

DAVID, PART II

STUDY #10

TEXT: 2 Samuel 3:1-4:12

- v. 1 The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time. David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.
- v. 2 Sons were born to David in Hebron: His first born was Amnon the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel;
- v. 3 his second, Kileab the son of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third, Absalom the son of Maacah daughter of Talmai king of Gesshur;
- v. 4 the fourth, Asonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;
- v. 5 and the sixth, Ithream the son of David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.
- v. 6 During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner had been strengthening his own position in the house of Saul.
- v. 7 Now Saul had had a concubine named Rizpah daughter of Aiah. And Ish-Bosheth said to Abner, "Why did you sleep with my father's concubine?"
- v. 8 Abner was very angry because of what Ish-Bosheth said and he answered, "Am I a dog's head—on Judah's side? This very day I am loyal to the house of your father Saul and to his family and friends. I haven't handed you over to David. Yet now you accuse me of an offense involving this woman!
- v. 9 May God deal with Abner, be it ever so severely, if I do not do for David what the Lord promised him on oath
- v. 10 and transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish David's throne over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beersheba."
- v. 11 Ish-Bosheth did not dare to say another word to Abner, because he was afraid of him.
- v. 12 Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to say to David, "Whose land is it? Make an agreement with me, and I will help you bring all Israel over to you."
- v. 13 "Good," said David. "I will make an agreement with you. But I demand one thing from you: Do not come into my presence unless you bring Michal daughter of Saul when you come to see me."

- v. 14 Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, demanding, “give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins.”
- v. 15 So Ish-Bosheth gave orders and had her taken away from her husband Paltiel son of Laish.
- v. 16 Her husband, however, went with her, weeping behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go back home!” So he went back.
- v. 17 Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and said, “For some time you have wanted to make David your king.
- v. 18 Now do it! For the Lord promised David, ‘By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.’”
- v. 19 Abner also spoke to the Benjamites in person. Then he sent to Hebron to tell David everything that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin wanted to do.
- v. 20 When Abner, who had twenty men with him, came to David at Hebron, David prepared a feast for him and his men.
- v. 21 Then Abner said to David, “Let me go at once and assemble all Israel for my lord the king, so that they may make a compact with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires.” So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.
- v. 22 Just then David’s men and Joab returned from a raid and brought with them a great deal of plunder. But Abner was no longer with David in Hebron, because David had sent him away, and he had gone in peace.
- v. 23 When Joab and all the soldiers with him arrived, he was told that Abner son of Ner had come to the king and that the king had sent him away and that he had gone in peace.
- v. 24 So Joab went to the king and said, “What have you done? Look, Abner came to you. Why did you let him go? Now he is gone!
- v. 25 You know Abner son of Ner; he came to deceive you and observe your movements and find out everything you are doing.”
- v. 26 Joab then left David and sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know it.
- v. 27 Now when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the gateway, as though to speak with him privately. And there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed him in the stomach, and he died.
- v. 28 Later, when David heard about this, he said, “I and my kingdom are forever innocent before the Lord concerning the blood of Abner son of Ner.
- v. 29 May his blood fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father’s house! May Joab’s house never be without someone who has a running sore or leprosy or who leans on a crutch or who falls by the sword or who lacks food.”

- v. 30 (Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.)
- v. 31 Then David said to Joab and all the people with him, “Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth and walk in mourning in front of Abner.” King David himself walked behind the bier.
- v. 32 They buried Abner in Hebron, and the king wept aloud at Abner’s tomb. All the people wept also.
- v. 33 The king sang this lament for Abner: “Should Abner have died as the lawless die?”
- v. 34 Your hands were not bound, your feet were not fettered. You fell as one falls before wicked men.” And all the people wept over him again.
- v. 35 Then they all came and urged David to eat something while it was still day; but David took an oath, saying, “May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets!”
- v. 36 All the people took note and were pleased; indeed, everything the king did pleased them.
- v. 37 So on that day all the people and all Israel knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner.
- v. 38 Then the king said to his men, “Do you realize that a prince and a great man has fallen in Israel this day?”
- v. 39 And today, though I am the anointed king, I am weak, and these sons of Zeruah are too strong for me. May the Lord repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds!”
- 4:v. 1 When Ish-Bosheth son of Saul heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel became alarmed.
- v. 2 Now Saul’s son had two men who were leaders of raiding bands. One was named Baanah and the other Recab; they were sons of Rimmon the Beerothite from the tribe of Benjamin—Beeroth is considered part of Benjamin,
- v. 3 Because the people of Beeroth fled to Gittaim and have lived there as aliens to this day.
- v. 4 (Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in both feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled. His name was Mephibosheth.)
- v. 5 Now Recab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, set out for the house of Ish-Bosheth, and they arrived there in the heat of the day while he was taking his noonday rest.
- v. 6 They went into the inner part of the house as if to get some wheat, and they stabbed him on the stomach. Then Recab and his brother Baanah slipped away.
- v. 7 They had gone into the house while he was lying on the bed in his bedroom. After they stabbed and killed him, they cut off his head. Taking it with them, they traveled all night by way of Arabah.

- v. 8 They brought the head of Ish-Bosheth to David at Hebron and said to the king, “Here is the head of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, your enemy, who tried to take your life. This day the Lord has avenged my lord the king against Saul and his offspring.”
- v. 9 David answered Recab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothrite, “As surely as the Lord lives, who has delivered me out of all trouble,
- v. 10 when a man told me, ‘Saul is dead,’ and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and put him to death in Ziklag. That was the reward I gave him for his news!
- v. 11 How much more—when wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed—should I not now demand his blood from your hand and rid the earth of you!”
- v. 12 So David gave an order to his men, and they killed them. They cut off their hands and feet and hung the bodies by the pool in Hebron. But they too the head of Ish-Bosheth and buried it in Abner’s tomb at Hebron.

INTRODUCTION:

In our last study we had the tragic death of Saul and Jonathan and many of the forces of Israel, as they fell before the Philistine onslaught.

David was led of the Lord to take up residence in Hebron and leave Ziklag, the city of the Philistines, behind.

It was while at Hebron that David was anointed king over the land of Judah.

Abner, Saul's first cousin and commander of his army, took Ish-Bosheth, Saul's son, and made him king over the rest of Israel in Mahanaim, about 65 miles northeast of Hebron.

Our study concluded with a minor skirmish between the house of Saul and the house of David. There was one prominent casualty in the death of Asahel, the brother of Joab and Abishai, all three of them nephews of David and sons of David's sister Zeruah.

The scene of today's study opens with the conflict between these two kingdoms on the land of Israel.

v. 1 The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time. David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

ch. 2:11 The length of time David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

The tragedy of this civil war going on in the country reminds us of our own national history when civil war broke out, and there was such needless bloodshed.

The only difference between these two civil wars is that the south won in this case, and David 's throne is established.

Many of Abraham Lincoln's statements help set the tone for the emotional feelings that are the backdrop to this particular passage of Scripture:

THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS:

- ❑ “Fourscore and seven years ago our Fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this, but in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead, we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion, that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

The conflict is very real and the battle is going on. “David is growing stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.”

One is reminded of Galatians 5:16,17

“Here is my advice: Live your whole life in the Spirit, and you will not satisfy the desires of your lower nature. For the whole energy of the lower nature is set against the Spirit, while the whole power of the Spirit is contrary to the lower nature. Here is the conflict, and that is why you are not free to do what you want to do.”

Romans 7:15ff

“In practice what happens, my own behavior baffles me, for I find myself not doing what I really want to do, but doing what I really loathe. Yet surely if I do things that I really don’t want to do, I am admitting that I really agree with the Law. But it cannot be said that I am doing them at all. It must be sin that has made its home in my nature. I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power. That is, I don’t accomplish the good I set out to do; and the evil I don’t really want to do, I find I am always doing.”

Redpath points out, “In the light of these memories that I have brought before you, I would recommend immediate action. Now then, do! Hesitate no longer. As of old, when Elijah faced the prophets of Baal, the question was, How long will you halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. But if Baal, then follow him. Don’t remain in the absurd and dangerous position of believing what is right but failing to put your belief into action. You can be right in your knowledge but wrong in your heart and go to hell. I want to make the issue crystal clear. There can be no possible doubt according to the Word of God. Either Jesus must be King or He cannot be your Savior. David had to be king over all of Israel or he never could have delivered them from the Philistines. It was absolutely essential that if David were to secure his right to the crown and lead them to victory, civil war had to stop.”

Progress and maturity in the Christian life is an experience of the Spirit of God moving from **RESIDENT TO PRESIDENT**. It is our moving into the land of rest and peace and allowing the Spirit of God to provide the power and the grace and the victory over our own nature.

v. 2 Sons were born to David in Hebron; His firstborn was Amnon the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel;

v. 3 his second, Kileab the son of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third, Absalom the son of Maach daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;

v. 4 the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;

v. 5 and the sixth, Ithream the son of David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.

ch. 2:2 So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel.

David, during this 7 1/2 year reign over the land of Judah in the south, has drastically changed his family situation as well.

There are six wives that are mentioned here in these verses, each of whom has given David a son.

His firstborn son Amnon, whose name means 'faithful,' came to him by his relationship with Ahinoam.

His secondborn son Kileab was born to Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. His name means 'whom the Father has perfected' or it is magnifying the Creator.

His thirdborn son Absalom, whose name means 'father of peace,' came to him through his relationship with Maach, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur.

The fourth son Adonijah was the son of Haggith. Adonijah means ‘my Lord.’

The fifth Shephatiah, whose name means ‘whom Jehovah defends,’ is a son of Abital.

And the sixth Ithream, whose name means ‘abundance of people,’ was born of Eglah.

All of this has happened during the 7 1/2 years of ruling in the city of Hebron over the land of Judah.

When David moved to Hebron, he got busy and found himself four new wives. Of course, later, he marries even more. This is a great weakness of David, and it causes his downfall in a lot of ways later in his biography.

Deut. 17:17

“Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away. Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.”

Multiplying wives was contrary to God’s law in Genesis, and it set a bad example for David’s successors. His son Solomon had this same fault.

This sin contributed to David’s insensitivity to God’s moral standard and contributed to the big problem that we are going to encounter in a few chapters.

Three of these boys were real stinkers. Amnon, Adonijah, and Absalom. In fact, Absalom will lead a rebellion against his father a little later in the story. His mama was the daughter of the King of Geshur. David evidently took her as a slave and then later married her.

Gehrke, however, points out, “In Israel at this time a large family such as David’s was a concrete sign of divine blessing.”

2 Samuel 5:13

“After he left Hebron, David took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem, and more sons and daughters were born to him.”

Pink points out, “Here was David’s besetting sin to which he yielded so freely. Little wonder that his son Solomon followed in his footsteps.

v. 6 During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner had been strengthening his own position in the house of Saul.

Once again, the war is mentioned here in verse 6, like it was back in verse 1.

Abner was using this opportunity to strengthen his position in the house of Saul. He was in this for political power, and his is using the opportunity to step upward in these circumstances.

David is king over one tribe, and Ish-Bosheth is king over the other eleven tribes. It looked on the surface like the major part of the kingdom was lost. But David waited on God and wanted only what God gave him. Waiting on God doesn’t just involve time. Discernment was involved. We have to listen hard for the still, small voice of God. I am sure that David really pondered all of this, thinking back over the eight years that he had to spend fleeing from Saul, and then seven years more on Hebron waiting God’s time; and civil war was going on.

Eccles. 3:11

“He makes all things beautiful in His time.”

If we will only give God time, He'll work things out in our lives.

Ann Kiemel Anderson in her book I Gave God Time says, “When one waits, the gift is more valuable; more priceless and cherished. And God always knows when we are ready. I gave God time, and His plan was perfect. It exceeded all my greatest expectations.”

Lamentations 3:25,26

“The Lord is wonderfully good to those who wait for Him, to those who seek for Him. It is good both to hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”

David's waiting begins to pay off because Abner obviously wanted Ish-Bosheth on the throne so he could slip into his place and control the nation. The harem of the dead king became the property of his successor.

v. 7 Now Saul had had a concubine named Rizpah daughter of Aiah. And Ish-Bosheth said to Abner, “Why did you sleep with my father's concubine?”

I told you this was better than “Dallas”, or “General Hospital,” or “As The World Turns.” Abner gets Rizpah into bed, and Ish-Bosheth puts up a squawk. Having intercourse with a king's concubine was a treasonous act, for it was in essence making a claim to the throne.

Division comes between the two leading personalities in the administration in the north.

- v. 8 Abner was very angry because of what Ish-Bosheth said and he answered, “Am I a dog’s head—on Judah’s side? This very day I am loyal to the house of your father Saul and to his family and friends. I haven’t handed you over to David. Yet now you accuse me of an offense involving this woman!”
- v. 9 May God deal with Abner, be it ever so severely, if I do not so for David what the Lord promised him on oath
- v. 10 and transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish David’s throne over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beersheba.”

The king had a perfect right in rebuking Abner but Abner became so enraged that he immediately began to make overtures to David.

Abner resented any criticism of his conduct from Ish-Bosheth, and he insolently reminds him that he owes his political position to him. Proud men will not take criticism well.

Also, Abner was no dummy. He was seeing that David was getting stronger and stronger, and that Saul’s house was getting weaker and weaker. That was because God was against it.

Acts 5:36-39

“Men of Israel, be very careful of what action you intend to take against these men. Remember that some time ago a man called Theudas made himself conspicuous by claiming to be someone or other, and he had a following of 400 men. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and the movement came to nothing. Then later in the days of the census, that man Judas from Galilee appeared and enticed many of the people to follow him. But he too died and his whole following melted away. My advice to you now therefore is to let these men alone. Leave them to themselves, for if this teaching or movement is merely human, it will collapse of its own accord. But if it should be from God, you cannot defeat them; and you might actually find yourselves to be fighting against God.”

Winter points out, “The fact that Abner himself became strong may indicate one reason why he backed Ish-Bosheth as the king in the first place. Abner was of the same family as Saul. Both were members of the tribe of Benjamin. This fact alone would incline Abner toward supporting Saul’s son as king.”

Abner, I think, realized that if he could put David under obligation to him by turning the whole of Israel away from Ish-Bosheth to David, then David would feel bound to compensate him and maybe put him over Joab. He wanted to be on the winning side and used this as an opportunity to jump on the bandwagon.

Winter raises the question, “Why had Abner dared to fight against God’s purpose? Abner evidently knew that God had sworn to David that he would be the next king. He expressed this when he said that he would translate the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah from Dan even to Beersheba. Abner had been motivated by personal and selfish reasons. These reasons often caused people to resist God’s will for their lives and for the lives of others. Ish-Bosheth was not able to resist Abner because Abner was stronger than the king himself. He also may have known that this was God’s will and that it was foolhardy for him to attempt to thwart God’s purposes.”

v. 11 Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to say to David, “Whose land is it? Make an agreement with me, and I will help you bring all Israel over to you.”

Abner begins his proposal to David with a question, “Whose land is it?”

Genesis 12:7

“And the Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land.’ So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.”

Just as there is civil strife and disorder in the land of Israel today, they are still trying to answer the age-old question, “Whose land is it?” As the Arabs and Jews fight over this sacred tract that was deeded originally to Abram and his descendants.

David qualifies, for he is in that sacred line.

“Make an agreement with me and I will help you bring all Israel over to you.”

v. 13 “Good,” said David, “I will make an agreement with you. But I demand one thing of you: Do not come into my presence unless you bring Michal daughter of Saul when you come to see me.”

David now begins to see the fulfillment of the Lord’s promises to him, and the anointing at the hand of Samuel many years earlier.

David has one demand and stipulation upon Abner’s coming, and that is that he bring Michal with him when he comes.

Michal was David’s bride that was given to Paltiel by Saul in his latter days as kind of a public reproach against David.

Abner sends a message to David to tell him that he was at his service. David only makes one demand, that his wife Michal, Saul’s daughter, be returned to him. This would strengthen his claim to Saul’s throne, and after all, Michal was his first wife, and he wants her back. Saul gave her to another man to humiliate David.

Winter points out, “David was shamed by Sauls’ giving his wife Michal to another man. The prohibition of a man marrying a woman who had once before been married to him and latter given to another man does not prevail in this instance because the marriage was not terminated by mutual consent (Deut. 24:1-4). Saul had simply taken David’s wife and had given her to another man. The second man did not have any right to her, and she was still legitimately and rightfully David’s wife.”

Gehrke points out, “His counter stipulation is that first of all, Michal, his rightful wife, Saul’s daughter, be restores to him, thus clearly establishing the legitimacy of his own succession to King Saul.”

Vos points out, “Before David was willing to receive Abner in person to negotiate with him, he demanded the return of Saul’s daughter Michal who had been given to Paltiel. It may be argued that David’s love for her had prompted the request, but far more was at stake. On political ground, she was important to him:

1. To show that he harbored no ill will toward the fallen king.
2. To demonstrate that as son-in-law he was Saul’s legitimate successor.
3. To win to himself by this means whatever lingering affection there was for Saul
4. To enlist the support of the Benjamites.

R. A. Carlson makes this observation, “It is interesting to note that chap. 3:2-5 is also by a passage containing related motifs. In chap. 3:7-16 we read how Ish-Bosheth reprimands Abner for his action in taking over Saul’s concubine Rizpah, which results in Abner’s conspiracy with David. This in turn leads to David’s demand that Michal, the daughter of Saul, be restored to him as his wife. Attempts of this kind to bring about an alliance with the royal house of Saul and his harem are clear expressions of the ambition to rule, and are thus of dynastic nature, a circumstance seen also in the later succession traditions.”

v. 14 Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, demanding, “Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins.”

Now David makes Michal an issue with Ish-Bosheth in demanding that she rightfully returned to him.

When David won the battle with Goliath, the Philistine, Saul had promised his daughter to be his wife. Saul, however, did not fulfill that obligation and gave Merab, his oldest daughter, to someone else. Then later, because of Michal’s great love for David, Saul demanded a dowry of 100 Philistines. David immediately proceeded to kill 200 Philistines, thus winning the hand of Michal.

It was Michal who warned David about her father’s threats to kill him and helped him to escape by letting him down through one of the rear windows of their home.

v. 15 So Ish-Bosheth gave orders and had her taken away from her husband Paltiel son of Laish.

The response to David’s order is probably the same response that Ish-Bosheth had toward Abner back in verse 11. Ish-Bosheth did not dare to say another word to Abner because he was afraid of him.

Ish-Bosheth, Michal’s brother is the one who gives this order for the separation to take place.

v. 16 Her husband, however, went with her, weeping behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go back home!” So he went back.

Paltiel had really fallen in love with Michal, and it is demonstrated by the fact that he did two things:

1. He went
2. He was weeping behind her all the way to Bahurim.

Evidently, this was several miles south of Gallim and Gibeah, where Michal and Paltiel had been living.

Abner had finally had enough, and so he turns to Paltiel and issues the command, "Go back home!" So Paltiel responds with obedience and went back.

v. 17 Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and said, "For some time you have wanted to make David your king.

v. 18 Now do it! For the Lord promised David, 'By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.'"

Abner realizes that he has been fighting against the Lord in his selfish plans, and now realizing that, makes a tremendous speech before the elders of Israel.

Now notice that it was Abner, not David, who suggests and manages the transference of the kingdom. He consults with the elders all over Israel to persuade them to make David king, then he goes to Hebron with twenty men to make the deal complete.

v. 19 Abner also spoke to the Benjamites in person. Then he went to Hebron to tell David everything that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin wanted to do.

The Benjamites are singled out here because this is Saul's tribe, and they are the ones who need to be supportive of this proposal of Abner to make David king over Israel.

The negotiations have been completed, Abner then went to Hebron to report to David everything that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin wanted to do.

v. 20 When Abner, who had twenty men with him, came to David at Hebron, David prepared a feast for him and his men.

Although the text does not say it, Abner also has Michal with him, or has had her sent on ahead to David because this was the stipulation earlier in the passage back in verse 13: "Do not come into my presence unless you bring Michal, daughter of Saul, when you come to see me."

It would be difficult to comprehend the emotions involved in this situation as David and Michal see each other once again. I am sure David would have said, "I've missed you, Michal." And she probably would have responded, "I'll bet you have with all these other women running around the place."

They had been apart for 10-12 years and were childhood sweethearts.

David, in this situation, is courteous to Abner and his men and makes them a feast, and then sends them away in peace.

v. 21 Then Abner said to David, “Let me go at once and assemble all Israel for my lord the king, so that they may make a compact with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires.” So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

Abner’s proposal to David is now very concise. His desire is to assemble all Israel and that they make a compact with David, and that David may rule over all that his heart desires.

Psalm 37:3-9

“Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him, and He will do it. And He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger and forsake wrath. Fret not yourself; it leads only to evil doing. For evil doers will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land.”

Psalm 38:9

“Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my sighing is not hidden from thee.”

v. 22 Just then David’s men and Joab returned from a raid and brought with them a great deal of plunder. But Abner was no longer with David in Hebron, because David had sent him away, and he had gone in peace.

Joab and the military have just returned from a victorious raid, but Abner had already departed.

v. 23 When Joab and all the soldiers with him arrived, he was told that Abner son of Ner had come to the king and that the king had sent him away and that he had gone in peace.

As soon as Joab and the men get back, the report is given that Abner has been there and has gone in peace.

Joab hates Abner because he killed his little brother. Also, he fears him as a political enemy.

v. 24 So Joab went to the king and said, “What have you done? Look, Abner came to you. Why did you let him go? Now he is gone!

Joab is angry and filled with several questions:

1. “What have you done?”
2. “Why did you let him go?”

David, he is our enemy! He killed my brother and your nephew, and now you are entering into negotiations with him; and you sent him away in peace. Now he is gone!

v. 25 You know Abner son of Ner; he came to deceive you and observe your movements and find out everything you are doing.”

Joab puts a completely wrong interpretation upon Abner’s act. So many times we make wrong judgments of people simply because we do not have all the facts that determine the situation.

v. 26 Joab then left David and sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know it.

Independent of David, Joab sent messengers to get Abner and have him return.

v. 27 Now when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the gateway, as though to speak with him privately. And there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed him in the stomach, and he died.

So Joab gets Abner back on pretense and murders him in cold blood. Both Abner and Joab are pretty bad guys, but at least Abner killed Asahel in an open war in his own defense after he had given him fair warning. But Joab shed the blood of war in peace.

Winter points out, “Later events reveal that David had high regard for Abner, probably the outgrowth of their many pleasant associations together when both were in Saul’s service.”

Whoever reported Abner’s visit to Joab may have given him misinformation, but there was nothing to indicate that Abner was planning to displace Joab. Abner was certainly friendly towards David, and Joab had no reason to kill him. It was only the strong hatred for Abner on the part of Joab which led to his action. Joab’s first point was that David had let Abner get away. His second point was that Abner must have come from an evil motive. Joab could not see Abner as anything but an enemy of Judah.

v. 28 Later, when David heard about this, he said, “I and my kingdom are forever innocent before the Lord concerning the blood of Abner son of Ner.

v. 29 May his blood fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father’s house! May Joab’s house never be without someone who has a running sore or leprosy or who leans on a crutch or who falls by the sword or who lacks food.”

David did not approve of Joab’s deed, and he accuses Joab of doing a very terrible thing, and places a curse upon him and his family. He washes his hands from the guilt of Abner’s blood in verse 28, and he places a curse on Joab and his family in verse 29.

v. 30 (Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.)

Now the writer tells us the motive behind the murder. That motive was retaliation for Abner’s killing Asahel, the brother of Joab and Abishai in the battle at Gibeon.

2 Sam. 2:18ff

“The three sons of Zeruah were there, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was as fleet-footed as a wild gazelle. He chased Abner, turning neither to the right nor to the left as he pursued him. Abner looked behind him and asked, ‘Is that you, Asahel?’ ‘It is,’ he answered. Then Abner said to him, ‘Turn aside to the right or to the left. Take on one of the young men and strip him of weapons.’ But Asahel would not stop chasing him. Again Abner warned Asahel, ‘Stop chasing me. Why should I strike you down? How could I look your brother Joab in the face?’ But Asahel refused to give up the pursuit, so Abner thrust the butt of his spear into Asahel’s stomach, and the spear came out through his back. He fell there and died on the spot. And every man stopped when he came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died.”

v. 31 Then David said to Joab and all the people with him, “Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth and walk in mourning in front of Abner.” King David himself walked behind the bier.

Here David calls for everyone, including Joab, to lament the death of Abner. David himself follows the corpse as the chief mourner and makes an oration at the grave.

v. 32 They buried Abner in Hebron, and the king wept aloud at Abner’s tomb. All the people wept also.

v. 33 The king sang this lament for Abner: “Should Abner have died as the lawless die?”

v. 34 Your hands were not bound, your feet were not fettered. You fell as one who falls before wicked men.” And all the people wept over him again.

He is sick that Abner was fooled out of his life, killed by surprise and treachery. Abner, who thought he was the main hinge in which the affairs of Israel turned, was made a fool of by a base rival and fell because of ambition and jealousy.

J. Vernon McGee points out, “Abner was in Hebron, and Hebron was one of the cities of refuge where a murderer was safe. In that city Joab could not have touched him, but Joab quietly took Abner aside and said to him, “Come out here, I want to talk with you. You are the captain on one side, and I am the captain on the other side. It would be nice if we could get together.” So Abner stepped outside the city of refuge, and Joab killed him. That is why David said Abner died as a fool dies. He was a fool to leave Hebron.”

v. 35 Then they all came and urged David to eat something while it was still day; but David took an oath saying, “May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets!”

David refused to eat, and in his mourning had taken an oath that he would fast until the sun set in honor of Abner.

v. 36 All the people took note and were pleased; indeed, everything the king did pleased them.

David’s public actions in this situation were very satisfying to the people. They were pleased with what David was doing and how he had conducted himself.

v. 37 So on that day all the people and all Israel knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner.

David is vindicated before the eyes of the people because of his conduct in this situation.

v. 38 Then the king said to his men, “Do you not realize that a prince and a great man has fallen in Israel this day?”

v. 39 And today, though I am the anointed king, I am weak, and these sons of Zeruah are too strong for me. May the Lord repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds!”

David three times in his lament back in chapter 1 said, “How the mighty have fallen!” And now, “a great man has fallen in Israel this day.”

David has fasted in honor of Abner and is satisfied to leave the judgment of Joab to God.

However, if David had punished Joab, a lot of murders could have been avoided in the future.

David was really at his height right now. He had the love of all the people.

Psalm 19:9-14

“The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true. They are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold; yes, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them thy servant is warned. In keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors; acquit me of hidden faults. Also, keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins. Let them not rule over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and redeemer.”

Winter points out, “David said that Abner was a prince. He was not really eligible to succeed Saul, but he was from the royal family. His tribe was the same as that of Saul, Israel’s first king. Both were from the tribe of Benjamin. He was also the cousin of Saul and the son of Ner, brother to Kish, who was Saul’s father. More than this, he was a great man.”

Dr. Paul Jordan raises the question, “How do you respond to people who don’t agree with you? to people who give you and your projects a hard time? Can you say, he is a great guy, I just don’t agree with his opinion on this matter. When you serve on a board, are you able to be in the minority and think that the majority are fine people? Or do you wonder if they have their heads screwed on backwards because they don’t agree with you? David had a tremendous ability to respect the people who God brought into his life, even though they didn’t always agree with him.”

Gehrke points out, “The second means David uses for disassociating himself from any suspicion of implication in Abner’s death is in the special public funeral he orders for the dead prince, in which David takes the position of chief mourner. Abner was, his lament points out,

an experienced soldier
a seasoned statesman
a prince
and a great man

“Had he been killed while handcuffed or clapped in stocks, his lack of counterattack could be explained. As it is, he died like a simpleton because of treachery that was afoot.”

Some of Abraham Lincoln’s correspondence during the Civil War probably would help us to get the feeling of what’s going on in this chapter.

Lincoln’s letter to Mrs. Bixby, November 21, 1864:

“Dear Madam,

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the republic they died to save. I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the alter of freedom.”

Abraham Lincoln's letter to Col. Ellsworth's parents:

"My dear Sir and Madame,

In the untimely loss of your noble son, our affliction here is scarcely less than your own. So much of promised usefulness and of bright hopes for one's self and friends have rarely been so suddenly dashed as in his fall. In size, in years, and in youthful appearance, a boy only; his power to command men was surprisingly great. This power combined with a fine intellect and indomitable energy and a taste altogether military constituted in him as seemed to me the best natural talent in that department I ever knew. And yet he was singularly modest and deferential in social intercourse. My acquaintance with him began less than two years ago, yet through the latter half of the intervening period, it was as intimate as the disparity of our ages and my engrossing engagements would permit. To me he appeared to have no indulgences or pastimes, and I never heard him utter a profane or intemperate word. What was conclusive of his good heart, he never forgot his parents. The honors he labored for so laudably and for which, in the sad end, he so gallantly gave his life, he meant for them no less than for himself. In the hope that it may be no intrusion upon the sacredness of your sorrow, I have ventured to address you this tribute to the memory of my young friend and your brave and early fallen child. May God give you that consolation which is beyond all earthly power."

Now we come to chapter 4 in our study. We might well write over chapter 4 Matthew 6:24

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Abraham Lincoln again in a speech at the Republican State Convention in Springfield, Illinois, on June 16, 1858 said,

“A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall. But I so expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, north as well as south.”

As long as there were two kings, there was civil war. In the lives of many Christians today there is raging literally a civil war. The flesh (the kingdom of Saul) struggles with the spirit (the kingdom of David); and the conflict is bitter. The flesh puts up a fight. We love our old inner self so much. We refuse to be crucified with Christ. As long as David was only king of Judah, but not all Israel, God’s people could not have rest from their enemies round about. The Lord said of David, “By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all of their enemies.”

While the civil war raged in Israel, David became stronger and the family of Saul became weaker. But the kingdom was still divided. The self life is the losing side. As long as it has any place in our lives, we will face nothing but defeats, heartaches, losses, and troubles. The longer we hold out, the more danger there is of hardening our hearts against Him. It happened to Saul.

Each of us needs to stop and really think and examine our own lives and put Christ in His rightful place where He is undisputed king. Then we can say, ‘It is no longer I, but Christ.’

Now all that is standing in God's way as far as accomplishing His ultimate purpose in having David rule as king over all Israel is the dealing with Ish-Bosheth.

chap. 4:v. 1 When Ish-Bosheth, son of Saul, heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel became alarmed.

Ish-Bosheth is just like his father. He had never really learned to turn to the Lord in the midst of a crisis, and so when one comes, he lost courage.

1 Samuel 28:5

“When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.”

2 Chron. 32:7,8

“Be strong and courageous; do not fear or be dismayed because of the King of Assyria, not because of all the multitude which is with him; for the One with us is greater than the one with him. With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.’ And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah, King of Judah

1 Samuel 17:10,11

“Again the Philistine said, ‘I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together.’ When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.”

1 Samuel 17:24

“When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid.”

1 Samuel 17:26

“Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him saying, ‘What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel, for who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should taunt the armies of the living God?’”

1 Samuel 17:45-47

“Then David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you; and I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel; and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear, for the battle is the Lord’s and He will give you into our hands.’”

Now that Abner was dead, Ish-Bosheth knows he can’t maintain his kingdom against David. His army is now weak. So he takes to the bed. That is what I like to do when I am worried about something—go hide under the covers.

v. 2 Now Saul’s son had two men who were leaders of raiding bands. One was named Baanah and the other Recab; they were sons of Rimmon the Beerothrite from the tribe of Benjamin—Beeroth is considered part of Benjamin.

Beeroth is northwest of Gibeah, about 8 or 9 miles. It is also a part of the territory for the tribe of Benjamin.

Baanah and Recab were evidently a part of the secret police or the guerrilla tactical squad which served as a branch of the military under Abner’s leadership.

Because of what had happened to Abner, they too turn on Ish-Bosheth and want to save their own hide if at all possible.

v. 3 because the people of Beeroth fled to Gittaim and have lived there as aliens to this day.

Evidently there was some conflict, and the people of Beeroth fled to Gittaim and continued to find residence in that place.

v. 4 (Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in both feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled. His name was Mephibosheth.)

Mephibosheth is an unusual name, but we need to remember it because the story about Mephibosheth and David is beautiful and will come into play a little bit later in our biography. Mephibosheth was Jonathan's son, and as long as he lived he was a constant danger to David because he had throne rights. Since he was Jonathan's son, however, David would never harm a hair of his head.

1 Samuel 20:14

“And if I am still alive, will you not show me the loving kindness of the Lord, that I may not die?”

Later on David is going to go looking for family members of Saul and Jonathan, not to kill them but to show them kindness.

When the word came that Saul and Jonathan had fallen in the battle with the Philistines, the nurse picked up Mephibosheth; and as she tried to leave, he fell and became crippled.

- v. 5 Now Recab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothrite, set out for the house of Ish-Bosheth, and they arrived there in the heat of the day while he was taking his noonday rest.

It was siesta time when the two boys arrived at the house of Ish-Bosheth.

It is while everybody is resting that they are the most vulnerable.

- v. 6 They went into the inner part of the house as if to get some wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Recab and his brother Baanah slipped away.

These two bad fellows are from the tribe of Benjamin, Ish-Bosheth's tribe also. They did a terrible thing. It was also a big mistake. They expected by killing this man to make peace with David. In fact, they thought David would reward them for the act.

Winter points out, "Mephibosheth was five years old when his father was killed in the battle with the Philistines. He was about twelve years old at the time when David was made king over all Israel. He is mentioned at the time of Ish-Bosheth's death here since he would be the only survivor and heir apparent to the throne of Saul.

- v. 7 They had gone into the house while he was lying on the bed in his bedroom. After they stabbed and killed him, they cut off his head. Taking it with them, they traveled all night by way of the Arabah.

After having killed Ish-Bosheth, they beheaded him; and took the head and immediately traveled south toward Hebron, which is about 60-65 miles southwest from where they were. They went through the wilderness and desert area because they did not want to call attention to themselves.

v. 8 They brought the head of Ish-Bosheth to David at Hebron and said to the king, “Here is the head of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, your enemy, who tried to take your life. This day the Lord has avenged my lord the king against Saul and his offering.”

They assumed two things in justifying their act that is not true:

1. That Ish-Bosheth was David’s enemy
2. That Ish-Bosheth had tried to take David’s life.

They also had one other false assumption, and that is, “This day the Lord has avenged my lord the king against Saul and his offspring.”

Matt. 7:22

“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

v. 9 David answered Recab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, “As surely as the Lord lives, who has delivered me out of all trouble.

How wonderful to see David in this situation recognizing that the Lord lives and recognizing that the Lord has delivered him out of all his trouble. So now in this situation, the Lord could have delivered him out of all of this trouble, and he was willing to wait for that to happen.

Psalm 31:14-15

“But as for me, I trust in thee, O Lord. I say thou art my God. My times are in thy hand. Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.”

Psalm 32:7

“Thou art my hiding place; thou dost preserve me from trouble. Thou dost surround me with songs of deliverance.”

Psalm 50:15

“And call upon me in the day of trouble. I shall rescue you, and you will honor me.”

v. 10 when a man told me, ‘Saul is dead,’ and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and put him to death in Ziklag. That was the reward I gave him for his news!

v. 11 How much more—when wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed—should I not now demand his blood from your hand and rid the earth of you!”

They were murderers, murderers of a king; and David executed them for taking God’s work out of his hand. He also calls Ish-Bosheth a righteous man. He was not guilty of any wicked or criminal deed. He merely took over his father’s kingdom at the urging of Abner. His only crime was being weak and ineffective and not seeking God’s will about the throne.

David here in his conversation with these men makes reference to chap. 1:14-16

“David asked him, ‘Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord’s anointed?’ Then David called one of his men and said, ‘Go strike him down,’ so he struck him down and he died. For David had said to him, ‘Your blood be on your own head, your own mouth testified against you when you said I killed the Lord’s anointed.’”

v. 12 So David gave an order to his men, and they killed them. They cut off their hands and feet and hung the bodies by the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-Bosheth and buried it in Abner’s tomb at Hebron.

Matthew Henry comments on this, “The murderers were put to death according to law to be monuments of David’s justice. But what a confusion was this to the two murderers. What a horrid disappointment and such those will meet with who think to serve the interests of the son of David (Jesus) by any immoral practices, by war and persecution, fraud and rapine; who under color of religion murder prices, break solemn contracts, lay countries waste, hate their brethren and cast them out and say, ‘Let the Lord be glorified;’ kill them and think they do God good service. However men may canonize such methods of serving the church, Christ will let them know another day Christianity was not intended to destroy humanity.”
He may not sneak in and cut someone’s head off, but we do sneak in and kill reputations and cast people out in the name of religion.

Winter asks the question, “Why did David bury Ish-Bosheth in Abner’s tomb? Ish-Bosheth was also of the tribe of Benjamin. He was the son of Saul and thereby a second cousin of Abner. Families were quite often buried together.”

Davis points out, “One cannot help but be impressed with the ethical and political sophistication that David brought to Israel’s politics. This was in contrast to the approach adopted by King Saul. David did not follow the philosophy that the end justifies any means. He was convinced of the providential and sovereign control of his God. He believed that in the proper time the way would be opened for the unification of the land and the establishment of one throne.”

CONCLUSION:

These chapters then record the civil war conflict that ensued when David took the throne in Hebron, and Ish-Bosheth took the throne in the north.

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

LESSON #2: "No man can serve two masters."

LESSON #3: Christian growth involves the RESIDENT BECOMING PRESIDENT.

LESSON #4: David never tries to force his kingship. He waits for the Lord to remove all the obstacles.

LESSON #5: The Lord will never force His will upon us either (Revelation 3:20).

LESSON #6: The words of Abner have sound advice:

"Now then do it!"

2 Corinthians 6:2

James 1:22

LESSON #7: The high cost of civil strife between brothers.

Theodore Epp points out, “Elijah put a proposition to the children of Israel one day, saying to them, ‘How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.’ And the people answered him not a word.’ Let us answer God and say yes to Christ. As long as David and Ish-Bosheth both ruled over the tribes of Israel, there was neither peace nor safety. We too must choose between Christ and the self life. Some day every knee will bow and acknowledge Christ as king, according to Philippians 2:9-11. We have that choice now. Let us do it gladly, and do it right away.”

The hymn writer has it correct when he sings,

“King of my life, I crown thee now,
Thine shall the glory be
Lest I forget they thorn-crowned brow,
Lead me to Calvary.

Lest I forget Gethsemane
Lest I forget thine agony
Lest I forget they love for me
Lead me to Calvary.”

Psalm 38:9

“Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my sighing is not hidden from thee.”

Psalm 38:21,22

“Do not forsake me, O Lord, O God. Do not be far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.”

Psalm 39:7

“And now Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in thee.”

Luci Swindoll in her book The Alchemy of the Heart says, “You have seen quotations from Nikos Kazantzakis throughout this book. They begin every chapter and divide the two parts, so you are somewhat familiar with his words and his message. Therefore, in closing these examples, let me leave you with only two final excerpts from his thoughts. First this:

‘Once I remembered I had detached a chrysalis from the trunk of an olive tree and placed it in my palm. Inside the transparent coating I discerned a living thing. It was moving. The hidden process must have reached its terminus. The future, still enslaved, butterfly was waiting with silent tremors for the sacred hour when it would emerge into the sunlight. It was not in a hurry. Having confidence in the light, the warm air, in God’s eternal law, it was waiting. But I was in a hurry. I wanted to see the miracle hatch before me as soon as possible, wanted to see how the body surges out of its tomb and shroud to become a soul. Bending over, I began to blow my warm breath over the chrysalis; and behold, a slit soon incised itself on the chrysalis’s back. The entire shroud gradually split from top to bottom, and the immature bright green butterfly appeared, still tightly locked together, its wings twisted, its legs glued to its abdomen. It squirmed gently and kept coming more and more to life beneath my warm, persistent breath. One wing, as pale as a budding poplar leaf, disengaged itself from the body and began to palpitate, struggling to unfold along its entire length, but in vain. It stayed half opened, shriveled. Soon the other wing moved as well, toiled in its own right to stretch, was unable to, and remained half unfolded and trembling. I, with a human being’s effrontery, continued to lean over and blow my warm exhalation upon the maimed wings, but they ceased to move now, and had drooped down, as stiff and lifeless as a stone. I felt sick at heart because of my hurry, because I had dared to transgress an eternal law. I had killed the butterfly. In my hand I held a carcass. Years and years have passed but that butterfly’s carcass has weighed heavily on my conscience ever since. Man hurries; God does not. That is why man’s works are uncertain and maimed, while God’s are flawless and sure. My eyes welling with tears, I vowed never to transgress this eternal law again. Like a tree, I would wait with confidence the long-desired hour of flowering and fruit that would come.’”

Psalm 62:1,2

“My soul waits in silence for God only; from him is my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; my stronghold. I shall not be greatly shaken.”

Psalm 62:8

“Trust in him at all times, O people. Pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us.”