



Finer Grounds Bible Study

2 Samuel

Lesson 3: 2 Samuel 2:12-4:12

At this point in 2 Samuel, the kingdom of Israel is divided between David, King of the tribe of Judah, and Saul's son Ish-bosheth, King of the northern tribes. The two sides did not endure this division peacefully. These dramatic years are filled with changing alliances, battles, double-crosses, and assassinations that eventually lead to the reunification of Israel under the rule of King David.

Read 2 Samuel 2:12-17

Abner, after taking some time to regroup at Mahanaim, crossed the Jordan River and came south to Gibeon, coming within miles of the tribal lands of Judah. Joab, David's nephew and commander of David's army, led David's forces out to defend the land against the forces of Abner. Once they met, they make an agreement to send 12 men from each side to fight the battle. It was common in ancient times for a single warrior or even a small group to fight as representatives of the whole army. David's battle with Goliath is another example of this type of arrangement. Surprisingly, the men from each side simultaneously killed each other, leaving no side victorious. This led to more bloodshed as the entire armies of both Joab and Abner engaged in combat. In the end, David's forces prevailed over Abner and the men of the Northern Tribes.

Read 2 Samuel 2:18-23

You may remember that David's nephews (sons of his sister Zeruiah) were among David's mighty men from the very beginning

of David's escape from Saul (see 1 Chronicles 11:20-26). They were battle tested and fiercely devoted to their uncle. Asahel's determination would cause the loss of his life. Abner feared Joab's wrath should he strike Asahel down. Knowing that he could not outrun Asahel, he attempted to stop him by striking him with the butt of the spear. It is interesting to note that Abner did not use the sharp point to stop Asahel; it is possible that he was just trying to injure Asahel rather than kill him outright. However, Asahel ran so quickly that the dull end of the spear went through him, killing him. The contrast between verse 19 and verse 23 is so sad. Asahel ran as swift-footed as a gazelle, but after his death all who mourned him stood still.

Read 2 Samuel 2:24-32

To avenge Asahel, Joab and Abishai attempted to capture Abner. They could not reach him in time; Abner and his forces fortified themselves on the high ground, making a successful attack by Joab impossible. The two sides agreed to disperse, but not before threats were made.

Who won the battle?

What other vendettas and rivalries result from this battle?



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Read 2 Samuel 3:1-5

Read Deuteronomy 17:14-17. What command did David disobey?

This passage seems to be a side note to the main story. It is inserted here to show the contrast between Saul's weakening house and the growth and strength of David's family and influence. It also serves as a hint to the reader. David had many sons, but by several wives. God had expressly commanded that the king should not have many wives, yet we see that David ignored His word. While this caused no immediate problems, we will find later how David's unchecked sexual desires led to disobedience, pain, and death. This little section reminds the reader that even though David is "a man after God's own heart," he is far from being free of sin.

Read 2 Samuel 3:6-11

What does Abner's promise in v. 9-10 tell you about his character?

Ish-Bosheth accused Abner of sleeping with Saul's concubine. If this had indeed happened, it would have been tantamount to Abner claiming the Ish-Bosheth's throne. Abner is so disgusted by this accusation that he promises Ish-Bosheth that he will take away the kingdom anyway. What amazes me about Abner's statement in v. 9-10 is his admittance that God had promised to give the kingdom to David. If Abner knew that God would give the kingdom to David, why didn't

he submit to David's rule earlier? After all, Abner was the one who installed Ish-Bosheth on the throne of Israel in the first place! It was only when Abner became frustrated with his self-made situation that he decided to submit to God's will.

In what ways do people today fight against God's sovereign will by following their own desires?

Read 2 Samuel 3:12-21

What did Abner do to help David to become king of Israel? Why did these things help David? (Read 1 Samuel 25:44, 1 Samuel 16:12-13, and 1 Samuel 9:1-2 for help).

Abner does four things for David, each of which strengthens David's claim to the throne. First, Abner restores Michal as David's wife. When David married Michal, Saul's daughter, it signaled to Israel that he could be a legitimate heir to the throne of Saul. When David was forced to flee Saul, Michal was given to another man, most likely in an attempt by Saul to discredit any claim David might have to becoming king. David rightly asked for his wife to be restored; he had not divorced her, so he had every right to ask for her back. However, the restoration of their marriage was not without heartbreak. Saul's sin had consequences as Michal's new husband mourned the loss of his wife. We will find out later, Michal may not have been excited about returning to her true husband.



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Abner then went to the elders of Israel to convince them that it was time to make David king.

How did Abner convince the elders to endorse David's rule (see 3:18)?

Abner reminded the people that God selected David to be king. He also took the time to talk to the Benjamites directly to make sure they are willing to disown Ish-Bosheth, one of their tribesmen. After that, Abner told David that he had united the Israelites in their desire to make a covenant with David. Notice in the end of 3:21 that Abner left David in peace.

Read 2 Samuel 3:22-38

Read Numbers 35:9-21. How does this passage support Joab's actions?

Read 1 Kings 2:5-6. How do David's words in this passage question Joab's actions?

Joab took vengeance on Abner for the death of his brother. He saw himself as the "avenger" of his brother. However, Joab does not follow God's prescribed order for judgment. He bypassed a trial and unashamedly kills Abner at the city gate. City gates were considered the place of judgment in Israel (see Ruth 4:1-12). Joab was trying to imply that death was just judgment on Abner.

However, the city they were in, Hebron, was a city of refuge, a city where Abner could expect to be safe from vengeance until his trial. Remember, there is some question as to whether Abner meant to kill Asahel. Joab had bypassed, and ignored, several steps in the process of judgment.

David viewed Joab's actions as unjust because he attacked Abner in a time of peace, a point that the text emphasizes in 3:21. Without the threat of war, and with Abner no longer Joab's enemy, David saw Joab's actions as indefensible murder, not the actions of an avenger.

In what ways are you taking vengeance on a person in your life?

How does holding grudges, withholding forgiveness, and intentionally inflicting painful words or actions on another affect your ability to serve God?

What did David do to prove that he was not involved in this plot?

David did everything possible to prove his innocence in the plot to kill Abner. He made his whole court, including Joab, mourn Abner's death. David wept over the tomb, followed the funeral procession, and sang a lament in Abner's honor. David even fasted in mourning.



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What did the people think of David's actions (3:36-37)?

David's willingness to humble himself in honor of Abner's memory pleased the people. After decades of being ruled by the jealous and petty Saul, Israel was pleased to see a leader who did not exalt violence against his countrymen. The people were satisfied that David did not participate in the plot. I think it is interesting to note that David pleased his people with his actions. Saul was often motivated by his desire to please the people, which led to sins that cost him his kingdom. David, the man after God's own heart, chooses to do the right thing and still pleases the people. While following God does not guarantee us earthly respect, when God's king follows God's direction, he wins the favor of God's faithful people.

Reread 2 Samuel 3:39. Who will repay Joab for his actions against Abner?

David did not act against Joab. He labeled Joab's actions as sin and revealed them to the people. However, David left it to God to repay the sin. It is hard to definitively say what specific punishment Joab deserved, especially since Joab saw his action as taking rightful vengeance for his brother. Since the line was not clear, David acted cautiously and waited on God to judge the matter.

Read 2 Samuel 4:1-12

Read 1 Samuel 24:21-22. How does this passage display David's righteousness regarding the house of Saul?

Ish-Bosheth is murdered by two men hoping to gain David's favor. The response from David is the opposite of what they hoped for. Just like the Amalekite who lied about killing Saul, David has Baanah and Rekab executed for their crimes. Ish-Bosheth died while David maintained his oath to Saul that he would not kill off Saul's descendants. At this point, almost all possible opposition to David's kingship was gone. Ish-Bosheth was dead, Abner was gone, and the people of Israel were in favor of David reigning over them. Two years after Saul's death, David was finally able to reign over Israel, just as God had promised him around 20 years earlier. As an impatient person myself, I am in awe of David's perseverance as he waited for God to keep His promise. I think of how quickly my faith fails me when I am waiting on God. David waited 15 years (or more) for God to fulfill His promise. We know from 1 Samuel and the Psalms that David did not always wait without fear during this time. Yet, he kept himself from speeding the process along by abstaining from killing Saul and his descendants and allowing the Lord to work all things together to fulfill his perfect plan (Romans 8:28).

Just as David waited for his time to come to reign as king, we read in the New Testament how our Savior had to wait for his time to come.



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Read the following passages. What “time” was Jesus waiting for?

- **John 2:1-11**

- **John 7:1-31**

- **Romans 5:1-11**

“...At the right time...” The perfect words of Romans 5:6 have echoed many times in my mind in those moments when I consider taking God’s matters into my hands. It is then that I must remember that God’s timing is the best timing. In our human thinking, we wonder why Jesus did not come immediately after Adam’s fall? Why did he not come before the flood? Even during Jesus’s ministry on Earth, there were moments that he could

have completed the work of the cross much sooner than he did. Why did he have to wait for that particular time and that particular moment?

We do not know why Jesus came at that time. However, we do know that it was the right time. Just as David trusted that God would fulfill His promise and willingly waited for that perfect time, Jesus willingly waited for the perfect time to fulfill his purpose.

Think of other examples of people who had to wait in the Bible (read Hebrews 11 for inspiration). How did waiting on God test/build faith in these people?

What are you waiting for? How does David’s example comfort or challenge you as you wait on God?
