

2 Samuel 1:17 - 2:32

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[0 : 00] So we're in 2 Samuel chapter 1. By way of a brief recap, we're only studying this sporadically.

! We've read all the way through 1 Samuel.! We've also studied Ruth and Judges before that. So we've come through a whole long swathe of history.

But most recently what we've seen is Saul, who was the first king whom God installed. Israel said, we want a king like the other nations.

And God said, are you sure about that? And Samuel said, are you sure about that? And they said, yes, yes, yes. So God said, all right, you get Saul. So Saul was God's choice, but he was given as an example of the best that man can get.

I think I've quoted something there, haven't I? The best that man could offer. And in fact, you can read in 1 Samuel chapter 8, if you like, a bit of revision. Then you'll see that's where the people demand a king.

[1 : 04] And Samuel says, all right, well, this is what it's going to be like. God installs him. And as I considered this, I was reminded of what God said to Cain.

If you do what's right, will you not be accepted? And that was true for Saul. If Saul had done what is right, he would have been accepted. The thing is, God knew he wouldn't. Being omniscient and all. Now, what we've seen is Saul commit two very conspicuous sins. He impatiently offered a sacrifice he's not eligible to offer. And he should have waited for Samuel.

And then he failed to complete the Lord's command to destroy the Amalekites. And you'll remember from last time when Tony took us through Saul's death, that somewhat ironically, it was an Amalekite who brought the news that Saul was dead.

And in fact, he claimed to be the one who put him to death, for which he got his just desserts. Saul is rejected.

[2 : 03] The young warrior bard, David, has been chosen. And he is God's choice. He is a man after God's heart. And we went through how God said to Samuel, don't look on the appearance.

Look on the heart. That's where I look. And in 1 Samuel 15, verse 28, Samuel said to Saul, the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor who is better than you.

Ouch. So it's given. And what we've seen then is this years of patience on the part of David who knows this is happening.

Saul knows this is happening. And Saul's response is to say that ain't happening. And he has a murderous pursuit of David. And in his desperate pursuing of David, he completely seems to ignore the rising threat of the Philistines, who are Israel's longstanding enemies.

And then they end up coming and defeating Saul in that decisive battle on Mount Gilboa. And there Saul and three of his sons fell. So today we're going to read the aftermath of this.

[3 : 17] What will now happen to the leaderless Israel? And before we continue, I do would like just to give a word of prayer. Lord, I want to just commit this time, this sermon, this message to you.

Lord, you know, it hasn't been the easiest week to prepare a sermon. But Lord, I depend on your grace, Lord. And we all depend on your grace to make your word come alive this morning.

Lord, I desire that we hear and receive from your word, Lord. So I pray you anoint my lips and help me to speak your truth today. Thank you for your spirit who has given to me and to all of all of us gathered.

And Lord, may he be very, very active and make up for what I very much lack today. In Jesus name I pray. Amen. Amen. So we're going to read from verse 17 of chapter 1.

And we're going to take our time and I hope to get all the way down to the end of chapter 2. We'll take our time a little bit through those first bit. And then the second chapter is a bit more straight narrative so we can pick up the pace a bit.

[4 : 18] And it divides into three sections. We've got this song of mourning from David, David's pen. And then chapter 2 divides up into some narrative about the anointing of David at last as king over Judah.

Though king over Judah, well, this person whom we've not come across before, Ish-bosheth. Who dat? He gets anointed as king in Israel.

And then what we see in the end of chapter 2 then is this conflict that begins to arise. So let's begin with 2 Samuel chapter 1 and verse 17, which says this.

We're reading this morning from the New American Standard Bible 2020 edition. As we always do. As I always do. Then David sang this song of mourning over Saul and his son Jonathan.

And he told them to teach the sons of Judah the mourning song of the bow. So, behold, it is written in the book of Yashah, or Jashah, or the book of the upright.

[5 : 23] The Hebrew for that verse is closer to David lamented this lamentation, which is very Hebraic in style. So it's a lamentation song. And it's very much in keeping with David's style to express grief.

As I said, he's a bard. He's a musician. And so he uses music to express his grief. And we've talked a bit about grief and emotion, actually at some length in chapter 30.

So I won't rehash that too much. Except to say that David was a man who did not bury his feelings like many men do today. He expressed them. And grief was something that the ancients did give time and space for.

And they would do it communally. The burial of Jacob. Forty full days were given for the embalming and then a further 70 days for weeping.

And after that, they go up to Goshen to bury him, where again, there was this great outpouring of grief. Grief needs time. And it's healthy and appropriate to give it time.

[6 : 28] So David pens this song. And the English text indicates that it is a lamentation called the bow, which David commanded to be taught to the men of Judah.

That is an interpretation of the Hebrew rather than a translation. It's tricky to translate because it could just as easily be interpreted to mean, and David commanded that the men of Judah be taught archery.

But that would seem a bit out of kilter. And the fact that Jonathan was an archer, as is alluded to in the song, means the most likely interpretation is that the song was called the bow.

So let's read. Let's read all the way through now. So verse 19. Your beauty, Israel, is slaughtered on your high places. How the mighty have fallen.

Tell it not in Gath. Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon. Or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice. The daughters of the uncircumcised will celebrate. Mountains of Gilboa, may there be no dew or rain on you or fields of offerings.

[7 : 36] For there the shield of the mighty was defiled. The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil. From the blood of those slaughtered, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back.

And the sword of Saul did not return unstained. Saul and Jonathan, beloved and delightful in life, and in their deaths they were not separated.

They were swifter than eagles. They were mightier than lions. Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet with jewellery, who put gold jewellery on your apparel.

How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle. Jonathan is slaughtered on your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan. You have been a close friend to me.

Your love for me was more wonderful than the love of women. How the mighty have fallen and the weapons of war has perished. And so you can divide up the song.

[8 : 39] Verse 19 serves as an introduction, and it has this phrase, how the mighty have fallen, which is sung three times in the song, and it kind of acts like a refrain. You've got verses 20 to 21, which is saying, this victory for the Philistines, let it not be celebrated.

Let the enemies of Israel not gloat over this. Let the mountain on which it took place be cursed. And then you've got verses 22 to 23, to honour Saul and Jonathan, brave in battle, beloved and delightful.

And then you've got verse 24, focus on Saul and blessing him. Verse 25 to 26, it's very unusual in a corporate song, because it's a very personal mourning from David for his friend.

And then verse 27 to close, repeating that refrain. And you guys who've been with us as we've gone through the life of David and Saul, and we've seen how they interacted together, and you're thinking, is this the same Saul?

Yes, it's the same Saul. David had to flee multiple times for his life from Saul. And you would think that at least part of David would be like, oh, he's finally dead.

[9 : 55] I'm finally freed. But he's not. We have this song, which I can only infer and believe and say, this is a genuine, sincere song of grief and mourning.

And now I wanted to say two things, two things that I thought were instructive for us. First, David is honoring the office of the anointed king of Israel.

You may remember chapter 24, 1 Samuel, in verses 6 and 7. There David said that he would not reach out, far be it from me, because of the Lord, to reach out against the Lord's anointed.

And he even rebuked his own men, saying, we don't get to do that, because of the office that he holds. And similarly, when that Amalekite came with the news, claiming to be the one who killed Saul, David was like, how did you not fear to lift up your hand against the Lord's anointed?

The Lord's anointed. And even though David knew full well that God had said, he's on the way out, it was not for any man to take that.

[11 : 14] So, there is a place for honour for God-appointed offices. You may look at Acts 23, verses 1 through 5, where there's this episode where Paul doesn't know it's the high priest that he's talking to.

And he says, he says, God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall. He speaks against the high priest, and then he takes a rebuke. You dare insult the high priest?

And he's like, I didn't know. I didn't know, brothers. Because, quoting Exodus 22, 28, you shall not curse. You must not speak evil of a ruler of your people. So, the office of a position that God has appointed is worthy of honour.

Worthy of honour. And we could also talk about Romans 13. Romans 13 is the passage where Paul turns his attention to, different, this is the Apostle Paul, he turns his attention to secular leadership. And there, he says, that there is a principle to honour secular leadership as well. Every person, verse 1, is to be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

[12 : 29] Similarly, 1 Timothy 2, Paul says that he urges for prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving to be made, on behalf of all people, for kings, and all who are in authority.

He wants the church to be regularly praying for leaders, and so, I made a point of doing that this morning when we prayed. I was like, yeah, we should do that. So, it's good. We should do that, even if we disagree. There isn't an exception given, if the leadership is ungodly even, and Paul knew about ungodly, secular leadership, and he said those words in that context.

So, there is that. David honours the office, and the authority, and the position, that Saul occupied. But secondly, there's this as well, and I'll be interested to know what you make of this.

David is going beyond simple honour here, I believe. His words, and his love, are genuine. And, you know, David did spend time in Saul's household.

How much time, we don't know. The narrative in 1 Samuel wasn't clear on that, but he developed enough time, I think, to certainly develop a very close friendship with Jonathan, clearly, but also, I think, a father-like relationship with Saul.

[13 : 42] We've seen him say, my father, and Saul will say to him, my son. Is that you, my son, David? They had a father-son relationship, and yes, it soured, and yes, it went pretty bad, but David retained this genuine love for Saul, and I think in that he is proving a model of Christ, genuine love for his enemy, Saul.

And one commentator suggested something that I thought, I think there is something to that. He referred to Hebrews 11, and if you know Hebrews 11, that's the chapter where the writer of the book of Hebrews goes through all these saints, and he honors them for their faith, the whole of faith, and you get to Jacob, and you're like, bruh, have you read the story of Jacob?

And all of the conniving, and the scheming, and he is able to find one thing, that he blessed, and he worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.

And it occurs to me that Hebrews 11, in that passage, all of the mistakes, Abraham made mistakes, they all made mistakes, they all sinned, and they fell short of the glory of God, but in that passage, they are remembered for the good that they did.

And I think that's what David is doing here for Saul. He made mistakes, he made errors, he sinned, he rebelled, he sinned clearly, he was rebuked sharply, and there's no evidence that he ever really repented from that.

[15:15] A lot of remorse, no repentance. But David is honouring the good that he did. And we'll be reminded of the men of Jabez Gilead, who remembered the good that Saul did.

And I think that is what David is doing. And for me, you know, it just reminded me that we who are in Christ Jesus, all of the sins that we have committed, they are washed away.

They are washed away. And only the good that we do, and those good things we only do in his strength, right? But all the mistakes are removed, and they're not, they're blotted out from the book, and only the good.

And I was like, oh, praise God. You know, when there are those who will be saved, as 1 Corinthians 3 says, only as through fire. They're saved, but only as through fire.

Because all of the bad that they've done, it is removed. And they're just saved by the skin of their teeth, as it were. But they're saved because of God's grace, and his blood, that they have believed.

[16:13] Saul did very little right. But those things that he did right, were remembered. Next. And I wanted to say this about, just a note about Jonathan.

And we did talk about this before, that David and Jonathan's love, and the grief that's expressed. One commentator said this, that I'll share, because there may be something to it. He said, David's wife, Michal, loved David the warrior, but she could not accept, David the dancing musician.

Saul loved the musician, but he couldn't accept David the warrior. And only Jonathan loved, and accepted the whole person. And I thought, I think there may be something to that.

I think there may be something to that. If you just reread that verse 26, David says, I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan. You've been a close friend to me. Your love for me was more wonderful than the love of women.

That word wonderful is a Hebrew verb with a root that means it's extraordinary, surpassing, or indeed wonderful. And then in the poem, David is saying, that is what feminine love is like.

[17:25] But he's saying, but with Jonathan, it was even more than that. And we talked about, back in session 12, we covered that, how they are both very, very similar. They're kindred spirits.

They're both very spiritually sensitive men. We've seen Jonathan, who was brave enough to go to the Philistine camp just with his shield bearer. And you know, if the shield bearer had said, I'm not going, he'd have gone on his own.

You know he would. He was a very brave, willing to trust the Lord. He was willing, he's able to save by many or few. And David was the same. So they became very close, very close friends.

And David, Jonathan was, had so much love and respect for David that he fully supported David being king, even though by rights, he would have inherited the throne.

And as we said at the time, I think that when you have friendships, same-sex friendships that are based on common faith, that can be very, very strong. And may the Lord grant that we have those strong friendships here.

[18:25] Now, into chapter 2, reading from verse 1. Then it came about afterwards that David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?

And the Lord said to him, Go up. So David said, Where shall I go up? And he said, To Hebron. So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelite, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.

And David brought up his men who were with him, each with his household, and they settled in the cities of Hebron. Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

Now, I want you to observe and note the sensitivity, David's sensitivity to the leading of the Lord. Saul is dead, and David has honoured the deceased. He's done his duty, and he knows he is called to be the next leader. So is it time now to be proactive, to get those pamphlets ready and send them throughout the land, to send messages, arguing that Saul's failure means it is time for political change?

[19 : 42] No, actually, it is time to pray. It's time to pray and say, Lord, what's next? What do I do next?

He seeks the wisdom of the Lord before he does anything, and I think that's amazing. And look at the exchange as well. Lord, shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah? Go up.

Lord, where to? To Hebron. You know, and I thought, that could easily have been summarised as, and David inquired of the Lord, and the Lord said, go up to heaven. It could easily have been summarised thus, but the conversation is recorded for us, and I thought, huh, and I think that was to emphasise, to emphasise for us that dependence that David had on God.

David himself wrote in Psalm 32 verse 8, I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go, I will advise you with my eye on you, and David certainly lived that.

Now, I wonder if you're like me, and you're like, man, I wish I had that kind of plain direction from the Lord sometimes. You know, you're facing a major life decision. In our case, this week, it was, do we go for that new roof or not?

[21 : 02] And the Lord didn't say, yes, but he didn't say no. So we needed to use, and I got some counsel and some wisdom, and in the end we made a decision.

Yes, we probably should, based on the fact that our one is rotting. And, you know, we should pray. We should pray when we face these decisions, whether they are long-term strategic decisions about career or job or college, or indeed, whether they are short-term things.

do I need to? We should pray about all of that. you know, we could wish when we read passages like this that God would say, and the Lord said. But it's rare.

It is rare. And I think David had a rare relationship with God in that regard. And we've talked about this actually during our series on understanding the Bible about how Moses had it, but, you know, it's just not a common thing.

We will see David have a similar conversation with the Lord in chapter 5 where he gives specific guidance on how to face the Philistines. Spoiler alert, he's successful. But then in chapter 6, he doesn't consult the Lord about how to move the ark.

[22 : 10] Spoiler alert, doesn't go well. Consulting the Lord, good thing to do, for sure. But one of the things I talked about in our study series is although we don't tend to have this kind of instruction, sometimes the Lord does, very much impress in our hearts, but not always.

But what we do have is the whole of the Bible in which the will of God is expressed for us very, very plainly. And we have the Holy Spirit to guide us.

You know, Jesus said to the 12 men who had found the church, wait until you are clothed with power, the Holy Spirit. Wait until you have that, then go forth and do my will in planting the church. And then subordinate to the word and to the spirit, we have the church and the council of our brothers and sisters, and we have our own wisdom to prayerfully use.

You know, the Bible does certainly call us to apply our own wisdom. Just read Proverbs. Again, subordinate to the word of God that we have in totality.

[23 : 16] So God can direct us. And I think what we are wise to do when there's doubt is follow some of the principles that God establishes.

So for an example of the principles would be Micah 6.8 in which God says, Micah 6.8, God says, He has told you, mortal one, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you but to do good, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. And sometimes I think we just need to start with those simple things because they're not simple and so easily we drift from those things.

And then we have Proverbs 16.9, the mind of a person plans his way, we should plan, but the Lord directs his steps. So, anyway, David seeks the Lord and they go up to Hebron, Hebron, if you like.

I haven't got many slides for you today but there's one. You will need a telescope to read that, I appreciate it. But hey, I'll upload the slides with the sermon later. Hebron is about 25 miles south of Jerusalem.

[24 : 28] Hang on, let me come round. Hebron, Jerusalem. Also useful, Manaheim will need that and Jabez Gilead but you'll see that, anyway.

That'll do. I'll leave that on the screen. As I said, I haven't got many other slides to show you so it can just stay up there. Hebron, up they go to Hebron and you can see how it's bang in the middle of the territory, the green territory that will be David's and you can see the extent of the yellow territory there which is the territory that has been lost to the Philistines.

What is significant about Hebron? Well, it was very, very significant during the patriarchal times. Abraham dwelt there.

You've heard of the Oaks of Mamre, you've heard of the cave of Machpila which is where Sarah died and was buried. It is the very first part of the land of Canaan that was officially owned by the Hebrews because Abraham bought it.

And there's a whole chapter that makes this massive point about the fact that Abraham bought it because it is the first place that Abraham, or the Hebrews through Abraham owned.

[25 : 41] Amazing. It had to be recaptured under Joshua. It was lost and actually there were these anachim there or giants and it had to be recaptured and it was actually given to Caleb who was the other spy with Joshua and you can read that in the book of Joshua if you want to.

A recap. But Caleb, this old guy, he's like, give me that mountain, give me Hebron, I want to kill those anachim and indeed he did. And by the time of David it was settled and secure.

Interestingly, Nabal was a Calebite. Now, I don't know whether that means that Abigail was and whether there was a familial connection there, David and Abigail, maybe, who knows.

But either way, that's where they go and ultimately they went there because God said to go there. It's a good reason. Reading on then. Verse 4.

And they told David, saying, it was the men of Jabesh-Gilead who buried Saul. So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-Gilead and said to them, may you be blessed of the Lord because you have shown this kindness to Saul, your Lord, and have buried him.

[26 : 51] And now, may the Lord show kindness and truth to you and I also will show this goodness to you because you have done this thing. Now then, let your hands be strong and be valiant.

Since Saul, your Lord, is dead and also, the house of Judah has anointed me king over them. So this is recalling 1 Samuel 31 where we read that the men of Jabesh-Gilead recovered Saul's body after it had been abused by the Philistines and his sons and they honoured them and buried them. And the men of Jabesh-Gilead did that because they remembered what happened in 1 Samuel 11 where the Ammonites besieged their city and this was early in the reign of Saul and Saul led this dramatic rescue rallying Israel to rescue the men from a barbarous threat.

And we read that the Spirit of God rushed on Saul and he delivered them and this good thing established Saul's reign and the men of Jabesh-Gilead never forgot it as we see so David honours them and David blesses them and I do think that that was sincere and genuine but I do also think there's a measure of politicking here politics here and of course they would be loyal to the line of Saul by default and so David does bless them and he says by the way you need to know Judah has anointed me king verse 8 but Abner the son of Ner commander of Saul's army had taken Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him to Mahanaim and he made him king over Gilead over the Asherites over Jezreel over Ephraim and over Benjamin even over all Israel Ish-bosheth Saul's son was 40 years old when he became king over Israel and he was king for two years the house of Judah however followed David and the time that David was king in Hebron was over the house of Judah was seven years and six months okay

Abner is Saul's cousin you may know he was the commander of Saul's army and he served in that role for the duration of Saul's reign David knew him Abner was there at the battle with Goliath and Saul and Abner were like who is that kid Abner was the one that David sort of poked chapter 26 when he David crept into the camp and stole the spear and the jug and he's like Abner you didn't protect your king you remember Abner Abner's been around he has been around cousin as I said to Saul now he established Saul's son Ish-bosheth then we're like who who well anyway you can see the place Mahanaim again I did point it out over there it's up in the purple bit I'm not going back around there it's actually east of the Jordan

[30 : 05] River far away from the Philistine territory in terms of the history of the site it's where Jacob met the angels of God back in Genesis 32 and then he had this rather curious wrestling match and it was regarded thus as a holy place its name Mahanaim means two camps which is what Jacob named it because there was his camp and there was the camp of God wow situated on the border of Gad and Manasseh and it was also given as a Levitical city in Joshua 21 interestingly I don't know what you do with any of that Ish-bosheth then he hasn't shown up in scripture before now although we have been introduced to him by Tony so I guess we were anticipating him but let me let me just show you a couple of verses 1st Samuel 14 verse 49 says this now the sons of

Saul were Jonathan Ishvi and Malkishua and the names of his two daughters were these the name of his firstborn was Merab and the name of the younger Michal no no Ish-bosheth no okay and then

chapter 28 verse 19 furthermore the Lord will also hand Israel along with you over to the Philistines Saul is told so tomorrow you and your sons will be with me indeed the Lord will hand the army of Israel over to the Philistines your sons all of them and so Saul died with his three sons verse chapter 31 verse 8 and his armor bearer and all his men on that day together oh Saul's three sons so who is Ish-bosheth and why does he not get mentioned well he is a son of Saul 1st chronicles 833 and we did talk about this a little bit already in previous studies ner fathered kish kish fathered Saul Saul fathered Jonathan Malkishua Abinadab and Eshbaal Eshbaal being an alternative name for Ish-bosheth the difference being one means man of Baal the other one meaning man of shame I think Saul was ashamed of this guy oh dear and what's not written is why Ish-bosheth didn't fall in battle in my head I was thinking maybe he's a coward this is what Josephus said Josephus being an ancient historian who's got about 2,000 years advantage over me he said in his works this but as soon as Abner the son of Ner who was general of Saul's army and a very active man and good natured knew that the king and Jonathan and his two other sons were fallen in battle he made haste into the camp which is where Eshbaal was and taking him with him the remaining son of Saul his name was Eshbaal he passed over to the land beyond the Jordan and ordained him the king of the whole multitude except in the tribe of Judah and in Mahanaim so that's Josephus' account so he saw Abner Saul because I was also thinking actually Abner why did he not die in this battle being the commander answer he saw the way the wind was blowing and he was like I need to preserve Saul's line so he went back to the tent where Eshbaal was why was he in the tent he's 40 years of age don't know but I don't know anyway that's all we know the son of Saul the last son the man of shame Saul's legacy is man of shame wow note this also I think this is worth pointing out David is anointed by the men of Judah the men plural install David Eshba Sheth however is installed by a singular man

Abner and one wonders if it were not for Abner would Eshba Sheth have even been installed who knows so we have these two kingdoms and this early division seems to foreshadow the coming split that happens in the days of Rehoboam and Jeroboam but what we have is David the king whom God has chosen and Eshba Sheth the king that a man has chosen note this as well David the name David means to love or beloved the kingdom of love Eshba means the man of shame so you have the kingdom of love or the kingdom of the beloved and you have the kingdom of shame I know which one I like the sound of better and you know it is the Lord's will that we are ruled and we are a kingdom of love God is love and his desire is that we walk in love and his love is lived out in our lives but so often don't we we choose the deeds of shame instead a little picture there just tucked away in the names we're told that David's reign is seven and a half years and that

[35 : 33] Eshba Sheth's reign is only two it's difficult to know exactly how that came to be because it seems to me by my reading that the death of Eshba Sheth coincides with the appointment or the anointing of David as king over all Israel and yet from Josephus' research it would seem that Eshba Sheth was installed immediately so I think we can say that Eshba Sheth was king for two years somewhere in the period that David reigned for seven and a half we don't know one other thing that occurred to me was this so the Philistines have had this great victory the king and the army wrecked why didn't they press on Israel is so weakened divided leaderless Israel could be the Philistines could surely have pressed on and turned a decisive victory into an absolute victory

I don't know what do the commentators say well they had a few ideas of course remember that David actually was allied with the Philistines earlier and it may be that with the kingdom of Israel now divided with their ally or at least pseudo ally David reigning there in the south Israel squished to the north underneath a shameful king maybe they thought good enough we need to recover our own army strength as well good enough for now personally my immediate thought was this is the providence of God preserving his people that was my first thought when I considered that who knows now we don't really know a lot about what happened in those seven and a half years really apart from what we're reading now and what we'll read next time which is that David has six sons we really don't know much else but we have this so let's read this we've only got a few minutes left but let's just study we'll read through this quickly verse 12 now Abner the son of Ner went from Mahanaim to Gibeon with the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul and Joab the son of Zeruiah and the servants of David went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon and they sat down Abner's men on one side of the pool and Joab's men on the other side of the pool and we might think Abner the baddie right he's the baddie from Israel and we think Joab yay the commander of David's army what a guy you know and it's true Abner is on the wrong side for now

but what we're going to see so many spoilers this week what we're going to see is Abner will repent he will repent and Josephus commented that he's a good natured man and I think this passage will draw that out to some extent as well Joab on the other hand is described by one commentator as cruel revengeful and imperious and I was like there's my dictionary what's imperious mean it means domineering arrogant and dictatorial so it's not

Abner Boo Joab yay actually on the contrary Joab is a very cruel man and that will come out particularly in well to some extent today and more next time and the Bible there's only one case in which it really divides neatly into goodies and baddies and that is in the case of Jesus Christ who is truly good in every other case you have baddies and baddies and most of the time we have very complex situations don't we and I've said that David is often portrayed as righteous and right but that's only in so far as he is given as a picture of Jesus Christ even in our text today we're reminded that David fell short taking two wives and on those six sons I mentioned six different women not good so Abner and Joab they meet at a place called the pool of Gibeon and it looked like that it looks like that today that's what it looks like today amazing amazing bit of ancient engineering they've cut nearly 30 metres into the limestone and there's these steps that go down like that how long would it take to hew out that from limestone

I have no idea and I just my research was limited to Wikipedia this week by the way and that's where I got both those pictures but that's the pool so it's a high ish place but a place of rest and water verse 14 then Abner said to Joab now have the young men arise and hold a martial skills match in our presence that's how the NASB 2020 puts it and Joab said have them arise so they got up and went over by count 12 for Benjamin and Ishbosheth the son of Saul and 12 for the servants of David and each one of them seized his opponent by the head and thrust his sword into his opponent's side so that they fell down together therefore that place was called Chalkath Hazorim which is in Gibeon that day the battle was very severe and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by the servants of David so this martial skills match the Hebrew word really means to make sport or to play and I think that's how the

[41 : 27] King James says it let the men ride up and play it's a gladiatorial battle gladiator battle I was kind of thinking Hunger Games style if you know the book slash movie but it's a battle it's a battle and it's a game to see who wins and perhaps it was intended to be a match that would decide the outcome I'm not sure about that because it would seem to me that this is not the strongest amongst them Abner and Joab are not in the battle and they are the commanders and the strongest so who knows and everybody dies everybody dies and I think you have a object lesson there that nobody is victorious in a civil war and a nation divided against itself cannot stand the meaning of that name there is not clear it seems to mean the portion or the allotment of the flints or stones and you think it doesn't make a lot of sense so anyway the battle of 12 on 12 is indecisive and then we read a more severe battle then arises in which team

David gets the upper hand verse 18 says now the three sons of Zeruiah were there Joab Abishai and Azahel and Azahel was as swift footed as one of the gazelles that is in the field now these three guys I think we've mentioned them before but they're very unusual in that they are given their matriarchal lineage Zeruiah is their mother in fact she is David's sister the bible doesn't record the name of her husband i.e.

the father of these guys anywhere they're mentioned so many times but never are they son of Josephus managed to figure out apparently his name was Suri cool I don't know how he did that Joab have introduced him already cruel imperious Abishai he will go on to become one of David's mighty men famous mighty men of David so we can picture him as tough guy and Azahel well he's a good runner so he's a man after my heart I guess verse 19 Azahel pursued Abner and did not turn to the right or to the left from following Abner then Abner looked behind himself and said is that you Azahel and he said it is I so Abner said to him turn aside for your own good to the right or to the left and take hold of one of the Abner repeated again to

Azahel turn aside for your own good from following me why should I strike you to the ground how then could I show my face to your brother Joab however he refused to turn aside so Abner struck him in the belly with the butt end of his spear so that the spear came out at his back you then he fell there and died on the spot killing and it happened that all who came thereafter to the place where Azahel had fallen and died stood still so what that means that fatality brought things to a close they're like oh wow now Abner really did not want to kill Azahel twice he's like dude just hold back I don't want to have to kill you and it's funny it never seems to occur to Abner that Azahel might be

able to defeat him he's like you're not a threat dude just anyway so Abner was pleading that he not have to kill him verse 24 but Joab and

Abishai pursued Abner so they continued the pursuit and when the sun was going down they came to the hill of Amah which is opposite Giah by the wilderness of Gibeon and the sons of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became one troop and they stood at the top of the hill and Abner called Joab and said should the sword devour forever do you not realize that it will be bitter in the end so how long will you refrain from telling the people to turn back from pursuing their kinsmen so the pursuit continues I couldn't figure out where the hill of Amah unfortunately so I don't know how long that chase was but now the sun is going down it's presumably been a while and Abner was like guys it's time to stop it's time to stop let not the swords devour forever again we see Abner he's a peacemaker he wants an end to hostilities verse 27 and

[46 : 17] Joab said as God lives if you have not spoken then the people of Judah certainly would have withdrawn in the morning each from pursuing his brother so Joab blew the trumpet and all the people halted and no longer pursued Israel nor did they continue to fight anymore Abner and his men then went through the Arabah all that night so they crossed the Jordan walked all morning and came to Mahanaim it's a long old way then Joab returned from pursuing Abner but he gathered all the people together and 19 of David's servants were missing besides Azahel however the servant of David had struck and killed many of Benjamin and Abner's men 360 men were dead and they carried Azahel away and buried him in his father's tomb which was in Bethlehem then Joab and his men travelled all night until the day dawned at

Hebron well and thus the chapter ends and again so we see Abner a man of peace and we see him serving as a peacemaker he didn't wander Escaler he's trying to bring an end and I do believe that God was working through Abner yes he installed Ish-bosheth and that was wrong it could have been considered an act of loyalty kind of like default he was in a position where he had to choose his job which was protecting his master's interests and doing what was right before the Lord he installed Ish-bosheth but he will repent he will defect to David as I said and he will show he's a man of great honour and David will respect and honour him at the end so how do we conclude how do we conclude well the kingdom of David is coming in the kingdom of Saul is going out the kingdom of the Christ like kingdom is coming in the kingdom of the beloved is coming in the human like kingdom the man's kingdom the man of shame's kingdom is going away but it's not taken by force it's taken through love now a few lessons that I just jotted down as we went through we've seen a reminder of the value of friendship again it's good to seek friends it's good to seek friendships and I pray that they would develop here in this fellowship that we would be characterised by love great love for one another and that we would have great friendships where we love and support and pray for one another we've seen a reminder to honour leadership we are to pray for our leaders whether they're local national or international and we are to pray for spiritual leadership as well and we've seen how civil war and no good comes of it there's no winners there's no winners and Abner is held up as an example of bringing peace into that context but David we see as a model of Christ once again he resists the temptation to push his own agenda or to fight for what God has promised God has promised he's going to be king Saul is dead he's waited years and he's still with Saul's death he waits patiently seven more years seven and a half more years with only partial fulfilment trusting God for the end and it's only when chapter 5 all the tribes of Israel come to him in Hebron and say be king be king it's so Christ-like Christ did not force himself as king in fact when he was rejected he said this in Matthew 23 verse 37 Jerusalem Jerusalem who kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to her how often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were unwilling behold your house is being left you desolate for I say to you from now on you will not see me until you say blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord Jesus is saying I won't come again until you cry out to me when you want me as king

I will come and Zechariah 12 speaks of that time when Israel has all of these nations coming against them kind of like now and God will miraculously protect them kind of like now and he will pour out a spirit of grace and pleading upon them may it come soon and then he will come and they will look upon me whom they have to hear amen I long for that day I long for that day amen Lord praise you praise you for your kingdom Lord the kingdom of the beloved thank you Lord that your kingdom is a kingdom characterized by love Lord thank you that you have grafted us in to that kingdom and that we are the beneficiaries of the Messiah Jesus Christ Lord we thank you for what

we've seen today in the text Lord I pray that your spirit has impressed these things in our hearts
Lord we want to walk in them we pray by your spirit that we would be able to do so amen in Jesus
name amen who