

REBELLION IN ISRAEL

12 Lesson Adult Bible Study

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Lesson One

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL Background Material

Text: 1 Samuel 8, 16-7; 2 Samuel 2-5, 13

- I. We need to understand the origin and development of the monarchy in Israel.
 - A. It was allowed by God as a decision against His wisdom and pleasure. 1 Sam. 8:4-22
 1. It represented a change in leadership away from God.
 2. Samuel futilely warned the people of the dangers of such a change.
 3. However, God does select the initial king.
 - B. During the first 120 years, three men served over the unified kingdom of Israel.
 1. Saul—proves to be unsuitable.
 2. David—a man of war and conquest.
 3. Solomon—a man of peace and commerce.

- II. It is important to share a brief summary of David's life to the point the revolt begins.
 - A. David had been privately anointed as the next king by Samuel. 1 Sam. 16:1-13
 1. Saul had been rejected for his disobedience regarding the destruction of the Amalekites.
 2. David was the eighth and youngest son of Jesse.
 - B. David won acclaim among the people with his defeat of Goliath. 1 Sam. 17:1-54
 - C. David served in Saul's court for a period of time, but Saul's jealousy led him to attempt to kill David on a number of occasions.
 1. This forced the young king to become a fugitive, even spending time with the Philistines.
 2. David's attitude toward the deaths of Saul & Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:11-27) illustrate that heart that was after God (see Acts 13:22).
 - D. David becomes king after Saul's death.
 1. At first he is king only over Judah as civil strife reigns. 2 Sam. 2-4
 2. David consolidates his power over all Israel after about 7 years.
 - a. Jerusalem is captured from the Jebusites. 2 Sam. 5:1-16
 - b. The Philistines are defeated. 2 Sam. 5:17-25
 - E. David's adulterous relationship with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11 & 12) introduces a difficult period for the king.

- III. It is equally important to understand the role played by Absalom.
 - A. He was born as the third son of David while he lived in Hebron (2 Sam. 3:2-5).
 - B. Tamar, Absalom's full sister, was raped by his half-brother, Amnon (2 Sam. 13).
 1. Absalom waited 2 years and successfully plotted to kill Amnon—this avenged the sin afflicted on his sister and removed a competitor for the crown.
 2. Absalom fled to Geshur and spent three years with his maternal grandfather.
 - C. David allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem, but would not meet with him for two years. 2 Sam. 14:28
 - D. Absalom is a handsome, popular young man in Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. Why is it important to understand a person's background?

Explore It

2. How did God view Israel's wanting a king? (1 Sam. 8:4-22)

3. Who was Israel's first king? (1 Sam. 9:1-27)

4. Why was Saul rejected as Israel's king? (1 Sam. 15:1-35)

5. Who was chosen to replace Saul as king? (1 Sam. 16:1-13)

6. What were the circumstances surrounding David's becoming King of Israel? (2 Sam. 2-4)

Get It

7. What do you remember most about David as a young man?

Apply It

8. Whose background do you need to understand better in order to understand that person better?

Next Week: "Absalom's Rise To Power"—2 Sam. 15:1 -13

Lesson Two

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL Absalom's Rise To Power

Text: 2 Samuel 15:1-13

COMMENTARY

15:1-6. Absalom's first move to achieve his purposes of revenge was to make himself conveniently available (by the side of the road leading to the city gate, with his chariot and 50 men) to hear the complaints of the citizens. Cleverly he insinuated that the king was too busy to hear them and that David had not even provided lesser judges to adjudicate their cases. If only he were chief judge . . . Absalom said, he would listen to one and all and deal impartially in every matter. Absalom showed the people great affection by kissing them when they came to bow . . . before him. Thus he gradually gained the support of the masses.

15:7-12. One day, feeling that his popular support was overwhelming, Absalom requested and received permission from the king to go to Hebron, allegedly to pay a vow . . . to the LORD which he had made while in exile in Geshur (cf. 13:37). For 4 years Absalom had been weaning the people away from David. Now the time was ripe for revolution. When Absalom reached Hebron, the very center of the Davidic dynasty, where David had begun his reign (2 Sam. 3:2-3), Absalom announced his usurpation of power (15:10). The 200 men who accompanied him from Jerusalem were ignorant of his plans. Apparently they were won over as was Ahithophel . . . David's own chief counselor.

OUTLINE

- I. Absalom's rise to power was assisted by serious flaws that existed within David's kingdom.
 - A. David's reign had some "cracks".
 1. Certainly enemies would have developed—Saul's supporters; people in Hebron, etc.
 2. David's affair with Bathsheba must have raised internal doubts.
 3. It appears that David was not providing proper justice
 - a. This was the role of the king (1 Sam. 8:5; Prov. 29:14; 1 Kings 7:7).
 - b. He may well have been too involved in matters of war.
 - B. The Christian must be careful to be fully loyal and faithful to Christ—no cracks in the foundation.
 1. We need to wear the full armor—Eph. 6: 10-18.
 2. We must give the devil a place to stand and work in our lives—Eph. 4:27.
 3. We must not leave our hearts empty—Mt. 12:43-45.
- II. Absalom patiently spends four years (v.7) laying the groundwork for a revolt; in doing these things he "stole their hearts" (by deception, see Gen. 31:20, 26).
 - A. He used external factors to his benefit.
 1. He was handsome—2 Sam. 14:25-26.
 2. He paraded wealth and regal attributes (15:1) -- see 1 Kings 1:5.
 - B. He increased his popularity by siding with them in matters of judgment.
 1. He spent a great deal of time at the gate (15:2).
 2. He listened and told them what they wanted to hear (15:3).
 3. He promised to do a better job than David, if he were king (15:3-4).
 - C. He demonstrated humility by identifying himself with the common man (15:5).
- III. Absalom's plot was well planned and carried out with effectiveness.
 - A. He uses deception in order to leave Jerusalem without detection (15:7-9).
 1. This act of treachery reminds us of Judas' betrayal of the Lord.
 2. We must be careful not to use our religion as a sham behind which to hide sinfulness (a working definition of hypocrisy).
 - a. 1 Thes. 2:5 -- religion for profit.

- b. Gal. 5:13 -- religion for pleasure.
 - c. Selfish motives can destroy the best of behaviors.
- B. Absalom strengthens the conspiracy by using several people.
 - 1. Spies were sent Out through the whole country with the details of the plot.
 - a. Sounding the trumpet would be the signal.
 - b. Absalom would rule in Hebron, the town of his birth (3:2-3) and the cite of David's partial reign for 7 ½ years (5:5).
 - 2. 200 men travel with Absalom from Jerusalem who were unaware of the plot.
 - 3. Ahithophel become a traitor and joins Absalom.
 - a. He was the grandfather of Bathsheeba.
 - b. He is possibly the one referred to in Ps. 41:9 and Ps. 55: 12-14.

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. What are some ways that ambitious individuals can "buy" a following?
2. What are the characteristics of the ambitious people you know?

Explore It

3. What symbols of status and power did Absalom acquire? (15:1)
4. Whom was Absalom in the habit of intercepting at the city gate? (15:2)
5. How did Absalom flatter the people he met at the gate? (15:3)
6. With what "if only" statement did Absalom plant the idea of himself as leader? (15:4)
7. How did Absalom treat anyone who bowed down to him? (15:5)
8. How did the Israelites react to Absalom? (15:6)
9. What request did Absalom make of David when some years had passed? (15:7-9)
10. When he had gone to Hebron, what did Absalom ask his supporters to do? (15:10)
11. By what trick did Absalom give the appearance of having a large following? (15:11)
12. Whom else did Absalom find to join his rebellion? (15:12)

Get It

13. Why was the city gate a particularly good place for Absalom to ingratiate himself with the Israelites?
14. How many of Absalom's interactions with people seem to you to have been sincere?
15. How do ambitious people manipulate the truth to their own advantage?
16. Why might it be wise to wonder about the motives of people who seem unusually helpful?
17. What circumstances make people susceptible to rebellion?
18. How is it possible to reconcile a strong personal ambition with devotion to God?

Apply It

19. What ambition should you examine to see if it is submitted to the will of God?
20. What steps can you take to avoid being gullible to nay-sayers and influence-gatherers?

Next Week: "David's Flight"—2 Sam. 15:13-31

Lesson Three

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL David's Flight

Text: 2 Samuel 15:13-31

COMMENTARY

15:13-23. News quickly reached the capital that Absalom had effected a coup and that all was lost. David, convinced of the hopelessness of his cause and anxious to spare the city from destruction, made his plans to depart and head east for the Transjordan. He left behind 10 housekeeping concubines. The people, including 600 Gittites (faithful men who had followed him from Gath in Philistia when he was pursued by Saul; 1 Sam. 23:13; 27:2; 30:9), fled with David. He tried to persuade his Philistine mercenary officer, Ittai of Gath, to remain behind since he had nothing to fear from Absalom. But to his credit Ittai refused, preferring to honor his commitment of loyalty by joining the king in banishment.

15:24-29. Zadok and Abiathar, the two chief priests, were sent back to Jerusalem by David. He knew that if it was God's will for him to return as king, he would do so. Hence there was no need to keep the ark away from the sanctuary. After all, it was David and not the Lord who was going into exile. Besides, the priests' two sons (Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son) could carry to David any revelations which God might give their fathers.

OUTLINE

- I. The threat of Absalom's rebellion forces David to leave Jerusalem (2 Sam. 15:14ff.).
 - A. Two decisions appear to be behind David's decision to make a hasty departure (15:14).
 1. He fears military actions on the part of Absalom that would cut off his exit routes.
 2. He wants to spare Jerusalem and its suburbs from a devastating attack.
 - B. The route of David's retreat is given in very brief detail.
 1. They stopped at the "last house" as they awaited all who were leaving, and then they crossed the Kidron Valley (17, 23, 30).
 2. This is similar to Jesus' journey from the upper room to Gethsemane—John 18:1.
 - C. The flight from Jerusalem is filled with sorrow.
 1. Three symbols of the culture are present demonstrating the emotion of mourning (30).
 - a. They were weeping—see 2 Sam. 1:12; 3:32, 34; 18:33; 19:1.
 - b. They had their heads covered—see 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 13:19; 14:3; Esther 6:12.
 - c. They walked barefoot—see Is. 20:2-4; Ezek. 24:17.
 2. Some of the emotion is reflected in Ps. 3.
- II. David is not alone in his flight from Jerusalem.
 - A. His household goes with him (16) –including loyal servants and soldiers.
 1. This includes the "hired" bodyguards: Pelethites (Philistines) & Cherethites (Cretans).
 2. We are impressed with their willingness to leave with him (15).
 3. Ten concubines are left to care for the palace (16) -- hints that he hopes to return.
 - B. The Gittites were residents of Gath.
 1. 600 of these had been with David—possibly since the period of time he fought along side the Philistines or possibly since he captured the city of Oath (1 Chron. 18:1).
 2. Ittai had only recently come to join David's forces, and he is granted permission to go serve with Absalom (15:19-20).
 - a. He was a refugee as well.
 - b. He expresses great loyalty to David (15:21) reminding us of other similar words.: Ruth—Ruth 1:16-17; Peter—Mk. 14:31.

- C. Zadok and Abiathar (along with the Levites) bring the Ark of the Covenant.
 1. Its presence certainly could be viewed as bringing "good luck"—2 Sam. 6:10-11.
 2. David sent it back to Jerusalem and threw himself on the mercy of God.
 - a. 2 Sam. 24:13-14.
 - b. Jesus taught such principles—Mt. 6:10; 26:42.
 - c. Paul reflects this attitude in Phil. 1:19-25.
 3. David balances trust in the Lord with his own preparations.
 - a. This resembles the role of faith and works in James 2.
 - b. This resembles the responsibility to plant and water, while knowing that God alone gives the increase—1 Cor. 5:3-8.

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. What would you be thinking and feeling if a sudden calamity forced you to leave your home?
2. To what person do you feel such loyalty that you would gladly endure danger along with him or her? Why?

Explore It

3. What discouraging message came to David in Jerusalem? (15:13)
4. Why did David feel it was necessary to leave the city? (15:14)
5. How did the king's officials respond to David's orders? (15:15)
6. Who were some of the specific groups who left Jerusalem with David? (15:16-18)
7. Why did David offer to send one group back with his blessing? (15:19-20)
8. What was Ittai's response to David's urgings? (15:21)
9. What was the response of the people in the countryside when the king and his retinue passed by? (15:23)
10. What did the priests do with the holy articles when David left Jerusalem? (15:24)
11. Why did David send the ark of the covenant back into the city? (15:25-26)
12. What did David hope to accomplish by leaving the priests inside the city? (15:27-29)
13. What was the mood and appearance of David and the people with him at the Mount of Olives? (15:30)

Get It

14. Why was David so quick to leave Jerusalem without a fight?
15. What quality characterized David's close officials?
16. What actions of David showed that he was not ready to relinquish the kingship?
17. By letting events take their course, what was David waiting to find out from God?
18. What are the different roles that can be taken by helpful friends in time of calamity?
19. Why is an attitude of penitence and mourning appropriate when we are confronted with trials?

Apply It

20. How can you make strategic requests of your loyal friends when you are in need?
21. To whom do you owe loyalty, even when he or she appears to be in trouble?
22. How can you entrust yourself to God the next time you face a setback?

Next Week: "Friends At The Palace"—2 Sam. 15:32 - 16:4

Lesson Four

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL Friends At The Palace

Text: 2 Samuel 15:32 – 16:4

COMMENTARY

15:30-37. David and his loyal supporters in the meantime made their way east across the Kidron Valley and up the Mount of Olives. His covered head and unshod feet indicated his depth of despair. To make matters worse David discovered that his trusted adviser Ahithophel had joined Absalom's cause. To contravene Ahithophel's effectiveness David recruited Hushai, a friend who asked to accompany the king on his way, and persuaded him to return to Jerusalem and attach himself to Absalom's court as a counselor. His mission would be to contradict the advice of Ahithophel and to communicate Absalom's plans to Zadok and Abiathar whose sons (cf. v. 27) in turn would relay them to David (cf. 17:21; 18:19). David then continued in his flight, but Absalom took firm control of Jerusalem.

ABSALOM'S SOLIDIFICATION OF POWER (CHAP. 16)

David's forced flight from Jerusalem not only put his own kingship in jeopardy, but it also opened the door to further contention for the throne between the dynasties of Saul and David. Absalom was apparently in the process of seizing power in Jerusalem but this by no means implied that he could also gain control over the Northern tribes. In fact the shakeup in David's own family began to revive hope among the Saulites that they might be able to recover the kingdom for themselves.

16:1-4. This is first evident in the reaction of Saul's grandson Mephibosheth to David's withdrawal. While the king was heading east across the Judean hills, he was met by Mephibosheth's servant Ziba who, out of gratitude to David for his past kindness toward him (chap. 9), now provided the fugitive king donkeys and provisions for the journey. But Ziba also brought David the sad news that Mephibosheth had turned against the king, hoping that in the midst of the turmoil occasioned by the revolution he might be able to retrieve Saul's old throne (16:3; but cf. 19:24-30). David then stripped from Mephibosheth the generous pension he had given him earlier and bequeathed it all to Ziba (cf. 9:7, 13).

OUTLINE

- I. Hushai is sent back to Jerusalem by the fleeing king (15:32-37).
 - A. We learn several things about this individual who will play an important role in the future.
 1. He is an Archite—one from the city of Archi in the territory of Benjamin—Josh. 16:2.
 2. He comes to follow David, sharing in the tone of mourning (see 2 Sam. 1:2 & Job 2:12 for similar symbols of grief).
 - a. He has torn his coat.
 - b. He has placed dust (ground) upon his head.
 3. Hushai is called a friend of David (37) -- a loyal advisor more than intimate associate.
 - B. David sends him back to Jerusalem to serve as a counter intelligence agent."
 1. David views Hushai's travel with them to be a burden.
 2. His ability to counter the advice of Ahithophel is viewed as an answer to the prayer of verse 31.
 3. We will encounter Hushai's arrival in 16:15-19 and his effective counsel in 17:5ff.
 - C. Sometimes we are more effective in serving God's purposes in areas not of our choosing.
 1. Jonah needed to go to Nineveh—Jonah.
 2. The recently healed demoniac needed to stay in his area—Mark 5:18-20.
 3. Paul needed to go to Macedonia—Acts 16:6-10.

- II. Two loyal priests, Zadok and Abiathar, are in Jerusalem (15:35-36).
 - A. These had been sent back with the Ark of the Covenant a short time earlier (15:24-29).
 - B. These men along with their sons (Ahimaaz and Jonathan) were to serve as informants to David of Absalom's plans.
- III. Ziba comes to David to express his loyalty (16:1-4).
 - A. Ziba was serving as caretaker for Mephibosheth (Saul's grandson). 2 Sam. 9:2-12
 - 1. He has 15 sons and 20 servants.
 - 2. He brings a significant gift to David and his forces.
 - a. Transportation—two donkeys.
 - b. Food -- 200 loaves of bread; 100 clusters of raisins; 100 summer fruits; jug wine.
 - 3. He implicates Mephibosheth in a plot to restore the throne to the house of Saul, and as a result David awards him the entire estate of Mephibosheth.
 - B. It is difficult to identify where Ziba is during the civil war.
 - 1. He does not appear to have been with David or Mephibosheth.
 - 2. He is reintroduced with a group from the tribe of Benjamin in II Sam. 19:17.
 - C. Mephibosheth appears to have been the loyal one abiding in Jerusalem during the conflict.
 - 1. A brief look at 2 Sam. 19:24ff. indicates this.
 - 2. We are reminded of the danger of making decisions based only on external appearances.
 - a. 1 Sam. 16:7.
 - b. John 7:24.
 - c. Judas appeared loyal but was a traitor.

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. In what circumstances can it be difficult to tell your friends from your enemies?

Explore It

2. What was David's prayer when he learned who was advising his son Absalom? (15:31)
3. Who met David at the summit of the Mount of Olives? (15:32)
4. What role did David assign to his friend Hushai in order to assist his cause? (15:33-37)
5. Who met David with provisions as he was fleeing Jerusalem? (16:1-2)
6. What difference of opinion did Ziba report between himself and Mephibosheth? (16:3)
7. What was David's response to Ziba's actions? (16:4)

Get It

8. Why is it not wise to take one person's version of events at face value without hearing the other side?

Apply It

9. How do you need to distance yourself from people whose attitudes and methods conflict with your own?

Next Week: "A Heckler On The Roadside"—2 Sam. 16:5-14

Lesson Five

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL A Heckler On the Roadside

Text: 2 Samuel 16:5-14

COMMENTARY

16:5-14. David next encountered Shimei, another relative of Saul, who greeted the fleeing monarch and his officials at Bahurim (east of the Mount of Olives) with curses and physical abuse, pelting them with stones. He taunted David with the observation that since he was a man of blood God was now avenging the death of Saul and his family by driving David from power. This was untrue, of course, for David had not raised his hand against Saul, whom he regarded as the anointed of the Lord, but had taken every measure to deal graciously with Saul's survivors. Shimei's real complaint, as is evident from his own admission, was that David sat on the throne of Saul (Saul, in whose place you have reigned). Abishai, David's bodyguard and nephew, begged the king to let him decapitate Shimei (whom Abishai called a dead dog, i.e., worthless and despised; cf. 9:8). But David forbade him to do so, observing that it might well be that Shimei cursed as an instrument of God Himself. If Absalom, David's own son, was trying to kill him, why should the cursing of Shimei be of concern? God would someday vindicate, but for now there must be no recompense for Shimei's evil conduct. Shimei continued his cursing, stone-throwing, and dirt-tossing as David continued on the road to his destination.

OUTLINE

- I. Shimei comes Out against David near Bahurim (2 Sam. 16:5ff).
 - A. Shimei was the son of Gera and a Benjamite who still held loyalty to King Saul.
 - B. He demonstrates his displeasure toward David in several ways.
 1. He curses David continually (5)-- in the form of heckling not vulgarity.
 2. He throws stones at David (6)-- more in protest than in actual assault.
 3. He throws dust at them (13)-- symbolic of his anger and his grief.
 - C. It is important that we try to understand the motivation behind Shimei's actions.
 1. He holds David responsible for the deaths of Saul and his family (7-8).
 - a. The death of Saul and his three sons in the battle on Mt. Gilbea (1 Sam. 31:1-6).
 - b. The death of Abner (Saul's uncle) --2 Sam. 3:22-39.
 - c. The death of Ishbosheth (Saul's son) --2 Sam. 4:5-12.
 - d. The death of 7 of Saul's descendants to appease the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21:1-14).
 2. He views Absalom's revolt as God's punishment against David (8).
 3. He has total disdain for David's character; calls him "worthless fellow" (KJV, "son of Belial") -- see use of similar word in: a. 1 Sam.2:12; b. 1 Kings 21:10; c. Ps. 101:3.
 - D. We learn a great truth about most criticism -- it is offered in ignorance.
 1. David was not responsible for these acts -- see especially...
 - a. 2 Sam. 3:28 regarding Abner.
 - b. 2 Sam. 4:9-12 regarding Ishbosheth.
 2. The bulk of our complaints fall into the same category -- Phil. 2:14.
- II. David's response to the "heckling" teaches great lessons regarding true character -- humility, patience, and self-restraint.
 - A. Abishai seeks permission to kill Shimei (9).
 1. Abishai was the son Zeruah (David's sister) and brother to Asahel and Joab.
 2. His aggressive attitude had led to the killing of Abner.
 3. Although David had certain kingly rights, revenge would have been a military blunder.
 - B. David responds by excusing Shimei's behavior on three grounds.
 1. Perhaps, God had told Shimei to curse David (10).

2. If David's own son could lead a revolt, perhaps others had legitimate complaints (11).
3. Possibly God would take the curse and turn it into a blessing (12).
- C. There is a great lesson to be learned here -- retaliation is not necessary.
 1. Jesus certainly taught and demonstrated this truth in His ministry.
 - a. Mt. 5:38-42.
 - b. Lk. 9:52-56.
 - c. 1 Pt.2:23.
 2. We need to learn to ignore unjust criticism and trust the Lord completely.
- D. David and his associates complete the first stage of their journey and find rest (14).

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. As a child of God, who is likely to rejoice if you stumble?
2. How does it feel to be in a crowd that includes a heckler?

Explore It

3. What did Shimei son of Gera do when David's entourage passed his way? (16:5-6)
4. What accusation and curse did Shimei level against David? (16:7-8)
5. Why was Shimei so bitter against David? (16:8)
6. What did Abishai propose to do to Shimei? (16:9)
7. How did David's view of the situation differ radically from Abishai's? (16:10)
8. What order did David give concerning Shimei, and what was his reason for doing so? (16:11)
9. For what outcome did David hope instead of the immediate death of the heckler? (16:12)
10. What did Shimei continue to do as David and his men journeyed on? (16:13)
11. What did David do when he arrived at his destination? (16:14)

Get It

12. What character traits did David exhibit through his reaction to Shimei?
13. In what ways did David think Shimei's behavior was "understandable"?
14. What can a person learn from his or her critics?
15. In what ways is it appropriate to distance yourself from "enemies"?
16. Would you prefer to vindicate yourself or to be vindicated by God in due time? Why?
17. How does our belief in God enable us to respond charitably toward our enemies?

Apply It

18. To what critic in your life would you like to learn to respond with silence and faith in God?

Next Week: "Political and Military Strategy" -- 2 Sam. 16:15-17:23

Lesson Six

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL Political and Military Strategy

Text: 2 Samuel 16:15 – 17:23

COMMENTARY

16:15-23. Meanwhile Absalom arrived in Jerusalem and was immediately met by Hushai, a friend of David who was pretending to be loyal to Absalom. His mission as contradictor to the counsel of Ahithophel, Absalom's chief adviser, would be implemented later. When Absalom asked Ahithophel what he should do, his adviser told him to lie with his father's concubines, an evidence of his succession (cf. 3:6-7), advice which Absalom quickly followed. The words of counsel which Ahithophel gave were given credence as though they came directly from God, so highly regarded was his wisdom. Hushai's assignment would be difficult indeed.

ABSALOM'S PURSUIT OF DAVID (CHAP. 17)

17:1-14. The second bit of advice which Ahithophel gave Absalom was that he, Ahithophel, should be delegated to pursue David in order to kill him and return everyone else. With their king dead his followers would certainly capitulate and return to Jerusalem peacefully. Eager for a second opinion, Absalom called for Hushai and asked him if Ahithophel's counsel was wise. Hushai told Absalom that David and his men, far from being exhausted, would be more courageous and fearsome than ever. Like a wild bear whose cubs have been stolen, the king, Hushai said, would be enraged over the loss of his kingdom. To move against him now would be foolish. Initial casualties, which were certain to occur, would cause Absalom's men to despair of victory and thus his cause would be defeated. It would be far better, Hushai continued, for Absalom to wait until he could amass a huge army and then attack. David and his host could then be destroyed even if it meant dragging their place of refuge into the Valley. Absalom was at once struck with Hushai's sagacity and decided to follow his instruction and reject that of Ahithophel. Obviously this was the Lord's doing, to frustrate Ahithophel's advice and bring disaster on Absalom.

17:15-23. Hushai immediately communicated Ahithophel's advice and his own to Zadok and Abiathar, who then sent their sons Jonathan and Ahimaaz from En Rogel (south of Jerusalem; see the map "Jerusalem in the Time of the Kings," near 1 Kings 9:15) to David with the message that he must hasten his flight. But the young men were spotted and their errand was reported to Absalom. Thanks to the boldness and kindness of a woman in the village of Bahurim east of the Mount of Olives (cf. 16:5), they escaped detection by hiding in a dry well. Then they made their way to David, who by now was at the Jordan. Without delay David and his followers crossed the river where they sought refuge at Mahanaim. Back at Jerusalem, Ahithophel, crushed because his counsel to Absalom had been spurned, committed suicide in his hometown by hanging himself.

OUTLINE

- I. The forces opposed to David settle into Jerusalem in full control of the capital. (16:15)
 - A. Absalom enters Jerusalem the same day that David has fled.
 - B. Two military strategists arise in Absalom's "cabinet".
 1. Ahithophel enters with Absalom (see 15:12, 31).
 2. Hushai comes as a spy falsely pledging loyalty to Absalom (16:16-19).
- II. Absalom seeks military advice on how to pursue David.
 - A. Ahithophel suggests a show of power to be followed by an immediate attack (16:20-17:4).
 1. He suggests that Absalom openly take David's concubines (see 15:16).
 - a. This would demonstrate Absalom's disgust for his father and strengthen his support among the people for the completion of the revolution.
 - b. This event also fulfilled the prophecy of Nathan in 2 Sam. 12:11-12.
 2. He suggests taking 12,000 troops and pursuing David that very night.
 - a. This was based on the weariness of the exiles.
 - b. It places top priority on killing David but sparing the people following him.
 3. Initially this plan pleases Absalom (17:4) just as his previous counsel had been viewed. (16:23)
 - B. Hushai suggests delaying the attack, knowing such an approach would favor David (17:5-13).
 1. He reasons that David and his men are mighty warriors (see 1 Sam. 18:7) and are presently in a "fierce" mood.
 2. He suggests that David would not camp with the army and would likely escape.
 3. He warns that even a moderate defeat could demoralize Absalom's new army.
 4. He argues the advantages of taking time to collect a large, universal army.
 - a. Absalom could lead those unified forces.
 - b. A large army could destroy David, even if he fled into a town for safety.
 - C. Absalom chose to follow the advice of Hushai (17:14)—an act consistent with God's purpose. (see Prov. 21:30-31)
 1. Unsure of the king's decision, Hushai sends a message to David to cross the river.
 - a. This his message was carried by Jonathan and Ahimaaz at great risk (17:15-21).
 - b. David heeded the message (17:22).
 2. Upon having his advice rejected, Ahithophel returns to his home and commits suicide.
 - a. His motive may have been either embarrassment or fear.
 - b. For other suicides consider: Samson, Saul & his armor bearer, Zimri, and Judas.
- III. Certain behaviors in our text raise serious ethical questions.
 - A. Are the lies of Hushai (16:16-19) and the woman in Bahurim (17:17-20) approved of by God?
 1. Other similar O.T. events can be found in Josh. 2:4-23 and 1 Sam. 19:11-18.
 2. Does the "end justify the means"?
 - B. We must be careful not to accept "historical behavior" as "approved behavior."
 1. God often uses man's sinful behaviors to advance His own Cause—consider Judas.
 2. Each of us is responsible for our own lives and must choose right over wrong.

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. What are the pros and cons of a head of state relying on advisors?
2. To whom do you turn for advice?
3. What makes your favorite "chase" scene from a book or movie so exciting?

Explore It

4. Who was at Absalom's side when he entered Jerusalem? (16:15)
5. What question did Absalom have for Hushai the Arkite when they met? (16:16-17)
6. What reasons did Hushai give to convince Absalom that he would change his loyalties? (16:18-19)
7. What was Ahithophel's advice on how Absalom should proceed in his bid to become king instead of David? (16:20-22)
8. How was Ahithophel regarded as an advisor to kings? (16:23)
9. What plan of attack did Ahithophel recommend to Absalom? (17:1-4)
10. What was Hushai's reasoning to convince Absalom that Ahithophel's plan was not good? (17:5-10)
11. What alternate advice did Hushai give to Absalom? (17:11-13)
12. Which advisor's plan was more likely to bring success to Absalom? (17:14)
13. Why did Absalom choose to follow Hushai's advice? (17:14)
14. What message did Hushai send to David via the priests? (17:15-16)
15. Why did the priests' sons end up hiding from Absalom's men? (17:17-18)
16. Who assisted Ahimaaz and Jonathan in hiding from Absalom's men? (17:18-20)
17. What did David and his followers do in response to Hushai's message? (17:21-22)
18. How did Ahithophel take the news that his advice had not been followed? (17:23)

Get It

19. Why was Ahithophel such a valuable asset to Absalom?
20. In what sense was the struggle between Absalom and David more a struggle of wits than of armies?
21. What evidence do we have that intelligence and even wisdom can be used for either good or evil?
22. How can we filter the advice we receive to ensure that it is according to God's wisdom?
23. Why is teamwork often essential to achieving our objectives?
24. Why are outrageous and detestable actions used as a strategy of war?
25. How important is motivation and morale in the outcome of military fighting?

Apply It

26. What safeguards should you employ before taking the advice of a widely acknowledged expert?
27. How can you make a contribution this week to the teamwork of the people of God?

Next Week: "Battle Lines Drawn"—2 Sam. 17:24 - 18:5

Lesson Seven

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL "Battle Lines Drawn"

Text: 2 Samuel 17:24 – 18:5

COMMENTARY

17:24-29. Probably David chose to go to Mahanaim because it was fortified and also had served as the capital of Israel under Ish-Bosheth (2:8). There could well have been a residue of good feeling there toward David because of David's past favors to Saul's family, especially to Mephibosheth (9:10-13). While he was there, his meager provisions of food and supplies were augmented by Shobi son of Nahash (and brother of Hanun, 10:1), Makir of Lo Debar (see comments on 9:4), and Barzillai of Rogelim, 25 miles north of Mahanaim. They brought such items as bedding . . . bowls . . . pottery, and extensive food supplies including wheat and barley, flour and roasted grain, beans and lentils, honey, curds, and sheep, and cheese. These three men were chieftains tributary to David, bound to him by ties of loyalty and obligation. (Barzillai was old and wealthy, 19:32.) Besides, they may have preferred to cast their lot with David, a known quantity, as opposed to Absalom, an unknown.

4. ABSALOM'S DEFEAT AND DEATH (CHAP. 18)

18:1-5. David, now in security and with his supplies replenished, quickly took measures to reorganize his troops and prepare them for the inevitable encounter with Absalom. A third of his troops he assigned to Joab; a third to Abishai, Joab's brother; and a third to Ittai. David determined that he would lead the attack personally, but his comrades dissuaded him. He was worth 10,000 of them, they said. If half of them died all would go on. But if he died the whole cause would be lost. Reluctantly David agreed to remain behind but commanded his officers that they not harm Absalom in the battle.

OUTLINE

- I. The imminent battle between David and Absalom will be fought near Mahanaim (17:24).
 - A. This town is to the east of the Jordan River and has some Old Testament heritage.
 1. Gen. 32:2 –name meant "two camps" and Jacob met the "angels of God" there.
 2. Josh. 13:26 –it was a city marking the boundaries of Gad.
 3. Josh. 21:38 –it was a city that was given to the Levites.
 4. 2 Sam. 2:8,12 –it was the fortified city used by Ishbosheth as his capital during the time David reigned in Hebron.
 - B. As David camps there, three men bring them supplies (17:27-29).
 1. Shobi was an Ammonite likely put in charge after David's defeat of Ammon (12:29ff.).
 2. Machir was the one who raised Mephibosheth (9:1-13).
 3. Barzillai was a loyal supporter (see touching story in 19:31-39).
- II. The military leaders for this conflict are clearly identified (17:24-26; 18:1-4).
 - A. Absalom's forces cross the Jordan in pursuit of David (17:24-25).
 1. Amasa, who was possibly Absalom's cousin, was put in charge of the army.
 2. Absalom personally goes with the army into battle.
 - a. This had been the advice of Hushai. (17:11)
 - b. They camped in the land of Gilead.

- B. David had organized an impressive army during the time Absalom was increasing his forces.
 - 1. David's military organization can be seen in 18:1 (see Num. 31:14; I Sam. 18:12; 22:7).
 - 2. David divided his army into three parts (see Judges 7:16 & 9:43 for similar military strategy) placing a general over each.
 - a. Joab was David's nephew who possessed previous military experience.
 - b. Abishai was David's nephew and had one exploit with David—I Sam.25:5-12.
 - c. Ittai was the Gittitite with 600 soldiers who expressed loyalty in 15:19ff.
 - 3. David intends to go out into battle with the army—a failure he had made in 2 Sam. 11.
 - a. The people warned him of his value and convinced him to remain in the city.
 - b. He does stand at the gate and see the soldiers off to battle.
- III. David offers one special command concerning the treatment of Absalom (18:5).
 - A. They were to deal gently with Absalom (the young man).
 - 1. Though he was a rebellious son, he was still a loved son—consider Jesus' parable of the prodigal son in Lk. 15:11ff.
 - 2. In this request, David evidences the "heart of God."
 - B. The basis of such grace is clearly stated—it was not for Absalom's sake but for David's sake.
 - 1. Grace is motivated and understood only through the eyes of the giver—Mt. 20:1-15.
 - 2. Our salvation can be understood only through the eyes of God—John 3:16.
 - C. The generals and the people understood the meaning of David's command.

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. What instance can you name when you decided to do what seemed best for someone else rather than what he or she wanted you to do?

Explore It

2. Who led the armies of Absalom to Gilead in pursuit of David? (17:24-26)
3. Who brought provisions to David at Mahanaim? (17:27-29)
4. How did David organize his army of supporters? (18:1-2)
5. For what reasons did David's followers ask him not to go into battle himself? (18:3)
6. What command did all the troops hear David giving his commanders as they left the city? (18:5)

Get It

7. Why was Ahithophel such a valuable asset to Absalom?
8. In what sense was the struggle between Absalom and David more a struggle of wits than of armies?
9. What evidence do we have that intelligence and even wisdom can be used for either good or evil?
10. How can we filter the advice we receive to ensure that it is according to God's wisdom?

Apply It

11. What safeguards should you employ before taking the advice of a widely acknowledged expert?

Next Week: "The Death of Absalom"—2 Sam. 18:6-18

Lesson Eight

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL The Death of Absalom

Text: 2 Samuel 18:6-18

COMMENTARY

18:6-18. The encounter soon followed in the forest of Ephraim, a deserted place in the vicinity of Mahanaim (cf. 17:24, 27) but otherwise unknown. As terrible as Absalom's losses were by the swords of David's heroes (18:7), they were even greater from the elements of that inhospitable terrain (v. 8). Absalom himself, in a frantic attempt to escape on his mule, rode beneath a large oak tree and became tangled in its branches. He was suspended in midair. A soldier of David found him in this predicament but because David had ordered his men not to hurt Absalom, the soldier refused to harm him further. Bloodthirsty Joab was not so reluctant, however, and thrust Absalom in the heart with three javelins. Immediately 10 of his attendants struck Absalom to make sure he died. Absalom had already erected a memorial (a pillar called Absalom's Monument) to his own name in the King's Valley (traditionally the Kidron Valley immediately east of Jerusalem) because he had no son to carry on his name. Joab buried him in a pit in the forest and piled over it a memorial cairn.

OUTLINE

- I. The battle between Absalom's forces and David's forces is presented in very brief detail (18:6-8).
 - A. It took place in the Forest of Ephraim.
 1. This certainly is in the Trans-jordan area near Mahanaim.
 2. It is likely some of the forest land described in Joshua 17:15-18.
 - B. Israel (Absalom) was defeated by David's organized forces.
 1. 20,000 of Absalom's army were killed.
 2. The terrain of the battle was the major cause of casualties: a. Trees. b. Pits. c. Precipices. d. Undergrowth.
 3. We must not lose sight of the hand of God in this victory.
 - C. The battle was halted by the sounding of the trumpet by Joab (see v.16).
- II. The key event in the text is the death of Absalom (18:9-16).
 - A. Absalom became trapped in an oak tree as he fled from David's soldiers.
 1. Josephus (*Antiquities* 7.239) mentions his hair being caught (2 Sam. 14:26), but the text merely mentions his head.
 2. The mule was a royal form of transportation.
 - B. One of David's soldiers observed Absalom's plight and went to inform Joab.
 1. Joab scolds him for not having killed Absalom on the spot—promised reward.
 2. This man shares two reasons why he did not kill Absalom.
 - a. It would have been against the wishes of David.
 - b. He knew Joab would not support his action to David.
 - C. Joab proceeds to kill Absalom.
 1. Joab thrusts three spears into Absalom's mid-section (heart) as he hangs from the tree.
 - a. Joab had a special hatred for Absalom—possibly for burning his field (14:30-31).
 - b. This was his objective in the battle—he halts it after achieving it (16).
 2. The ten armor-bearers take Absalom from the tree and complete the murder.
 3. We must never forget: rebellion, whether politically or spiritually, always has its price.
- III. Absalom is buried on the battlefield (18:17-18).
 - A. Near where he was slain, Absalom was buried in a pit.
 1. The soldiers placed a heap of stones over him—truly a burial of dishonor.
 - a. See Josh. 7:25-26 -- burial of Achan after his execution for sin.

- b. See Josh. 8:29 & 10:27 for the burial of the enemy kings.
 - 2. Israel then fled back to her tents.
- B. Absalom had prepared a monument for himself years before.
 - 1. It was not uncommon to build a monument to ones' self during his own lifetime—1 Sam. 15:12; Dan. 3.
 - 2. It was to be a memorial to him, since his sons apparently had died (see 14:27).

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. What instance can you name when you decided to do what seemed best for someone else rather than what he or she wanted you to do?
2. What do you want people to say about you after you are gone?

Explore It

3. What did David and his followers do in response to Hushai's message? (17:21-22)
4. How did Ahithophel take the news that his advice had not been followed? (17:23)
5. Who led the armies of Absalom to Gilead in pursuit of David? (17:24-26)
6. Who brought provisions to David at Mahanaim? (17:27-29)
7. How did David organize his army of supporters? (18:1-2)
8. For what reasons did David's followers ask him not to go into battle himself? (18:3)
9. What command did all the troops hear David giving his commanders as they left the city? (18:5)
10. How did Absalom's side (Israel) fare in the battle against David? (18:6-7)
11. How did the location of the battle add a unique element to the fighting? (18:6-8)
12. What happened to Absalom just as he encountered David's men? (18:9)
13. What was Joab's complaint against the man who reported Absalom's whereabouts? (18:10-11)
14. How did the soldier explain his reasons for not killing Absalom on the spot? (18:12-13)
15. How did Joab make sure that Absalom was not taken alive? (18:14-15)
16. How was the battle brought to an end? (18:16)
17. What became of Absalom and of the Israelite army? (18:17)
18. Why had Absalom built a monument to himself while he was still alive? (18:18)

Get It

19. Why did David want his army to "be gentle with the young man Absalom"?
20. Why do you suppose Joab chose to ignore David's plea and killed Absalom himself?
21. To what extent can human beings control how they will be remembered?
22. In what sense was Absalom's death good news for Israel and Judah?
23. When is a person's fondest wish not in his or her best interest?
24. What can be good or bad about taking advantage of someone's sudden vulnerability?

Apply It

25. What close friend can help you determine whether your desires really constitute what is best for you?
26. What habits can you establish that will partly ensure that you will be remembered favorably?

Next Week: "Two Runners; Two Messages"—2 Sam. 18:19-32

Lesson Nine

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL Two Runners; Two Messages

Text: 2 Samuel 18:19-32

COMMENTARY

18:19-23. When Ahimaaz, David's courier (cf. 15:36; 17:17), announced that he would set out to bear word to David of the army's victory Joab forbade him to do so, ostensibly to spare the king unnecessarily early grief over his son's death. Joab may also have been concerned for the well-being of the young messenger for the bearer of such bad news might not be well received. Instead Joab dispatched an unnamed Cushite (an Ethiopian) who was obviously known to David. He was either considered more knowledgeable as to what had happened to Absalom (see 18:29) or was more expendable. Ahimaaz was not to be denied, however, and finally received permission to go. Taking a shortcut, he outran the Cushite.

18:24-33. Both runners were seen from a distance, and when David understood that the nearer was Ahimaaz he assumed that the message he was conveying was good because Ahimaaz himself was good. The assumption was unfounded, however, for when Ahimaaz finally was able to deliver his message all he could do was speak in general terms of the victory over Absalom. The details were left to the Cushite who presently arrived and shared with the king the grisly news that Absalom and his confederates were dead. Overwhelmed, the king retired to an upper room where he privately poured out his heart before God in unremitting grief. The depths of his love for his rebel son are couched in his lament, If only I had died instead of you. Two of David's sons, Amnon (13:28-29) and Absalom (18:15), died violent deaths as a consequence of David's sin (12:10).

OUTLINE

- I. Joab needs to select a messenger to deliver to David news concerning the battle (18:19-23).
 - A. Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok the high priest, desires to be sent (19).
 1. Ahimaaz has served as a messenger before—2 Sam. 17:15-21
 2. Joab does not want to send him, possibly fearing a strong negative reaction from the king upon discovering the death of Absalom—see 2 Sam 1:1-16 and 4:5-12.
 3. He pleads for permission to go for he is willing to take his chances (22-23).
 - B. A Cushite is selected by Joab to carry the news.
 1. The Cushites are generally identified as the inhabitants of Ethiopia.
 2. Joab will risk the safety of a foreigner rather than a Jew.
- II. Both runners deliver their messages to king David (24-32).
 - A. David was waiting at Mahanaim for the news.
 1. He was between the inner and outer gates of the city—a position that afforded him safety and accessibility.
 2. The watchman is on the wall looking for any sign of activity.
 - a. Is.21:6
 - b. Jer. 6:17
 - c. Ezek. 3:17-21; 33:1-9
 - B. David is waiting with great anticipation for so much hangs in the balance.
 1. David is optimistic and is hoping for the best possible news.
 - a. He sees one runner and takes that to be good—no rout or retreat.
 - b. He knows Ahimaaz is a good man—must have been selected for good news (27).
 2. Remember, there are two issues in David's mind.
 - a. He wants to have won the battle and solidified his position as king.

- b. He wanted for Absalom to be safe.
- C. Each of the runners shares his message with David.
 - 1. Ahimaaz arrives first.
 - a. He was a swift runner who took the way of the plain (longer but faster).
 - b. He tells of the good news of the battle—victory for David.
 - c. He evades David's question about Absalom; the deceit is evident from v. 20.
 - 2. The Cushite arrives shortly after Ahimaaz.
 - a. He offers the good news concerning the battle.
 - b. He proudly announces the death of Absalom as a rebel.
 - 3. Both runners gave God the credit for the military victory (28, 31).
 - a. Ex. 12:25
 - b. 1 Sam. 17:45-47
 - c. 1 Cor. 15:57

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. What would you do if someone urged you not to grieve a loved one's death?
2. To what extent do you expect a leader to set aside his or her personal feelings for the good of the group?
3. Why would you or would you not want to be the one to break bad news to your best friend?

Explore It

4. Who wanted to take the news of the battle's outcome to David? (18:19)
5. Why did Joab want to send a different messenger than the one who wanted to go? (18:20)
6. Whom did Joab send with the news of Absalom's defeat and death? (18:21)
7. What did Joab do when Ahimaaz insisted that he wanted to run with the news of Absalom's death? (18:23)
8. What did the watchman report to David, who was waiting inside the city? (18:24-26)
9. What did David assume about the two lone runners coming his way? (18:24-27)
10. Why did David assume that Ahimaaz came with good news? (18:27)
11. What positive message did Ahimaaz convey to David? (18:28)
12. How did Ahimaaz respond to David's inquiries about Absalom's safety? (18:29)
13. How did the Cushite answer the question from David? (18:32)

Get It

14. Why was Joab hesitant to send the son of a priest to David with bad news?
15. Why did both of the messengers present the good news first?
16. Why was David's reaction confusing and disheartening to his followers?
17. Why is it difficult to give up hope about someone we love, even when there is no logical reason to hope?

Apply It

18. In what concrete way can you show appreciation for someone who has sacrificed on your behalf?
19. What are some responsibilities that you need to fulfill despite how you feel?

Next Week: "David's Grief"—2 Sam. 18:33-19:8

Lesson Ten

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL David's Grief

Text: 2 Samuel 18:33 – 19:8

COMMENTARY

THE PREPARATIONS FOR RETURN (CHAP. 19)

19:1-3. What should have been a day of triumphant joy became to David a day of profound grief. His elation at having regained the kingdom was undercut by his despair at having lost a son. So chagrined were David's soldiers that they slipped out of Mahanaim as though they were losers instead of winners.

19:4-8a. Joab, who had known before the frustration of doing what he felt was right only to have the king turn it against him (cf. 3:27-39; 14:28-33), confronted David and rebuked him for his insensitivity toward his officers and people. It appeared, Joab said, that David would have been more satisfied if Absalom had lived and all of them had died. In order to salvage what little morale was left, Joab urged David to appear before the troops and assure them that he appreciated their selfless service to him.

OUTLINE

- I. We are presented an open view of David's grief (2 Sam. 18:33).
 - A. The depth of David's feelings over Absalom's death are presented in the text (compare with his grief at the death of Saul & Jonathan in 1:17-22 and the death of his infant son in 12:16-17).
 1. He was deeply moved (visibly touched) (v. 33).
 2. He wept continually (vv. 33, 1).
 3. He covered his face (humility and sincerity).
 4. His language indicated that he wished that he had died in place of Absalom—note the parallels with the death of Jesus.
 - B. Grief is a complex emotion.
 1. Primarily, grief comes from the experiencing of a loss in one's life.
 - a. David refers to him as his "son" eight times in this text.
 - b. We can lose people or things from our lives and thus incur grief.
 2. The process of grief can be complicated by such issues as guilt.
 - a. David certainly had demonstrated parenting flaws in raising Absalom.
 - b. We see a flaw in his raising of Adonijah (Absalom's younger brother), 1 Kings 1:6.
 3. We need to recall that grief recovery takes time and progresses through stages: a. Denial. b. Anger. c. Bargaining. d. Depression. e. Acceptance.
- II. We witness the effect of David's grief on others.
 - A. David's grief was contagious within the army of Israel (19:1-4).
 1. The victory over the rebellious forces was turned into a period of sorrow.
 - a. There was no victory celebration as in Exodus 15 or Judges 5.
 - b. The soldiers seemed to understand this intellectually but not emotionally.
 2. The people quietly slipped back to the city (3) and their tents (8) just like a defeated or cowardly army.

- a. It was like a big football win which included the serious injury of a key player.
 - b. It was like the return of the Vietnam veterans.
 - c. It was like a negative reaction to the achievement of a child.
- B. Joab boldly comes to confront David's persistent grief (19:5-7).
 - 1. He expresses to David the feelings of the army.
 - a. They feel unappreciated (5).
 - b. They question where David's loyalties really lie (6).
 - 2. He warns that the people are on the brink of deserting him (7).
 - 3. Leadership must always understand and serve those who follow them—see 1 Pt. 5:1-4.
- C. David's response to the rebuke of Joab was quite positive (19:8).
 - 1. David greets the troops at the gate—a visible act of thanks and praise.
 - a. Recall the gate in 18:4.
 - b. Recall the gate in 18:24.
 - 2. We are impressed with David's response to criticism—2 Sam. 12:13.

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. Why would you or would you not want to be the one to break bad news to your best friend?

Explore It

2. What was David's response to the news of the death of his son? (18:33)
3. Why was the spirit of victory squashed among David's supporters? (19:2-3)
4. What was David's lament from the time he learned the news of his son's death? (19:4)
5. What were Joab's accusations against David? (19:5-6)
6. What did Joab warn would happen if David didn't encourage the troops? (19:7)
7. What did David do in response to Joab's urgings? (19:8)

Get It

8. Why is it impossible for grief and rejoicing to happen side by side?
9. What level of responsibility does God require of leaders?
10. To what extent does God expect a leader to set aside his or her own emotions and work for the good of the group?
11. Why is it wise to reward loyalty and sacrifice?

Apply It

12. How can you reach out to someone who is dealing with bad news?

Next Week: "Old Acquaintances Meet the King"—2 Sam. 19:9 –43

Lesson Eleven

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL Old Acquaintances Meet the King

Text: 2 Samuel 19:9-43

COMMENTARY

19:8b-13. The remnants of Absalom's army had made their way home and together with the rest of Israel found themselves in a quandary. They had rallied behind Absalom, but now he was dead. Moreover, David had provided effective leadership in the past. So why were the elders not bringing the king back? Sensing the local officials' indecision, David sent . . . Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, to them to ask why they were so reluctant to restore David when it was clear that the people were willing and ready to do so. No doubt to shore up his support from Judah especially, David told the priests to promise Amasa, his nephew (cf. 17:25; 1 Chron. 2:17), that he would succeed Joab as commander of the army (2 Sam. 19:13). Joab, also David's nephew through another half sister (1 Chron. 2:16), had by now become completely discredited in David's eyes because of his open disagreements with David's policies.

19:14-23. The mission of Zadok and Abiathar was successful. With one accord (as though they were one man) the people of Judah not only invited David to return to rule over them but they also sent a delegation to the Jordan River to meet him and help him cross over the river. Included in the delegation were Shimei (v. 16), who had cursed David on his way into exile (16:5-8), and Ziba (19:17), Mephibosheth's servant who had refreshed David along the way (16:1-4). Shimei, realizing the peril in which he now found himself because of David's restoration, prostrated himself before the king and sought his forgiveness, a favor David temporarily granted over the objections of Abishai (19:21-23; but cf. David's last instruction to Solomon, 1 Kings 2:8-9). The large number of Benjamites who accompanied Shimei (2 Sam. 19:17) and who were identified by him (v. 20) as elements of the whole house of Joseph (i.e., Israel) indicates the first steps taken by the tribe of Benjamin to link itself with Judah.

19:24-30. Next came Mephibosheth who protested to David that Ziba had lied about Mephibosheth's motive for remaining in Jerusalem when the king was forced to leave. Saul's grandson said he had not tried to use the occasion as an opportunity to bring his grandfather's dynasty back into control as Ziba had reported (see 16:3). Whether this was true or not cannot be determined, but David at least was somewhat convinced by Mephibosheth and agreed to return at least half of the estate he had threatened to withdraw from him (19:29; cf. 16:4).

19:31-38. Then Barzillai the Gileadite, who had provided David with supplies when he had crossed into Transjordan (17:27-29), presented himself to the king. Grateful to the 80-year-old for all his goodness, David urged him to move to Jerusalem and live out his days on government sustenance. Barzillai protested that he was too old to make such a move and preferred to die in his own land. He asked, however, that Kimham, perhaps his son, go in his place and be similarly rewarded. This David was more than happy to do.

19:39-43. At length David and his entourage crossed the Jordan and arrived at Gilgal where they were met by a throng of citizens from both Judah and Israel. The latter were upset that the Judeans claimed David as one of their own to the exclusion of the other tribes (v. 41). When the Judeans replied that David was part of their own flesh (v. 42), the Israelite counter-response was that there were 10 tribes of them and therefore their claim was much more weighty. Besides, they said, they had been the first to insist that David return to rule over the nation (v. 43), a claim for which, incidentally, there is an apparent basis in the preserved narrative (vv. 9-10). The argument reveals the fickleness of the people who had first acquiesced in, if not actively supported, the rebellion of Absalom and now clamored to be first to welcome David back. But it also indicates the depth of the schism which was developing between Israel and Judah, a rift which eventually produced two separate kingdoms.

OUTLINE

- I. David must reclaim the support of the people before being reestablished as king.
 - A. Considerable strife can be seen during the weeks following the battle.
 1. There are questions regarding David's position (2 Sam. 19:9-10).
 2. There are disputes between the northern and southern tribes (40-43).
 - a. The north claims they have more tribes and were the first to reaffirm the king.
 - b. The south "vocally" claim kinship with David.
 - B. David's actions demonstrate wisdom in seeking to reclaim control and create unity.
 1. He seeks to have Absalom's strongholds formally ask him to return (11, 14-15).
 - a. There is a change of heart.
 - b. There is a change of action.
 2. He refers to those in Judah as "kinsfolk" (12).
 3. He makes Amasa (Absalom's general) the commander of his army in place of Joab.
- II. As David journeys to Jerusalem, he meets several people.
 - A. Shimei comes seeking forgiveness for his act of cursing David (see 16:5-8) (16-22).
 1. He brings 1000 Benjaminites with him to demonstrate the loyalty of those who were descendants of Saul.
 2. Abishai seeks to have Shimei killed.
 - a. He had sought the same action in 16:9.
 - b. The Law would have allowed such—Ex. 22:28.
 3. David graciously extends forgiveness and pardon.
 - a. He is seeking unity at this time, not more conflict.
 - b. Later events cause David to warn Solomon about Shimei—1 Kings 2:8-9; 36-46.
 - B. Ziba hopes to solidify his position of loyalty with the king (17-18).
 1. He likely anticipates that Mephibosheth will challenge his account given in 16:1-4.
 2. He brings 15 sons and 20 servants to carry David's possessions across the river.
 - C. Mephibosheth comes to welcome the king back (24-30).
 1. David confronts him with his apparent lack of loyalty.
 2. Mephibosheth's account of Ziba's plot to discredit him appears to be plausible.
 - a. He has not cared for himself—a sign of distress.
 - b. He was aware of Ziba's story.
 - c. He is humble and willing to renounce all claims to the gifts previously given him.
 3. David compromises and splits the land between Mephibosheth and Ziba.
 - D. Barzillai comes to escort David toward Jerusalem (3 1-39).
 1. He was from Gilead and had financially sustained David during the revolt.
 2. He turns down David's invitation to come live in Jerusalem and be cared for by the king because of his advanced age—he was 80.
 3. Barzillai does seek this blessing for Chimham—likely his son.
 4. This act further assists David in unifying forces in his new government.

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. What do you do when you have to judge between two completely different reports of the same incident?
2. What, in your opinion, is the right balance between justice and mercy for criminals?

Explore It

3. What was the sentiment among the Israelites who had fled to their homes after the death of their leader, Absalom? (19:9-10)
4. How did David communicate to the leaders in Jerusalem his readiness to return? (19:11)
5. To what did David appeal to get the leaders to name him king once again? (19:12)
6. What special message did David send to Amasa, Absalom's general? (19:13)
7. What was the effect of David's overtures to the people of Israel and their leaders? (19:14)
8. Who were the people who rushed to meet David and offer their assistance as he returned from exile? (19:16-18)
9. What was the attitude of Shimei, who had cursed David on his way out of the city? (19:19-20)
10. How did Abishai think Shimei should be treated now that David was victorious? (19:21)
11. Why did David rebuke Abishai? (19:22)
12. What promise did David make to Shimei? (19:23)
13. Who came to meet David in an attitude of mourning and waiting? (19:24)
14. What was Mephibosheth's explanation of why he hadn't followed David when David retreated from the city? (19:26-27)
15. How did David's reaction to Mephibosheth indicate that he wasn't sure whom to believe? (19:29)
16. Why was David eager to reward Barzillai the Gileadite? (19:31-33)
17. Why was Barzillai not eager to accept the king's generosity for himself? (19:34-37)
18. Whom did Barzillai ask David to reward in his stead? (19:38)
19. Which of the troops from the previous fighting were with David when he crossed the Jordan? (19:40)
20. How would you characterize the disputing between the people of Israel and Judah once the kingship was restored? (19:41-43)

Get It

21. What challenges faced David as he resumed the kingship of both Israel and Judah?
22. How many decisions did David have to make as soon as the outcome of the rebellion was settled?
23. From a position of power is it more difficult to deal with friends or enemies? Why?
24. Why do we want to be identified with the winner, even if we weren't initially on his or her side?
25. Why are there such differences between the various historical accounts of the same war?
26. How is mercy more conducive to building a strong consensus than vengeance?
27. What's most difficult for you when it comes to granting mercy?

Apply It

28. What judgments will you have to make in the coming week for which you could seek wisdom from God?
29. What habits of thought and prayer can enable you to forgive a former enemy?

Next Week: "David Returns To Jerusalem"—2 Sam. 20

Lesson Twelve

REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL David Returns To Jerusalem

Text: 2 Samuel 20:1-26

COMMENTARY

2. THE REESTABLISHMENT OF AUTHORITY (CHAP. 20)

20:1-3. The contention between the Israelite and Judean delegations at Gilgal became so heated that a Benjamite by the name of Sheba announced a revolutionary movement against David and led the Israelites to desert the king. David and the Judeans then continued their homeward journey to Jerusalem alone. Once there, David reasserted his monarchical claims by, among other things, regathering his harem (cf. 15:16). He provided for them, but remained sexually aloof because they had been appropriated by his son Absalom (16:21-22).

20:4-10. The first matter of state was urgent. It was clear to David that he must overcome the rump movement that had been initiated by Sheba at Gilgal. So he ordered Amasa, his new commander (19:13), to reorganize the army of Judah . . . within three days so that Sheba might be brought to heel. When Amasa was unable to do so in the allotted time . . . Abishai, at David's command, took his own personal elite troops (cf. 18:2) and set out for the North (20:7). On the way they met Amasa at Gibeon, about five miles north of Jerusalem. Joab, though having been demoted and replaced by Amasa, was present. Pretending to greet Amasa warmly, Joab killed him with his dagger. Thus Joab gained revenge for his loss of rank. What is particularly heinous is the fact that Joab and Amasa were cousins, sons of two of David's half sisters (1 Chron. 2:16-17). Again, then, the prophecy of Nathan came to pass: "The sword will never depart from your house" (2 Sam. 12:10).

20:11-22. Joab at once took command as though nothing had happened. The troops were stopping in the road to look at Amasa's corpse. So heartless Joab dragged Amasa's body to a field and threw a garment over him, without bothering to bury him. Summoning reinforcements, Joab marched as far north as Abel Beth Maacah (four miles west of Dan and north of the Sea of Kinnereth) through the territory of the Berites (site unknown). There he found Sheba safely ensconced behind the city wall, apparently prepared to face a long siege. While attempting to batter down the walls Joab was contacted by a wise woman from the city who yelled over the wall that she wanted to talk with him. She told Joab of her own fame as a purveyor of wisdom (v. 18) and then asked why he was destroying her city which had always been loyal to Israel. The city, as a mother in Israel, was a prominent one. To this Joab replied that he was not attacking the city itself but only wanted Sheba, the rebel who had presumed to lead Israel away from its king. If she would assist in delivering Sheba over to him, he would end his siege. Soon the head of Sheba was thrown over the wall to Joab. Successful in his mission, Joab stopped the siege and returned to Jerusalem.

20:23-26. Apparently David tolerated Joab's assassination of Amasa for Joab appears in this list of David's royal administrators. Joab was over Israel's entire army. Benaiah son of Jehoiada was leader of David's special troops, the Kerethites and Pelethites (see comments on 8:15-18). Benaiah eventually replaced Joab at the beginning of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 2:35; 4:4). Adoniram was in charge of conscripted labor gangs, a position he retained in the government of Solomon. (In 1 Kings 4:6 and 5:14 the Heb. has "Adoniram," a longer form of his name.) Jehoshaphat . . . was the recorder (or chronicler). Sheva was official scribe, evidently having succeeded Seraiah (2 Sam. 8:17). Zadok and

Abiathar remained as chief priests. Finally Ira the Jairite was David's special minister, having succeeded the king's own sons in that capacity.

OUTLINE

- I. Before David can solidify control upon arrival in Jerusalem, a new rebellion occurs (2 Sam. 20:1-22).
 - A. Sheba rallies the northern tribes to refuse loyalty to David.
 1. By ancestry he was a Benjamite (past allegiances to Saul's family ??).
 2. He is described as a "worthless fellow".
 - a. Belial generally refers to ungodly, foolish men—Judges 20:13ff.
 - b. Is used of Satan in 2 Cor. 6:15.
 3. He blows a trumpet to initiate the rebellion—see Judges 3:27.
 - B. David takes decisive action to prevent a new and more powerful rebellion.
 1. He locks up (as widows) the concubines that Absalom had taken—an act of power (3).
 2. He commissions Amasa to conscript an army within three days.
 - a. Amasa is late and Abishai is given command.
 - b. Joab kills Amasa (8-13).
 - C. An interesting battle is staged at Abel in northern Galilee.
 1. This is set as Sheba seeks asylum in the fortified city after being pursued throughout Israel (14).
 2. Joab plans on besieging the city, breaking over the walls, and destroying it.
 3. A woman comes to Joab and promises to throw the head of Sheba over the wall in order to spare the city (16-22).
 4. Wise and courageous acts of women are often recorded in the Scriptures.
 - a. Esther saved her people.
 - b. The woman of Tekoah—2 Sam. 14.
 - c. Jael delivered the enemy to Barak—Judges 4:17-22.
 5. Notice that the trumpet is sounded to conclude the battle as well (22).
 - D. A very important principle is underscored for us in this chapter.
 1. We are reminded that challenges to "God's throne" will rise again and again.
 - a. Exodus 1:8; apply to 2 Tim. 2:2.
 - b. This is the basis of biblical application to our lives.
 2. We are given a portrait of the political weakness existing in the "unified kingdom".
 - a. Recall from last week's lesson -- 19:9-10.
 - b. The later division that occurs after Rehoboam becomes king makes sense.
- II. David's control over Israel is evidenced by the organization of the administration (20:23-26).
 - A. There were military leaders—the same as in 8:16-18.
 1. Joab was the commander and chief—over the whole army.
 2. Benaniah was over the mercenary forces (Pelethites and Cherethites).
 - B. There was an organized forced labor program under the control of Adoram.
 - C. Record keeping was headed up by Jehoshaphat.
 - D. Religious activities were directed by leaders in two familiar roles.
 1. Sheva was the scribe.
 2. Zadok, Abiathar, and Ira were priests.

QUESTIONS

Open It

1. Whom do you know who has defused a potentially disastrous situation with reason?
2. What are the pros and cons of being a ruthless competitor?

Explore It

3. Who was the troublemaker who started another rebellion against David? (20:1)
4. How did the kingdom split for and against David? (20:2)
5. How did David treat his concubines with whom Absalom had slept? (20:3)
6. Why did David give up on his first commander and turn to Abishai? (20:4-6)
7. Who were the soldiers who fought with Abishai? (20:7)
8. When Amasa met up with Joab, what was notable about Joab's military dress? (20:8)
9. How did Joab seem to be greeting Amasa? (20:9)
10. What did Joab do to Amasa? (20:10)
11. What message did one of Joab's men have for the troops who stopped to look at Amasa's body? (20:11)
12. What had to be done before the troops would move past Amasa's body and fight? (20:12-13)
13. Where did Joab and Abishai catch up with Sheba and begin a siege? (20:14-15)
14. What message did a wise woman in the city have for Joab? (20:16-19)
15. How did one woman save the city of Abel Beth Maacah from attack? (20:16-22)
16. What objective did Joab have which, once fulfilled, would remove the danger from the city? (20:20-21)
17. What did the wise woman get the people of the city to do? (20:22)
18. What did Joab do in response to the death of Sheba? (20:22)
19. Who led the entire army after this rebellion was put down? (20:23)

Get It

20. Why did David feel he had no time to waste in defeating Sheba son of Bicri?
21. Why did Joab treacherously kill Amasa?
22. Why were the people of Abel Beth Maacah unwilling to defend Sheba?
23. Why was it in the best interests of David and Joab to let the rest of the troops go home once Sheba was dead?
24. What unique challenges face a country in the wake of a civil war?
25. Why might one wise person be of greater value to a group of people than many strong ones?

Apply It

26. Which of the conflicts that you see in your daily life could benefit from a peacemaker's approach?
27. What can you do to help the next time a friend is plagued by a troublemaker?