#), he was so militarily dominant over those who opposed him that God extended his influence to nations that were not of Israel, and his conquest was so forceful that his enemies turned their backs and ran away from him.

This also looks forward beyond the time of David to the throne of David’s Greater Son; this is a Messianic prophecy, parallel with [Psalm 2:8](#). It was during the end of David’s reign as king of Israel when he overpowered the enemies of Israel, [2 Samuel 22:45-46](#) / [Psalm 18:44-45](#).

His military strength was so great that the surrounding nations were intimidated by the army of Israel, and as a result, no nation attempted to attack Israel, and so, during the reign of Solomon, David's son, peace prevailed.

'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

David now declares that 'the Lord lives', [2 Samuel 22:47](#) / [Psalm 18:46](#). He has no hesitation in giving God all the glory He deserves for what He has done and is doing in David's life. This is one reason why he is described as 'a man after God's own heart', [1 Samuel 13:14](#) / [Acts 13:22](#).

David now goes on to praise God, [2 Samuel 22:47-51](#) / [Psalm 18:47-49](#). The apostle Paul quotes these words in [Romans 15:8-12](#), as the first of four Old Testament prophecies demonstrating that the work of Jesus Christ wasn't only for the Jewish people, but for the Gentiles also.

Notice also that he says that God shows unfailing love to his 'anointed', [2 Samuel 22:51](#) / [Psalm 18:50](#). This again tells us of the Messianic nature of this verse, and [Psalm 18](#), as it reflects God's covenant with David and his descendants, [2 Samuel 7:12-16](#).

God promised David that from his seed, one would arise who would build God's house, that is, the church, [Matthew 16:18](#), and His Kingdom should be established and that the throne of it would endure forever, [Daniel 2:44](#).

He is fully aware that he was only allowed to be king of Israel because God anointed him. David says if people plotted against him, their plots would come to nothing because they weren't obedient to God's anointed king, [2 Samuel 22:51](#).

David is well aware that he was God's anointed, [2 Samuel 22:51](#) / [Psalm 18:50](#) / [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](#). As long as the anointed walked in the ways of God, God would walk with him and work for 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.

CONCLUSION

David had no hesitation in giving God all the glory for everything He had done and was doing in his life. When we come into God's presence, there is simply no room for boasting about what we have done, [1 Corinthians 1:31](#) / [1 Corinthians 4:7](#) / [1 Corinthians 1:29](#). We must remember that we were created for His glory, not our own, [Isaiah 42:8](#) / [Isaiah 43:7](#).

Even Jesus Himself reminds us in His prayer that it's God's kingdom, it's God's power, and all the glory is His, [Matthew 6:13](#). As Christians, we too must give God all the credit for everything He has done, is doing and will do in our lives in the future, [James 1:17](#).

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION

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.

DAVID'S LAST WORDS

'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

We are told that 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, [2 Samuel 23:1](#). Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This character not only belonged to him as the finest poet in Israel, but as the finest and most Divine poet of the whole Christian world. The sweet psalmist of Israel has been the sweet psalmist of every part of the habitable world, where religion and piety have been held in reverence.'

David says, 'The Spirit of the Lord spoke through him, and His Word was on his tongue,' [2 Samuel 23:2](#). 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](#) / [Acts 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, [2 Samuel 23:3](#). They are to be like the light in the morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, [2 Samuel 23:4](#).

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, [2 Samuel 23:5](#) / [Isaiah 55:3](#) / [Acts 13:34](#). However, those who constantly rebel against God and His will are promised to be punished, [2 Samuel 23:6-7](#) / [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.

Ellicott, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 2 Samuel 23:8.

‘Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three, 2 Samuel 23:8. The text of this verse has undergone several alterations, which may be corrected by the parallel passage in Chronicles. This clause should read, ‘Jashobeam the Hachmonite,’ as in 1 Chronicles 11:11. Jashobeam came to David at Ziklag, 1 Chronicles 12:1 / 1 Chronicles 12:6, and afterwards became the general of the first division of the army, 1 Chronicles 27:2, being immediately followed by Dodo. One of the same family was a tutor to David’s sons, 1 Chronicles 27:32.’

Ellicott, in his commentary, continues and says the following, concerning 2 Samuel 23:8.

‘The word for ‘captain’ and the word for ‘three’, 2 Samuel 23:8, are much alike, and the text here and in Chronicles perpetually fluctuates between the two. Probably the sense here is that Jashobeam was the chief of the three who stood highest in rank among the heroes. No mention is made in either list of Joab, because, as commander-in-chief, he stood in a rank by himself. The same was Adino the Ezrite, K.J.V.’

Ellicott, in his commentary, continues and says the following, concerning 2 Samuel 23:8.

‘It is difficult to attach any meaning to these words in their connection, and they are generally considered as a corruption of the words in 1 Chronicles 11:11, ‘he lifted up his spear,’ 2 Samuel 23:8, which are required and are inserted here in the English. 2 Samuel 23:8 mentions that he killed ‘eight hundred men’, but Chronicles says he killed ‘three hundred men,’ as in 2 Samuel 23:18. Variations in numbers are exceedingly common, but the probability is in favour of the correctness of the text here. This large number was slain by Josheb-Basshebeth or Jashobeam, as the footnote says, and the men under his command in one combat.’

The following thoughts concerning each of these men have been adapted from Grant’s commentary on this chapter.

Eleazar is seen in the second place of honour, 2 Samuel 23:9-10, a man who did not retreat when the rest of Israel retreated, but boldly carried on the battle with the Philistines alone, and for so long that his hand struck the sword he was using.

By his energy of faith, the Lord accomplished a great victory, for the Lord honours the faith of one who will not be intimidated by the enemy even when no one else stands with him. The people afterwards returned after him to reap the benefits of his faith.

The third of the most outstanding three was Shammah, 2 Samuel 23:11-12. The Philistines attacked with the object of either taking for themselves a field of lentils or destroying it. 1 Chronicles 11:13 tells us it was ‘a parcel of ground full of barley’.

Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field and killed the attackers, thereby giving the Lord the victory. This illustrates the faithfulness of a believer in fighting to keep the food of the word of God from being stolen from God’s people. May we stand firmly and decidedly against anything that will deprive the saints of God of the food of His word that is so necessary for their sustenance.

Three other men are now spoken of in 2 Samuel 23:13-16 / 1 Chronicles 11:11-47, who show their devotedness to David himself in an unusual way. The garrison of the Philistines had taken possession of Bethlehem while David was in exile in the cave of Adullam.

Saul did not have the energy to expel the Philistines from Bethlehem, the house of bread, and David expressed the longing for a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem.

No doubt there was no thought in his mind of expecting anyone to take this seriously enough as to risk their lives in order to secure a drink of water for him, and he certainly gave no command as to this.

Yet these three mighty men, purely out of devotedness to David, were willing to venture their lives in breaking through the army of the Philistines with the object of drawing water from the well of Bethlehem. They did so successfully and brought the water to David.

This is a refreshing picture of the faith that delights to please the Lord in a spirit of willing self-sacrifice. David, however, appreciated their devotion more than he desired the water.

He considered that he was not worthy of so great devotion, and he poured the water out as a drink offering to God, who alone is worthy of such sacrifices, 2 Samuel 23:16-17.

Abishai, the brother of Joab, has a significant place as chief of these three men, 2 Samuel 23:18-19. Sadly, Joab himself is not mentioned as being given any honour at all in this final summation of David’s mighty men.

He was a capable warrior who gained many victories, but his one fatal flaw was the fact that his motives were proven to be selfish. It was not God’s honour that he sought, but his own. David knew this and advised Solomon that Joab must be put to death, 1 Kings 2:5-6.

Joab’s treachery could not be ignored because of his many victories. Benaiah is another one of the second three, a man who showed unusual courage, whether in fighting men or beasts, 2 Samuel 23:20-23.

He is described as being a giant of a man in 1 Chronicles 11:23. Certainly, the exploits of both of these are typical of spiritual victories, little as we may be able to interpret their significance.

We are not told the name of the third man of this group, but we are reminded in 2 Samuel 23:23 that the first three are accorded higher honour than the second three or all that follow them. These are mentioned by name only, and any spiritual lessons to be learned from them can be gleaned only from the meanings of their names.

These mighty warriors, 2 Samuel 23:8, 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 maintain 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 weren'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, Elika 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 during 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 on this chapter.

Asahel, the brother of Joab, 2 Samuel 23:24, 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, 2 Samuel 23:24, shouldn't be confused with Eleazer, the son of Dodo, 2 Samuel 23:9; he is a different person. Shammah the Harodite, 2 Samuel 23:25, and 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 Elika the Harodite, 2 Samuel 23:25, except that he was one of the thirty mighty warriors of David. Helez the Paltite, 2 Samuel 23:26, was an Ephraimite and commander of twenty-four thousand men, 1 Chronicles 11:27 / 1 Chronicles 27:10.

Ira, son of Ikkesh from Tekoa, 2 Samuel 23:26, is also mentioned in 1 Chronicles 11:28. Abiezer from Anathoth, 2 Samuel 23:27, was a Benjaminite with twenty-four thousand men under his command, 1 Chronicles 27:12.

Sibbekai the Hushathite, 2 Samuel 23:27, 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, 2 Samuel 23:28, 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, 2 Samuel 23:28, 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 twenty-four thousand men, 1 Chronicles 27:13.

Heled, son of Baanah the Netophathite, 2 Samuel 23:29, is called Heled in 1 Chronicles 11:30, and Heldai in 1 Chronicles 27:15. He was also the commander of twenty-four thousand men. Ithai, the son of Ribai from Gibeah in Benjamin, 2 Samuel 23:29, his name means ploughman or living, and he is called Ithai in 1 Chronicles 11:31.

Benaiah the Pirathonite, 2 Samuel 23:30, his name means Jehovah has built or is intelligent. He belonged to the tribe of Ephraim and was commander of twenty-four thousand men, 1 Chronicles 11:31 / 1 Chronicles 27:14.

Hiddai from the ravines of Gaash, 2 Samuel 23:30, Gaash was in Ephraim. The name Hiddai means mighty or joyful. Abi-Albon the Arbathite, 2 Samuel 23:31, 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, [2 Samuel 23:31](#), 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](#).

Eliabha the Shaalbonite, [2 Samuel 23:32](#), is also mentioned in [1 Chronicles 11:33](#), and his name means whom God hides.

The son of Jashen, [2 Samuel 23:32](#), 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, [2 Samuel 23:33](#), in [1 Chronicles 11:27](#), he is named Shammoth, and in [1 Chronicles 27:8](#), he is named Shamhuth. He was also the commander of twenty-four thousand men.

Ahiam, son of Sharar the Hararite, [2 Samuel 23:33](#), is called the son of Sakar in [1 Chronicles 11:35](#). Eliphelet, son of Ahasbai the Maakathite, [2 Samuel 23:34](#), 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, [2 Samuel 23:34](#), 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, [2 Samuel 23:35](#), 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, [2 Samuel 23:36](#), 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', [2 Samuel 23:36](#), 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, [2 Samuel 23:37](#). 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, [2 Samuel 23:38](#), 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, [2 Samuel 23:39](#), 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, [2 Samuel 23:39](#), were courageous and mighty warriors of David who helped 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 chose 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

INTRODUCTION

‘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, [2 Samuel 24:1](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:1](#). We know that when God’s anger is let loose, then the consequences for those on the receiving end aren’t going to end well. In [2 Samuel 24:1](#), it tells us that God incited David against Israel.

We must be careful how we interpret this because we could 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, [2 Samuel 24:2](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:2](#) / [Judges 20:1](#) / [1 Samuel 3:20](#) / [2 Samuel 3:20](#) / [2 Samuel 17:11](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following, concerning Joab.

‘This very bad man saw that the measure now recommended by the king was a wrong one, and might be ruinous to the people, and therefore he remonstrates against it in a very sensible speech; but the king was infatuated, and would hear no reason.’

The reason for the counting of people was possibly a lack of faith in God on David’s part, [2 Samuel 24:3-4](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:3-4](#), 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, [2 Samuel 24:5](#).

These places are mentioned in [Deuteronomy 2:36](#), and they formed the southern boundary of the land taken by Israel from Sihon.

Next, they went to Gilead and the region of Tahtim Hodshi, and on to Dan Jaan and around toward Sidon, [2 Samuel 24:6](#) / [1 Chronicles 5:10](#). Then, they went toward the fortress of Tyre and all the towns of the Hivites and Canaanites, and finally, they went on to Beersheba in the Negev of Judah, [2 Samuel 24:7](#).

It took them nine months and twenty days to finish, [2 Samuel 24:8](#) // [1 Chronicles 27:24](#). Joab now tells David the number of fighting men, and we are told that there were eight hundred thousand able-bodied men who could handle a sword in Israel and in Judah, five hundred thousand, [2 Samuel 24:9](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:5](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In the parallel place, [1 Chronicles 21:5](#), the sums are widely different: in Israel one million one hundred thousand, in Judah four hundred and seventy thousand. Neither of these sums is too great, but they cannot be both correct and which is the true number is difficult to say. The former seems the most likely, but more corruptions have taken place in the numbers of the historical books of the Old Testament than in any other part of the sacred records. To attempt to reconcile them in every part is lost labour; better, at once acknowledge what cannot be successfully denied, that although the original writers of the Old Testament wrote under the influence of the Divine Spirit, yet we are not told that the same influence descended on all copiers of their words, so as absolutely to prevent them from making mistakes. They might mistake, and they did mistake; but a careful collation of the different historical books serves to correct all essential errors of the scribes.’

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, and because he found David’s commands repulsive, [1 Chronicles 21:6](#) / [1 Chronicles 27:24](#).

‘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 for his actions, [2 Samuel 24:10](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:8](#) / [2 Samuel 24:1](#).

Before David got up the next morning, the word of the LORD had come to Gad the prophet, David’s seer, Gad, [2 Samuel 24:12](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:9](#). He tells him he has three choices, [2 Samuel 24:12](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:10](#), on how he will be punished.

Either Israel as a nation could endure seven years of famine, [2 Samuel 24:13](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:11-12](#) / [Ezekiel 14:13-21](#) / [Genesis 41:27](#) / [Genesis 41:30](#), or David himself could endure three months as a fugitive, [2 Samuel 24:13](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:12](#), or Israel could suffer three days of plagues, [2 Samuel 24:13](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:12](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In 1 Chronicles 21:12, the number is three, not seven, and here the Septuagint has three, the same as in Chronicles; this is no doubt the true reading, zain, SEVEN, being mistaken for gimel, THREE. A mistake of this kind might be easily made from the similarity of the letters.’

David chooses the three days of plagues, 2 Samuel 24:14 / 1 Chronicles 21:13. As a result of David’s sin and his choice, seventy thousand people died, 2 Samuel 24:15 / 1 Chronicles 21:14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is the most destructive plague recorded as having fallen upon the Israelites. In the plague that followed the rebellion of Korah, there died 14,700, Numbers 16:49, in the plague, on account of Baal-Peor, 24,000, Numbers 25:9 / 1 Corinthians 10:8.’

The plague came to an end by God’s command when it reached Jerusalem at the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, 2 Samuel 24:16 / 1 Chronicles 21:15.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When David saw the angel that smote the people, both he and Ornan and his four sons saw him and were affrighted, 1 Chronicles 21:20. These threshing-places, we have already seen, were made in the open air. In the parallel place, 1 Chronicles 21:15 / 1 Chronicles 21:20, this person is called Ornan.’

Notice it was the angel of the LORD who was at the threshing floor, 1 Chronicles 21:15 / 2 Samuel 24:16. Who is this angel of the LORD? This is a Christophany, which suggests that this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ, Genesis 12:7. Remember the word ‘angel’ in Hebrew is ‘malak’, and it simply means messenger. Christ is God, not an angel, Genesis 16:13.

Haynes Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A study of these passages reveals that the Angel of the Lord appeared in human form, Genesis 18:2 / Genesis 22:1-18 / Hebrews 13:2, and performed normal human functions, Genesis 32:24 / Numbers 22:23 / Numbers 22:31, yet he was an awe-inspiring figure, Genesis 32:30 / Judges 6:22 / Judges 13:22, exhibiting divine attributes and prerogatives including predicting the future, Genesis 16:10-12, forgiving sin, Exodus 23:21, and receiving worship, Exodus 3:5 / Judges 13:9-20.’

David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem and so, David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown, 1 Chronicles 21:16.

When David saw the angel of the LORD 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 24:17 / 1 Chronicles 21:17.

Ellicott, in his commentary, says the following.

‘David seeks to take all blame to himself, and prays that punishment may fall only upon him and his father’s house. But, without mooting the question as to how far the people actively shared in David’s sin, his prayer was impossible to be granted. Such was the divinely ordained federal relation between the ruler and his people that they were necessarily involved in the guilt of their head.’

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 on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, 2 Samuel 24:18 / 1 Chronicles 21:18. Some believe that this site is where the temple was going to be eventually built.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This place is supposed to be Mount Moriah, on which, according to the rabbis, Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices, where Abraham attempted to sacrifice Isaac, and where the temple of Solomon was afterwards built.’

David obeys God, and when Araunah looked, he turned and saw the angel and his four sons who were with him hid themselves, 1 Chronicles 21:20. When he saw David and his officials coming toward him, he went out and bowed down before David with his face to the ground, 2 Samuel 24:19-20 / 1 Chronicles 21:21.

Araunah asks why David is here, and David tells him he wants to buy his field so he can build an altar to the LORD, so that the plague may be stopped, 2 Samuel 24:21 / 1 Chronicles 21:22.

Although Araunah wanted to give his threshing floor to David for free, 2 Samuel 24:22-23 / 1 Chronicles 21:23, but David insisted on paying for it, 2 Samuel 24:24 / 1 Chronicles 21:24.

He pays fifty shekels not only for the land but also for the oxen and the threshing sledges and ox yokes of wood, 2 Samuel 24:24. 1 Chronicles 21:25 says that David paid six hundred shekels; this would be the price for the entire surrounding area.

So David buys the threshing floor from Araunah as the place to build the altar, 2 Samuel 24:25 / 1 Chronicles 21:25. After building the altar and sacrificing a burnt offering and fellowship offering, the Lord answered David’s prayer and stopped the plague completely, 2 Samuel 24:25 / 1 Chronicles 21:26.

The altar was built in order to thank God for sparing the nation of Israel, 1 Chronicles 21:18-26. God now spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath, 1 Chronicles 21:27. When David saw that God had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there, 1 Chronicles 21:28.

Selman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Having seen his prayers answered and his sacrifices accepted, the site had already become a ‘house of prayer’ and a ‘temple for sacrifices’, 2 Chronicles 7:12 / Isaiah 56:7.’

The tabernacle which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time on the high place at Gibeon, but David couldn’t go before it to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD, 1 Chronicles 21:29-30.

It’s interesting to note that God, through Moses, said that this threshing floor would be the very spot in Jerusalem where the future temple should be built, Deuteronomy 12:11.