

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Good evening –

We are continuing our study through the book of 2 Samuel.

We are going to see the beginning of the transition of David becoming King of Israel. 15 years earlier, God had anointed David as the next King of Israel.

But as we will see over the next few weeks, David would still face opposition from individuals who pursued their own will over God's will.

And one of the things that we will see is David refusing to deviate from the purpose that God had for him.

Let's pray...

[2Sa 2:1-32 NKJV] 1 It happened after this that **David inquired of the LORD**, saying, "Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up." David said, "Where shall I go up?" And He said, "To Hebron."

"After this" refers to the time after the death of King Saul and Jonathan and the period of mourning for them.

You might remember from our study last week that King Saul had been injured in battle against the Philistine – he was pierced by an arrow and he then decides to kill himself by falling in his sword.

So now that King Saul is out of the picture, we see God's anointed King asking God for directions.

You see, David was still in Philistine territory when all of this was occurring.

He knows that God has called him to be the next King of Israel – but he still wants to make sure that he does it God's way and according to His timing.

Notice that David doesn't rush in blindly into town to seize the throne. Instead he carefully sought the Lord.

David knew the promise was from God, so he knew that God was going to fulfill it without any manipulation from his end.

[1Pe 5:6-7 NKJV] 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Church, as we study the life of David, we will come to the conclusion that this was the key in his life.

We will find David constantly inquiring of the Lord –

I counted a total of nine different times in scripture where it states that David inquired of the Lord.

His practice of continuously inquiring of the Lord is a beautiful model for our personal relationship with God.

And we will see the consequences of what happens when he doesn't inquire of the Lord –

So here in our text, David is asking whether or not he should go to the cities of Judah and God says, "Yes"

Why the cities of Judah? Well, David was from the tribe of Judah.

David then proceeds to ask another question - Well which one Lord? What city in Judah should I go to?

And then God reveals to David – "Go to Hebron"

Notice how God only gave David the specific information that he requested and waited for David to ask for more.

The Lord does the same with you and me –

He wants us to come to Him over and over again because He loves us so much.

He isn't reluctant to give us guidance, but there is something more important than guidance and that is to have intimacy with Him.

He wants us to come into His presence again and again, He wants to hear from us continuously, He wants us to feel the embrace of His grace.

Far too many times, we only resort to inquiring of the Lord when we need something or when something bad occurs –

However, it is through the intimacy that we have with Him, that is where He gives us guidance and direction to be able to fulfill the will He has set for us.

I love the fact that God didn't turn a deaf ear to David's inquiry and He won't turn a deaf ear to us when we pursue His will and way for our lives and seek His counsel and guidance.

God knows our dilemmas and has compassion for our problems, and is always available— If we will just inquire.

It is human nature to want an immediate answer to our problems, but God has specific purposes for the journey He leads us on if we will simply surrender our need to control and learn to trust him with our outcomes.

God knows, He sees, and He deeply desires to answer us when we inquire of him.

That is what we see David doing here.

2 So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. 3 And David brought up the men who [were] with him, every man with his household. So they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

Verse two and three reads like an inventory. Two wives... an army of fighting men... multiple households.

In those 15 years that David was out there running from Saul – we see God molding and shaping David even before he came into his calling.

He was already acting like a king, in the best possible ways, to those who were depending upon him.

Now, it also mentions that David brought over his two wives –

He actually had three –

Michal was his first wife but when he fled from Saul, Saul gave her away to another man.

David married Ahinoam after Michal, and she was the mother of David's first son, Amnon, but we aren't told the story of how they met up.

Abigail was his third wife.

You might remember the story:

While David was running from Saul with his men, he gets word that Nabal is out shearing sheep – so he sends some of his men to ask for food for some of his men.

Nabal – which actually means fool – proceeded to act like one and proceeded to snub David's request.

David hears that he just got snubbed and is on his way to kill Nabal when Abigail intercedes on her husband's behalf.

Abigail returns home and tells Nabal what she did and the scriptures tell us that he was shocked to find out what almost happen to him and he suffered a heart attack or a stroke and 10 days later God strikes him dead.

David therefore married Abigail for her humble courage, wisdom, and grace.

Later on – we will see David adding more wives and concubines and this will cause him greater trouble.

4 Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, "The men of Jabesh Gilead [were the ones] who buried Saul." 5 So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead, and said to them, "You [are] blessed of the LORD, for you have shown this kindness to your lord, to Saul, and have buried him. 6 "And now may the LORD show kindness and truth to you. I also will repay you this kindness,

because you have done this thing. 7 "Now therefore, let your hands be strengthened, and be valiant; for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

So David arrives in Judah and the men there anoint him King over Judah – why not Israel? We will see in a little bit that the transition of power from Saul to David didn't go so smoothly.

I had you make a note of the men of Jabesh Gilead –

When Saul first became king – you might recall that at first, he was a good guy – he was humble – and one of the first things he does as King is that he rescued these individuals (these men of Jabesh Gilead) from an Ammonite, King Nahash, who was threatening their village – you could read that in 1 Sam 11.

King Saul organizes an army and defeats the Ammonites.

Now, fast forward to when King Saul killed himself in the battlefield – we are told that the Philistines came by and cut his head off and that they mutilated his body and hung it on a wall for the Philistines to mock.

The men of Jabesh Gilead – because they remained loyal to Saul for what he had done earlier, they go on a rescue mission.

Turn to 1 Samuel 31 – here we have the account.

[1Sa 31:11-13 NKJV] 11 Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all the valiant men arose and traveled all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth Shan; and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. 13 Then they took their bones and buried [them] under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

So what David does here is that he shows gratitude for the heroic efforts that these men took to honor the memory of King Saul and Jonathan.

And afterwards he asked for their support and devotion to him as their king – the same devotion they had demonstrated toward King Saul.

So David is showing some diplomacy here.

8 But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim; 9 and he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, and over all Israel. 10 Ishbosheth, Saul's son, [was] forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David. 11 And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

Apparently not all of Saul's sons died with his that day in the battle at Mt. Gilboa.

Ishbosheth was most likely not fighting alongside his father.

Abner was not only the commander of Saul's army, he was also his cousin.

He refused to recognize David's anointing by God or by man.

He wanted to continue the line of Saul – even though Saul's kingship had ended in dismal failure and his surviving son was not one to fight.

So here we have the first fracture in the Kingdom – the kingdom is divided, 11 tribes declare allegiance toward Ishbosheth, while Judah is the only tribe that recognizes David as King.

12 Now Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. 13 And Joab the son of Zeruijah, and the servants of David, went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon. So they sat down, one on one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool. 14 Then Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men now arise and compete before us." And Joab said, "Let them arise."

Now Joab, who is also David's nephew – and Abner get together and decide among themselves who should be the king over Israel – David or Ishbosheth.

So they set up a fight between some of their men.

This is very similar to David fighting Goliath - where the Israelites and Philistine decided that their battle was going to dictate who would serve who.

15 So they arose and went over by number, twelve from Benjamin, [followers] of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve from the servants of David. 16 And each one grasped his opponent by the head and [thrust] his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called the Field of Sharp Swords, which [is] in Gibeon. 17 So there was a very fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

The competition starts off as 12 on 12 – and each time, the combatants killed each other.

There was no winner.

So then the rest of the armies got involved and the men of Abner were defeated by the men of Joab.

18 Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab and Abishai and Asahel. And Asahel [was as] fleet of foot as a wild gazelle.

Zeruiah was David's sister.

19 So Asahel pursued Abner, and in going he did not turn to the right hand or to the left from following Abner.

When Abner sees that he is losing badly, he takes off.

Asahel begins pursuing Abner and he is determined to get him.

He is not going to allow him to get away.

He is not going allow anything to distract him.

His eyes are fixated on Abner.

I see a valuable application here in the life of the believer.

[Pro 4:25-27 NKJV] 25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. 26 Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.

Our eyes should be fixated on Jesus Christ – we shouldn't allow the riches of this world to distract us from what God has called you and I to do.

It is when we take our eyes off of Him and start to turn to the right or to the left – that is when we lose sight of our ultimate goal.

20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, "[Are] you Asahel?" He answered, "I [am]." 21 And Abner said to him, "Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and lay hold on one of the young men and take his armor for yourself." But Asahel would not turn aside from following him.

As Abner is being chased by Asahel – Abner tries to get him to stop chasing him by trying to convince Asahel to arm himself before he pursues him any further.

22 So Abner said again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I face your brother Joab?"

Abner is not afraid of Asahel – he knows that he can kill him if he has to.

Abner is worried about the consequences that will occur after he kills Asahel, as he will then have to deal with Joab who is going to be trying to avenge his brother's death.

23 However, he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the blunt end of the spear, so that the spear came out of his back; and he fell down there and died on the spot. So it was [that] as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still.

Asahel continues to go after Abner – Abner finally turns around and he takes out a spear with a blunt end – meaning that it was dull.

Why did he take out a dull spear?

It appears that he had no intention of killing Asahel – it is not that he is showing mercy, it is what I said earlier, he doesn't want to deal with Joab.

Joab was a stronger fighter – he commanded David's armies.

So Asahel finally catches up to Abner and Abner drives the spear with the blunt end into his stomach and out his back.

Abner kills Asahel in self defense.

24 Joab and Abishai also pursued Abner. And the sun was going down when they came to the hill of Ammah, which [is] before Giah by the road to the Wilderness of Gibeon. 25 Now the children of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became a unit, and took their stand on top of a hill.

Asahel's brothers, including Joab, pursue Abner – and by now, reinforcements have shown up for Abner.

26 Then Abner called to Joab and said, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the latter end? How long will it be then until you tell the people to return from pursuing their brethren?"

Even though Abner has reinforcements, he pursues peace with Joab and Abishai.

Abner is trying to reason with Joab and his followers to stop the fighting.

After all, they are all Israel.

They shouldn't be fighting each other.

The only reason that he is doing it is because he sees that they are no match for the men of Joab.

27 And Joab said, "[As] God lives, unless you had spoken, surely then by morning all the people would have given up pursuing their brethren." 28 So Joab blew a trumpet; and all the people stood still and did not pursue Israel anymore, nor did they fight anymore.

Basically—Joab's is saying that his men were prepared to keep the fight going all night, but because Abner called for a truce, they stopped

Joab recognized the truth of what Abner had said.

He knew that David would not be pleased if he created a full scale war against their Israelite brothers.

So, he blew the ram's horn to indicate the cessation of the pursuit, and to call the men together ready for the return home.

And being well-disciplined the men responded immediately.

The pursuit was over, and the killing stopped. The invasion of Judah had also been prevented.

So, Joab accepts Abner peace offer.

The idea of fellow Israelites killing each other was clearly a bad idea.

Apparently, Abner was a great negotiator.

We'll see this again in the next chapter when he actually switches allegiance from Ishbosheth to David.

Joab, as fierce as a warrior he was, and as much as he was bitter over losing his brother, let his temper cool, and wisdom prevailed...

Temporarily.

He won't forgive the grudge against Abner.

He will just wait till a better opportunity to get his revenge.

29 Then Abner and his men went on all that night through the plain, crossed over the Jordan, and went through all Bithron; and they came to Mahanaim. 30 So Joab returned from pursuing Abner. And when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel. 31 But the servants of David had struck down, of Benjamin and Abner's men, three hundred and sixty men who died. 32 Then they took up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb, which [was in] Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at daybreak.

The cease fire revealed that the men of Judah had clearly dominated the men of Israel

—

360 dead men for team Israel and 20 men for team Judah.

The problem with this is that this was not a battle between good and evil.

This was not the Philistines that they were fighting.

This was a battle among fellow brothers.

Church –

This civil war did not happen because of Abner's loyalty to Ishbosheth or Joab's loyalty to David –

This civil war happened because both of these men were only out to make a name for themselves.

We will see Abner turn on Ishbosheth next week and later on we will see Joab turn on David.

As I was reading our text, I was reminded of the fractures within the church.

Believers only interested in making a name for themselves – doing things unto the flesh instead of the Spirit - promoting themselves instead of promoting Jesus Christ.

[1Co 3:1-4 NKJV] 1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual

[people] but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able [to receive it], and even now you are

still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where [there are] envy, strife, and

divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like [mere] men? 4 For

when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I [am] of Apollos," are you not carnal?

Church, I pray that we fixate our eyes upon Jesus and upon what He has called us to do.

And when things don't go as smoothly or as fast as we want them to – I pray that we may be steadfast in our obedience to His will.

Amen

Let's pray...

