# THE KINGDOM, THE BIBLE, & US

Understanding the Bible's story, Jesus' importance, & our place in God's kingdom plan



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# Introduction

David was on the run yet again, but this time from one of his sons, Absalom. In the last lesson we explored the events of Absalom going out in battle to take over his father and his army. However, God intended to judge Absalom for his wickedness. In the end, Absalom was killed by Joab (Absalom's cousin). David was grief stricken until Joab spoke sense to David that he was sending a terrible message to his brave soldiers who won victory for David.

Lessons like the previous one show us God meant what He said about the severe consequences from David's sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah. David would never have peace again in his family.

In this lesson we explore how David is restored to the kingdom, but he still deals with troubles against his kingdom.

# David Restored to the Throne

#### 2 Samuel 19:8-43

#### David must Convince the Hearts of Judah

David may have won the battle and defeated the coup, however, he still had an issue. Verses 8b-10 share that there was great confusion in Israel and Judah. The people were not sure at this point who they should follow, who should be their rightful king. Absalom had real supporters still, but he was dead, and they were unsure of the future. David had to convince the hearts of the people to rally under his kingship once again.

Verses 9 and 10 become important towards the end of the chapter. It seems in these verses that the tribes of Israel (meaning not Judah) were the first to call for the people to go meet David and bring him back as king (v.10).

Scholars point out that this reignites a long-standing social divide in Israel between the 10 tribes (often called Israel) and the 2 tribes of Judah and Benjamin (often called Judah). Since the times of Joshua, Judah and Israel have often had a contention relationship. This makes it no surprise that when the kingdom formally splits, it becomes the 10 tribes as one kingdom and the 2 tribes as a separate kingdom.

In this scene, commentators make a point to show that the restoration of David reveals the long-standing animosity between the two sections of Israel. In this scene, the tribes of Israel (not Judah) decide it would be best to bring David back as king. Chronologically speaking, it seems they decided to do this before Judah came around.

On the other hand, Judah had lent considerable support to Absalom's side during the coup. David knew that he must have Judah's support or else his reign as king would not succeed. In verses 11-15, David's strategy was to proactively call on Judah's support.

David had his closest supports, Zadok and Abiathar (priests), to persuade the elders of Judah that David should be their king once again. Their persuasion tactic was to impress on Judah that the other tribes of Israel had already agreed to re-install David, so why should Judah be embarrassed by being the last to do so when they are David's kin (vv.11-12)?

Next, David appealed to Amasa (one of David's newphews) for his support (v.13). Amasa was put in charge of Absalom's army. Now that Absalom's regime was defunct, David thought he could secure the loyalty of Amasa and thus win over the soldiers who followed Absalom. David offered Amasa to be commander of the armed forces, thus taking Joab's place.

Why do you think David wanted to replace Joab?

Verse 14 says David turned the hearts of all the men of Judah "as one man." The strategy worked, he convinced Judah to re-install him as their king. Judah sent people to meet David as he returned towards Jerusalem so they could escort him across the Jordan and on to Jerusalem to be king once again.

Judah took the lead in bringing David back in full force, while the rest of Israel had half their forces support bringing David back.

### Shimei and Benjamites Rally to David

#### 2 Samuel 19:16-23

Verse 16 says that Shimei, the son of Gera, and 1,000 men from the tribe of Benajmin hurried to meet David at the Jordan. They assisted bringing David and his army across the Jordan by scouting for the low spots to cross. Shimei repented before David (vv.19-20) and apologized for his terrible behavior against Daivd. You may recall Shimei was the man who cursed David as he fled Jerusalem (see 2 Sam 16:5-13). David forgave Shimei and swore that he would not repay him by killing him, however one of David's commanders. Abishai wanted to kill him.

This event led to a large contingency from the tribe of Benjamine joining David's cause. This was significant because Saul was from Benjamin. Thus with this event, it shows the rest of Israel that even those from Saul's kin are rallying to David's kingship.

## Mephibosheth Rejoins David

#### 2 Samuel 19:24-30

In this scene Mephibosheth rejoins David. He met David along the way back to Jerusalem. This is the son of Johnathan that David swore he would always care for. He was also dropped when he was a young child and became lame. He did not leave with David when he fled from Absalom.

Mephibosheth reaches David and has a very haggard appearance. The narrator says that when David left Jerusalem, Mephibosheth refused to tend to his hygiene as a sign of mourning over losing David. David questions Mephibosheth's loyalty but Mephibosheth says that his servant Ziba betrayed him. In verses 26-28, he says Ziba lied to him and said he was getting donkeys ready for their travel to meet David, but Ziba left on his own. Mephibosheth says Ziba lied to David and that he had intended to go with David but was left behind and could not catch up (2 Sam 16:1-4).

Do you think Ziba or Mephibosheth lied?

David is unsure whether Ziba or Mephibosheth is lying. He previously promised Ziba all of Mephibosheth's property but now he decides to split the property of Mephibosheth between the two of them. Mephibosheth says that Ziba can take it all because the only reward Mephibosheth wants, he already has, that David has returned home safely (v.30).

### Argument over Claims to David

#### 2 Samuel 16:40-43

An interesting turn of events happens in this scene. "Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him; and all the people of Judah and also half the people of Israel accompanied the king" (v.40). At this point Judah, the Benjamites and many more tribes of Israel have rallied to David. However, an argument breaks out at this point in the story.

Verse 41 says the rest of the men of Israel came out to meet them. These would include people who had formerly followed Absalom's side. It would also include the

other half of the Israeli forces that did not go out at first to escort David. They spark an argument with the men of Judah. "And behold, all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king, 'Why have our brothers, the men of Judah, abducted you and brought the king and his household and all David's men with him, over the Jordan?"

In verse 42, Judah responds that they were the first to bring David back because David is their kin. They ask back to the rest of Israel why are they angry about this? Judah has not personally profited nor gotten a reward from the king for doing this. Judah's argument is that they are David's kinsmen, therefore, they took the honor of bringing him back first.

However, Israel responds that they are greater in number than Judah and therefore had more claims to David as king. "But the men of Israel answered the men of Judah and said, 'We have ten parts in the king, therefore we also have more claim on David than you. Why then did you treat us with contempt? Was it not our advice first to bring back our king?" (v.43). Not only do they outnumber Judah, they reminded Judah it was their idea first to bring David back as king.

We do not know what else was said, but the narrator concludes this argument by saying the words of Judah were harsher than the words of the rest of Israel. So, Judah won the debate and escorted David back to Jerusalem.

Why do you think the tribes were arguing over who had more claim to David as king?

# Sheba's Rally against David

#### 2 Samuel 20:1-2

While traveling back to Jerusalem, another man tries his hand at a revolt against David. Verse 1 says "a worthless man happened to be there whose name was Sheba." Worthless is the Hebrew word to refer to something (or someone) as useless, a goodfor-nothing. We might think of this man as a rebel rouser. He doesn't care about anyone but just looks for a good fight because he is bored. He is probably a wicked man who just lives in sin without regard. He happened to be present for the argument between Judah and Israel.

He blows a trumpet, as if to give a rallying cry for battle. He said that Israel has no share with David so all of Israel should return to their own home. It's interesting how quick Israel's minds changed about David. He was also a Benjamite (Saul's tribe). It is

possible he rekindled an old grudge that David, a Judahite, was leading Benjamites who were the first to produce a king in Israel.

Verse 2 says, "So all the men of Israel withdrew from following David and followed Sheba the son of Bichri; but the men of Judah remained loyal to their king, from the Jordan even to Jerusalem."

Why do you think the other tribes were so quick to abandon David after the argument they just made wanting to be first to make him king?

#### David Returns to the Palace

#### 2 Samuel 20:3

David finally returns to his throne and is the king again. He took the ten concubines that his son Absalom defiled, and took care of them economically but kept them in seclusion as widows until they grew old and died.

David's victory against his foes was not easy. His return to the throne was a hard-fought return. However, his troubles are not over. Sheba has caused many in Israel to turn their hearts away from David and this must be addressed or else David risks splitting the kingdom in half.

# Sheba's Revolt Put Down

#### 2 Samuel 20:4-22

David set his house back in order but still had to deal with Sheba's revolt and unify the kingdom. His strategy was to use Amasa, not Joab, to put down the rebellion. He commanded Amasa to put down the revolt rather quickly to not give Sheba time to rally forces and defenses. For an unknown reason, Amasa took longer than David anticipated. David went to plan B and gave the job to Amasa's cousin Abishai to hunt down Sheba. Abishai was Joab's brother.

Why did David not give the job to Joab?

To use modern-day military terms, Joab was like a 5-star General in command of all armed forces for David. Or, like the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. However, due to his insubordination of killing Absalom, David demoted him. Joab was bumped down to perhaps a 2 or 3-star general. David made Amasa in charge. However, when Amasa seemed incapable, David put Joab's brother (Abishai) in charge. Abishai was perhaps like a 2 or 3 star general but now had the reigns of the whole army. Joab is still involved but is no longer the top general.

David had a small force because he had yet rallied all of Israel's soldiers to his cause. David thought a quick attack would be successful rather than needing large numbers. As David's forces met up with Amasa in Gibeon, Joab went out to greet him. As Joab greeted Amasa, his dagger fell out on the ground. Joab picked it up with his left hand. The left hand was used for defensive moves and the right hand for offensive attacks. Thus, Joab was signaling to Amasa that he had no intentions of attack him by not picking up the dagger with his right hand.

Joab gave Amasa (Joab's first-cousin) a customary greeting as if one is a friend. When he grabbed Amasa by the beard with his right hand, he secretly used the dagger in his left hand to slice open his stomach (vv.8-9).

The men with Amasa were stunned and unsure of what to do. One soldier cried out that if they were for David, then they must follow Joab. Joab and Abishai threw Amasa's body off the main road and covered it. Then, Joab assumed his old job and took over the armed forces. He rallied all the soldiers to follow him after Sheba (v.13).

Was Joab justified in his actions?

Joab besieged the city of Abel Beth-maacah where Sheba took shelter. Joab and his forces were preparing to destroy the city wall tops and launch an attack over the walls into the city. Verse 16 says a wise woman called out to Joab. She appeals to Joab that he should not destroy a city of Israelites. Joab says he has no desire to kill innocent Israelites, but he has a job to do which is to kill Sheba. Joab says if they turn Sheba over, his forces will leave them alone.

The woman says, "Behold, his head will be thrown to you over the wall." The woman convinced the people to kill Sheba, which they did. They cut off his head and threw it over the wall to Joab. Joab and his forces retreated to king David in Jerusalem.

# David's Kingdom Stabilized

#### 2 Samuel 20:23-26

These verses record in summary fashion the point that David finally had unified the kingdom once again. They list people's names in key positions which suggests stability as these people retained these key roles.

Interestingly we see that Joab regained his old position as commander of the entire army of Israel. Other men are listed as commanders and supervisors in David's administration. Also, Zadok and Abiathar are the priests, signifying David stabilized the priesthood in Israel again.

# Conclusion

God warned David that there would always be conflict in David's kingdom because of his sin. Furthermore, God warned that David's enemies would come from within his own family. Unfortunately, the stories from our last lesson and this one show these things came true.

David was never abandoned by God though. God protected David and restored his kingdom. The lesson for us I think is to realize that even when we sin, we may face discipline from God, but God will never totally abandon us. Even amid discipline, God proves to us He is a loving and caring Father who wants to correct us to live for Him and follow His perfect ways.

God will never fail to keep His promises to David, to always have a son on the throne, despite David and his sons' sins.