

MAY 23

2 Samuel 2:12-3:39

2 Samuel 2:12-32

Vs. 12-17 We have no real description of the fighting that went on between David's forces and Abner's forces. It went on for over seven years. What we have here is a small battle that might have happened fairly early in the civil war, after David had established himself in Hebron and organized his army. It is a small battle, but it is huge in understanding some of the events that followed. Also, it gives us tiny character sketches of the two main players, Joab and Abner.

Joab is never mentioned as one of David's mighty men, but he does later become the captain of his army. Joab and his brother were David's half-nephews and were probably the same age as David. It is probably a good guess that Joab had been with David from the early days of David's service for Saul. Apparently he was a confident and commanding leader.

Abner would have been the older man, and it is likely that Joab had been in the army under Abner just as David had been. They all knew each other.

V. 16 This wasn't a sword fight, it was a dagger fight. The intent, I guess, was to decide the war with the outcome of this fight; but BOOM, a miracle - they all killed each other.

Vs. 18-23 Notice that Abner knew Asahel. Apparently Asahel's pride was his death. Abner was too good a prize to pass up; unfortunately, Abner was also the experienced fighter. The most important part of this story is Abner killing Joab's brother.

Vs. 24-28 Fueled by their need for vengeance, Joab and Abishai (who wanted to kill Saul for David) drove the army of David. Abner tried to speak peace to the situation and Joab listened. In a sense, Joab was blaming Abner for the fighting, suggesting that if Abner had spoken sooner, they would have stopped fighting sooner.

Vs. 29-32 The interesting thing here is the headquarters of Abner and Ish-bosheth. It was in Mahanaim, way across the Jordan in the middle of Gad. It was miles away from Hebron and the main life of Israel.

2 Samuel 3:1-39

V. 1 During this story, years are passing. What we actually read about here will happen fairly close to the end of the civil war. We know this war lasted seven years and six months.

Vs. 2-5 According to the law, the king was not supposed to have a lot of wives. This would be a good place to look at what God said:

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 *"When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,'¹⁵ you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.¹⁶ Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.'¹⁷ And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.¹⁸ "And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests.¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them,²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.*

Now, how many wives are too many? We guys ask ourselves that all the time, and some days "one" is too many; but usually we would say, "Who'd want more than one?" By v. 5, David has six wives and he'll acquire some others along the way. This will quietly set up David for a fall, one from which he will never fully recover. If the point of marriage is completion and becoming "one" with one person, then the effect of all of these women was that David remained incomplete and "one" with no one. David would remain unsatisfied emotionally and sexually and he would keep looking, in all the wrong places.

Vs. 7-8 This was a very serious thing that Abner did. To claim one of Saul's wives as his own, even having sex with her, would have been a step to the throne. When Solomon's brother tried to marry David's last concubine (which would have been illegal under the law), Solomon had him killed, knowing it was a ploy (instigated by Joab and Abiathar) so he could claim the right to the throne over Solomon. It was a murky business and what Abner did here was possibly preparation for becoming king himself. In Abner's defense, although he never denies the charge, he seems offended by the insinuation. He still did what he did and shouldn't have. I wonder if Abner was getting tired of fighting against God. They all knew Samuel had anointed David king.

Vs. 9-11 Abner, as a political animal, would have to find a way to come into David's favor. Ish-bosheth seems like a tragic figure here. If Abner hadn't fueled the civil war, I think Ish-bosheth, who was probably a friend of David's and was legally David's brother-in-law, probably would have been happy with making peace with David and endorsing David's throne.

Vs. 13-16 This is all very interesting. David wanted Michal back. She had been his wife, but also, she was the daughter of Saul and he was Saul's son-in-law. It was justice, it was political and it could heal some things.

Notice that Ish-bosheth had her taken and separated from her husband. Ish-bosheth doesn't seem like a bad guy, and the fact that David didn't kill him during these seven years shows some respect. Before this whole fiasco, I'll bet they had been friends.

Somehow I feel bad for this poor schmuck Paltiel. His name sounds like a sandwich from Panera and he is really moved and hurt by this thing. What a mess. People were still paying for Saul's ungodliness.

Vs. 17-19 Abner, a natural leader and very influential person, was laying the framework for bringing all the tribes to David.

Vs. 20-21 There might be more to this than meets the eye. Abner had been one of those former "friends" of David who had kept Saul's fears of and hate for David alive. This covenant was not only for peace with Abner, but it might have been for Abner to have a position in David's government.

Vs. 22-39 This story eventually brings the civil war to an end, and it seems tragic to me for more than one reason.

V. 26 Joab not only acted without any obedience to David, but he showed that he was very deceitful and ambitious.

V. 27 This verse explains God's view of why Joab did this.

V. 35 Unlike Saul, David's resolve was firm.

Vs. 36-37 God used this situation to bring the people to David. Politically speaking, removing Abner was a good thing, but the means by which it happened would poison David's reign. Although David rightfully said he didn't know about this, and then cursed Joab's family, and cried and made a poem, the just thing would have been to have put Joab to death. David saved this job for Solomon. In the future, David will command Solomon to kill Joab for this act.

I can only think that David was so fixed on getting things secure and stable that he didn't want to lose a man like Joab, who was important to the forming of Israel. You will get your own ideas as you read this, but year after year I'm saddened by these stories.

I know we are all riddled by sin and weakness, and none of us is any better than David; but these stories are here for us to learn. I guess I would say that if we begin with faith and dependence on God, we have to end that way. There have been ministries that have protected key players when they have sinned, because if those sins had been exposed or that person treated justly in accordance with their failure, it would have "hurt" the ministry. No one is so important that their sin can be overlooked if it disqualifies them from leadership. No ministry is so important that it can tolerate sin for the greater good. All of us are prone to this, but in different areas and different ways.

Here, at the beginning of David's reign, he is allowing poison to enter the stream, and it will get worse. It might be that David's own tolerance for his own lying also made him weak to dealing justly with those who were like him. Again, we'll see the tragic result of that too.

John 13:1-30

The Gospel of John is very unique, and particularly after reading the first three Gospels, there is a different kind of richness in the stories John includes. If the other portions of John shine, this part is absolutely brilliant. This Upper Room Discourse, beginning in chapter 13 and ending in chapter 17, is amazing. It is uncut discipleship teaching. Jesus is preparing His disciples to hold on to their faith, which will be severely tested at His death. He is also preparing them for the ministry they will have after His resurrection as they are guided by the Spirit. Understanding this portion of Jesus' teaching is dependent on understanding the stress they all felt and the fact that they were entering a very dark tunnel. This teaching would stay with them the rest of their lives and mark their ministries, but here, it was meant to give them hope following Him as His disciples on this mission.

We actually get the setting for chapter 13 from the other Gospels, where they tell us that a fight broke out among the disciples as to who was the greatest. They all knew that something was going to happen during this visit to Jerusalem. Thomas had already said those sage words, *Let us also go that we may die with Him* (John 11:16). They all knew there were threats against Jesus. And Jesus kept talking about His death and resurrection. There was some expectation that something would happen, and they must have been hopeful that Jesus would win and there would be a kingdom.

Vs. 1-11 Notice that Jesus served from a position of strength and He had a goal and a message. We tend to think that those who "can," "do," and those who "can't," "serve." Not so. Servant leadership always has a deep strength, a goal and a message. Notice, too, that this was outside of Jesus' "job description" as a rabbi, but not outside His job as a savior and maker of disciples.

V. 8 Jesus seeks to wash. How sad to resist.

Vs. 12-20 Jesus gave the explanation of what He had done. This was not only teaching on leadership and servanthood, but there was something here about preparing the disciples for the night ahead.

Vs. 21-30 Jesus was *troubled in His spirit* again, but this time, because one of His own would betray Him.

V. 23 The disciple Jesus loved is the writer of this Gospel, John the son of Zebedee, Jesus' cousin.

V. 27 This was Satan himself taking possession of Judas. Satan saved the big job for himself.

Again, although Jesus knew what Judas would do, His love and actions toward Judas never wavered. The disciples had no clue by Jesus' actions or moods or words to Judas that Judas was a traitor. Judas always had the option of saying, "No." Jesus never treated Judas unfairly. Judas' problem was within himself.

V. 30 is very poetic and ominous in its ending, *And it was night.*

Psalm 119:1-16

I believe that David wrote this during his seven years in Hebron. I think the view you have here of David's heart describes him as a man after God's own heart in a way the stories about him do not. As much as I understand that David was a contradiction in his life and actions, this psalm expresses his heart. I know I'm a contradiction. All of us are. So what do we do? We follow David's/the Spirit's advice in this psalm, if possible, and do it better than David did. This psalm ought to be the cry of every disciple's heart.

Notice how often words like *law, testimonies, commandments, word*, and other variants are used. Verse 11 is one of the famous verses out of this section. How can we as disciples afford to live one day without reading His Word and allowing it to flow through our hearts, cleansing us? Reading the Word daily is a must. Memorizing is what truly leads to meditation. On this earth, I think that is vital for us too.

In this psalm, each paragraph of eight verses begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It's kind of artsy.

Vs. 1-8 This paragraph begins with the letter "A." Since it is the introduction of the psalm, David uses it to describe blessing. The key to blessing is not just keeping God's Word, but fixing our eyes on it.

Vs. 9-16 The question asked in v. 9 is answered in this section. What a great section of Scripture and v. 11 is definitely worth memorizing if you haven't done it already.

Our longevity and fruitfulness in the harvest is held in all that David is saying here. Jesus said, *If you abide in Me and My words abide in you....* His words have to dwell in us and we are all leaky vessels. We need to be pouring in the Word every day.

Proverbs 15:29-30

If our hope is set on the Lord, our good news each day comes from His Word. And with His hope and His Word, we bring strength to His disciples and His light to those who are lost in the dark fields of this world.