

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**THE LIFE OF DAVID
AS KING – THE LESSONS OF
MATURITY**

BY

DR JOHN C McEWAN

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INTRODUCTION

The second book called after Samuel covers the reign of David as the king of Israel. It divides into four sections.

1. Chapters 1 – 4 The time of Civil War – with David ruling Judah from Hebron
2. Chapters 5 – 9 David becomes King over all Israel and expands his power base
3. Chapters 10–20 David's dignity reduces after his acts of adultery and murder
4. Chapters 21–24 David's last years as King

David is the ruler against whom the reigns of all others are judged. David loved the Lord with all his heart and soul. He sinned greatly, and the writer does not hide the facts from us, but he records also his humility in confession and repentance. David gives all men and women hope when they sin, but only if they love the Lord with all their hearts and minds. David's sins were against the spirit of the God who loved him, and he was forgiven because of his genuine repentance and life change. Psalms 51:1ff.

He paid terribly for his sins, for while we are forgiven, there is a flow on cost to all our sins. Once begun, the train of consequences from some sins will unfold over time with great distress and destruction. David is an example for us of repentance, and also of why it is wise to resist temptations and never give in to them. The cost of unconfessed sin is simply too high!

From this point onwards we have a parallel passage to read covering most chapters. These are found in 1 Chronicles chapters 10 and following. Chronicles is written from the priestly perspective, and some things recorded in Samuel are omitted from that record, or given different weight. The reason for that is simple; if a matter is out of the will of the Lord, then it may be minimized by the priestly writer, for it is a sidetrack from the Plan of God.

The record of Chronicles tries to keep to the events that are in accordance with the Plan of God, and in those chapters we get the comments of the Lord on events. We will see this in 1 Chronicles 10:13-14, where the writer identifies the spiritual reasons for Saul's death. As we go we will also study or refer to the Psalms written around the time of each event noted, for these add depth of spiritual analysis to each event they comment upon.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter records the after effects of the deaths of Saul and his sons in the battle of Mt Gilboa, and the attempt of one man to win favour with David through bringing the news, with his own lying additions, to win favour. There are always people around who want to win points with those in power by lying about their deeds to receive greater reward.

The young Amalekite in this first chapter, who comes to David with the news of Saul's death, is in this category. He lies to win renown and ends up dead for a murder he did not commit. Lying to the Lord or man is a dumb thing to do at the best of times, but in this case it was fatal. Look also at the lies of Ananias and Sapphira. Acts 5:1-11.

David loved Jonathan and respected Saul's position as king before God. He is a clever politician, but this does not mean he will deceive, nor have any patience with those who play politics. He will take every opportunity to bring peace between the house of Saul and himself, and will try to unite the people of Israel under his banner before the Lord. In this chapter we have the great ode of David honouring Saul and Jonathan for their nobility and bravery.

The parallel passage in Chronicles is 1 Chronicles 10. The important passage there to read is the priestly writer's observation as to the spiritual reasons for the death of Saul and his sons.

1 Chronicles 10:8-14. *"8. And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa.*

9. And when they had stripped him, they took his head, and his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto their idols, and to the people.

10. And they put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.

11. And when all Jabeshgilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul,

12. They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

13. So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it;

14. And enquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse."

Notice the writer's point; the one who killed Saul was the Lord. Saul dies under the Sin Unto Death, as will the young Amalekite who brings the news to David. There are physical and often fatal consequences for spiritual errors and sins.

2 SAMUEL 1:1-27

1:1 Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag; 2 It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. 3 And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. 4 And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also. 5 And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? 6 And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. 7 And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I. 8 And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite. 9 He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. 10 So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord. 11 Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him: 12 And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword. 13 And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite. 14 And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD's anointed? 15 And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. 16 And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD's anointed. 17 And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son: 18 (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.) 19 The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! 20 Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. 21 Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. 22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. 23 Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. 24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. 25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. 26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. 27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. The writer is quite precise as to the number of days taken for each event and this gives us the time line from the arrival of the two armies in the vicinity of Gilboa till Saul's death. It appears that the day David left the assembly point at Aphek, the Philistine Army moved north to their battle station at Shunem. David takes three days to walk home to Ziklag and then at least two days to catch up to, and destroy the Amalekites, and possibly three days to get back with all the animals. It is three days after their return to Ziklag that the news of the battle is brought to him.

If you look at a map of the land you will see that the battle of Gilboa was being fought possibly on the day of the battle against the Amalekites. The precision with which the writer notes these things tell us that he is looking at some written record of events before him, and he will note at least one, (The "Book of Jasher"), that has not survived for us to study. Oral records don't normally have this precision. It is another reminder that we are dealing with good sources here.

After a five or six day walk-run from Mt Gilboa a survivor of the battle arrives at the camp of David with his clothes torn and ashes/dirt upon his head. This was the universal sign of mourning at this time, but my belief (explained below) is that this Amalekite is a crooked individual who is faking mourning, and whose heart is on wealth and power, not any grief at all. He is a hypocrite. David himself will genuinely mourn, and will cause his men to honour the dead this way also, but with genuine sorrow. To wear patched clothing was a sign of previous mourning, and severe mourning meant a new set of clothes was required. Clothing was expensive and so this act of mourning was a serious and costly sign of grief, or in the Amalekite's case a con job designed to win enough reward to buy many sets of clothing.

David can tell that the man proclaiming that he is in distress, in fact isn't, but he still asks the question as to how the battle went, for the man could be like this for any reason. David is careful and doesn't jump to conclusions without evidence – a good trait in leadership. The man recounts that the battle was lost and that Saul and Jonathan are dead. We have heard from the last chapter of 1 Samuel, that all the sons of Saul who were in the battle were killed, but this man only mentions Jonathan. This young man is an eye witness, and so that tells us that the other two sons must have fallen earlier, on another part of the hill, and he didn't see them. 1 Samuel 31:2-3.

If we put the two accounts together we get the full picture of the battle and the bravery of Saul and his sons. The battle clearly became a fighting retreat, with the Israelites being forced back, and Saul and his sons fighting a rear guard action

against the Philistine pursuers. The writer has recorded in 1 Samuel 31, that the archers were following Saul, and it was they who fired volleys at him and gave him fatal wounds. It is of note that the archers are the one who pursue and fatally wound him; no foot soldier dares come close to the old warrior lest they be killed. Even at the end Saul is a formidable military figure and men stay away from single combat with him.

The archers kill Jonathan outright and he must fall close by Saul, but they do not approach Saul and Jonathan. They must have been recalled to camp by trumpet call just after firing their last volley. We know this because had they been close enough to him, and seen who he was, once he fell on his sword, they would have swooped on the body and snatched the crown and jewellery. To bring these back to camp would have won them great reward.

Some time has clearly elapsed before the Amalekite creeps past the bodies of Jonathan and Saul. The Philistines have called off the pursuit and do not return to the battlefield until the next day to strip the dead, and it is then they discover the bodies of Saul and his sons. 1 Samuel 31:8-10. This would be a common practise of armies, as then their forces remain intact before darkness leads to men killing each other in confusion.

Where does the Amalekite come from? He has clearly been lying low at another point on the battlefield, likely pretending he is dead while the sun sets. When it is dark enough he creeps away and falls across Jonathan and then Saul's body. He sees the crown and golden arm band and takes them as evidence and then invents the story he will tell to David to curry favour. This young man has been a coward in the battle; no other man would be walking past Saul later that night, unless they were in the Philistine Army.

The other man or men who reported Saul falling on his sword may have been around him at the time of his last stand, and they withdraw immediately they saw him dead without touching the body. They would have heard the Philistine recall trumpet and seen the archers leave. Then the words that are said between Saul and his armour bearer are overheard, and they see both men, seriously and mortally wounded fall upon their swords. They leave at that point, not thinking of getting the crown at all, for they think of rejoining the army and preparing to protect the settlements around the battle field that will be attacked the next day. They are real soldiers and they are thinking of fighting the following day, but the Amalekite is thinking of loot and reward!

The soldiers who were around Saul at his death rehearse the story of the death that is in 1 Samuel 31, most likely to Abner and the court officials, and so even if the lie had been believed for a time, this Amalekite would have been uncovered in his deception eventually. The other soldiers head for the point where Abner or Saul has told the army to gather if they have to withdraw from the battlefield. The army will stay together after this defeat and will be re-organized by Abner quite quickly to counter the Philistines and also David's claims to the throne. The Amalekite is driven by greed, not any desire to bring the truth to David and serve him as his king. He is a true mercenary soldier and he will die with the lie still upon his tongue. Numbers 32:23.

Verses 5 – 10. The story that the Amalekite tells is pure fabrication. There is no mention of a spear in the battle, nor of Saul leaning upon it, but it was the weapon that was used to try to kill David, and the weapon that David seized from the sleeping Saul two years before. The Amalekite uses the weapon in the story that he thinks will have greatest significance for David and tie the story back to the times Saul was trying to kill him. 1 Samuel 19:9, 26:16. This man is too clever for his own good however, for he does not know David's spiritual attitude towards Saul and his love for Jonathan. Like all lust driven men he sees only the obvious and does not ask what lies behind the actions he observes.

The man is clearly lying from his account of the battle. Saul dies upon the slopes of Mt Gilboa after retreating up the hill under Philistine pressure. The last forces that would follow him uphill would be the chariots and the cavalry, as the chariots cannot go uphill, and the cavalry is at a disadvantage heading up a steep hill when facing well placed infantry there and would be unlikely to have pursued infantry up hill. The foot archers are the ones pursuing Saul, but this man doesn't see that, because he is in another part of the field avoiding these heavier forces and pretending he is dead so the enemy forces will pass him until evening sets in.

When he finds Saul he is already dead, but the story indicates he finds Saul alive and still feeling physically strong (his life is still within him), but believing the battle to be lost seeks his own way of death rather than the enemy take him and torture him. While this was a common desire amongst warriors, to have a "warrior's death" with a sword thrust, but to ask another to kill him was not Saul's style. He was brave enough to fall upon his own sword, which he indeed did. If Saul was standing wounded, the Amalekite ought to have carried the king from the field, or stood guard over his body, but to kill your commander because he tells you to when he could be carried from the field, is a crime in all armies through all time.

The Amalekite does not mention the armour bearer at all, indicating that Saul dies surrounded by so many of his men that the Amalekite does not notice the armour bearer at all in the dark pile of bodies. It does tell us that Jonathan falls and dies very close to his father. David double checks the story again and confirms that this man is indeed an Amalekite; a member of the tribe he has just wiped out for kidnapping his family! It's not a good time for an Amalekite to lie to David!

Verses 11 – 16. The first thing David does is mourn for Saul and for Jonathan. They fast and sit under the hot sun, and they weep until the evening. David will also be reflecting upon the deliverance of the Lord for him and his men from being at this battle. He knew from the Lord that Saul would die in God's time in a battle, but for his own future it was crucial that he was no-where near the place of death so that no blame could attach to himself. 1 Samuel 24:5-7, 26:9-12.

David bluntly confronts the Amalekite with the awfulness of what he has reported he did. It is now too late to retract his story, and I suspect that David has doubts about it anyway, but this man either way ought to die. David orders one of his men to kill him and he is killed on the spot.

To kill an anointed of the Lord is such a serious thing that death was the penalty for any and all who slay their rulers. Look through history at those who have slain their legitimate monarchs and you will see that ever after they have trouble and disaster. No revolution that begins in the shedding of innocent blood ever brings any peace or prosperity to any nation until their sin is dealt with. In our own day within the community of the Lord's people we ought to be very careful about rebellions against legitimate authority in the nation or the church. A leadership coup will lead to nothing good, for evil does not, indeed cannot produce good.

Verses 17 – 18. David composes the following ode on the death of Saul and Jonathan. This is an early example of the sort of formal poetry that was a part of all the ancient people's rituals for death. A great man had to have an ode written to celebrate his life work, and remind others of his greatness. Most were long and ponderous; this is short and powerful in its simplicity, and the love of its author for the men who have died comes powerfully through the lines. This ode stands out from all the surviving works of Homer, and of the later works from Greece and Rome as a great piece of literature.

The comment is also made regarding the challenge for the Israelites to learn the techniques for the use of the bow and arrow. The Benjamites were experts in this area, but their enemies were more numerous and Saul was felled by an archer, not a great warrior, and so as far as David was concerned, all Israel had to learn this weapon and out shoot their opponents. Within a few years under David's leadership they would do so.

Verses 19 – 27. Read these verses as poetry and feel their power.

“The beautiful ones are slain upon the heights of the hills
Oh how are the mighty ones Fallen

Tell it not in Gath – Publish it not in Askelon
Let not the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice in triumph

You mountains of Gilboa
Let there be no more dew upon you
Neither let there be rain upon your slopes or fields where the first fruits are offered
For there was the shield of the mighty thrown away
The very shield of Saul as if he was not the anointed one of God

From the blood of the slain
From the fat of the mighty
The bow of Jonathan turned not back
And the sword of Saul did not return to its sheath without effect

Saul and Jonathan were pleasant in their lives
In their death they were not divided
They were swifter than eagles
They were stronger than lions

Ye daughters of Israel – weep for Saul
He clothed you in scarlet and other delights
He put ornaments of gold upon your clothes

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle
Oh Jonathan – you were slain in your high place

I am distressed for you my brother Jonathan
Very pleasant you have been to me
Your love to me was wonderful
Passing even the love of women

How are the mighty fallen
And the weapons of war perished.”

This is a poet-soldier's prayer and song for the honoured dead. It runs a parallel to the songs of Homer from the same time period. It sums up all David's great sadness at what might have been, had only Saul accepted the will of the Lord and handed the kingdom to David. He saw this family as beautiful people, spoiled only by their father's will to stand against the Lord's clearly revealed will. It is a tragedy, because of the deaths being in the place of disobedience to the Lord.

He felt the tragedy of the loss of these mighty men and the army that stood by them. The human tragedy is what catches David's mind here and he weeps for them. The "Sin Unto Death" that Saul suffers has the consequence of causing the deaths of many good men, and David weeps over the cost of Saul's persistent sin, yet he forgives Saul and speaks only good things concerning him.

I have been to the funerals of two male friends who both died the Sin Unto Death and I know this sadness well; it is a time to remember what was in them that was good, but what might have been had they followed through with the Lord. The full truth may not be told regarding their death, but enough must be told to stop others following their foolish decision making. We will see this principle illustrated again in chapter three after the death of Abner. The death of Abigail's husband was nothing to mourn, and we don't mourn fools, but even then David gives her time to do so formally as his wife, but Saul and the others who fall of Gilboa were great men and even though it is the Sin Unto Death, they are worthy of honour for their past deeds.

Read also Jeremiah 9:17-25, which gives us a more general ode on the deaths of those who died the "Sin Unto Death" in the fall of Jerusalem in 586BC, and then identifies the issue that would have turned this tragedy into a triumph of grace. Had the people only "gloried in the Lord, learned of Him, and obeyed Him," then they would not be dead upon the fields.

David acknowledged earlier that Saul would meet his fate when God was ready and it would be appropriate for him. He will later sum this up in the Psalms, noting that "to the Lord belong the issues of death". Psalms 68:20. A later Psalmist will note in Psalms 116:15, "precious in the sight of God are the deaths of his saints". It is for men to grieve the timing and the nature of the deaths of others, but our grieving is able to rest in the holy character of the justice of God that we will see clearly only from the other side of time. Jeremiah 15:1, 24:4-7, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Moses had delivered the solemn warning to Israel about their need to serve the Lord and obey His Word in many places in the Torah, and as he summed the Law up the last time, he repeated the warning and the promise of blessing that was always there if, and only if, they obeyed. Deuteronomy 4:1-9. God's flock was to be led by obedient shepherds who taught the Law of God, but if the shepherds were false and the people foolish both would be destroyed. Zechariah 11:4-17. Moses had given the people the Lord's warning in Leviticus 26, and in Deuteronomy 27:9 – 30:20.

Saul had brought the people and the nation to the fourth cycle of national discipline by his disobedience to God's clearly revealed will, but David will be called to restore the people, and he will over the next years. Compare David's ode and the sad, yet calm nobility of it to the ode of Job. Job 3:1-26.

When we face the death of friends we face the challenge to rest upon the certainties of the CHARACTER OF GOD rather than lose ourselves in the uncertainties of the world and emotions of men. We are stabilized in this present world only upon the dependability and certainties of the character and plan of God. No matter what the power of kings and princes they all need to learn the fear of the Lord, for He alone is to be rightly feared, and all men are to learn to walk humbly before their Creator and Saviour God. Two later Psalmists sum this point up, possibly reflecting upon the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. Psalms 46:8-11, 76:6-12.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We may grieve over the death of those who have fallen short of God's purpose for their lives. There is nothing wrong in weeping as David does for those who have failed the Lord, for we feel their loss to ourselves as friends, and their eternal loss of rewards. Let us live ourselves in a manner worthy of the Lord, so that none may grieve for our lives with sadness for what might have been. Let us live worthy of a song of praise at our deaths.
2. Lying to achieve great rewards is a risky business. It is sinful and it is stupid. Let us flee from all forms of lies. To lie is to open the door to Satan himself and prepare the way for divine discipline of the worst sort. Let our "yes" be yes and our "no" be no!
3. We grieve, but not as those who have no hope. The death of God's people does not halt or hinder His almighty plan. Let us remember that the Lord has a plan that will be victorious, the only question for each of us is; will we be there to rejoice over the victory?

REFLECTION UPON THE PLAN OF GOD

1. In eternity past, God designed a plan for every believer, which takes into account every event and decision in human history.
2. The plan centres on the person of Jesus Christ. (1 John 3:23, Ephesians 1:4-6)
3. Entrance into the plan is based on the principle of grace (Ephesians 2:8, 9) where the sovereignty of God and the free will of Man meet at the cross. God brings salvation which is complete, Man simply brings his faith in the completed work of God on our behalf.
4. God's plan was so designed so as to include all events and actions. (1 Peter 1:2)

5. Under his plan God has decreed to do some things directly and some through agencies, Israel, the Church.
6. Without interfering with human free will in any way God has designed a plan so perfect that it includes cause and effect, as well as provision, preservation and function.
7. There are many functions in the Plan of God. They all constitute one whole comprehensive plan which is perfect, eternal and unchangeable.
8. The plan of God is consistent with human freedom and does not limit or coerce human free will. Distinction should be made between what God causes and what God permits. God causes the Cross but permits sin. God is neither the author of sin nor sponsors sin.
9. His plan portrays that man has free will. God never condones sin in the human race. Man started in perfect environment and innocence. Man sinned of his own free will. Man will sin in the perfect environment of the Millennium.
10. Distinction should be made between the divine plans which are related to the plan of God and divine laws which regulate human conduct on the earth. Divine laws occur in time, divine plans occur in eternity.
11. God's plans derive from His foreknowledge. He recognised in eternity past those things which are certain. The foreknowledge of God makes no things certain, but only perceives in eternity past those things that are certain.
12. There is a difference between foreknowledge and fore ordination. Fore ordination establishes certainty but does not provide for the certainty which is established. It is the plan that provides. (Romans 8:29, Acts 2:23, 1 Peter 1:2)
13. Therefore the elect are foreknown and the foreknown are elect. God knew in eternity past what way each free will would go for each particular problem in life. God does not coerce human free will but he does know what way each freewill will choose at any given time. As free will decides so God provides.
14. Since God cannot contradict his own character he plans the best for the believer. God is perfect, his plan and provisions are therefore perfect.
15. The cross was planned in eternity past but the human free will of Christ decided for the cross at Gethsemane. (Matthew 26:39-42) God has provided salvation through the cross and it is a free will decision as to whether one accepts it or not.
16. No plan in itself opposes human freedom but once a choice is made from the free will then the plan limits your human freedom. At the same time it gives you the freedom to love and appreciate God. God lays down the means of living the Christian life.

DYING GRACE

1. We are all here upon the earth as in a "strange country"; we are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, and are not meant to be too comfortable here. Philippians 3:12-17, Hebrews 11:13, 1 Peter 2:11.
2. Death is the strangest thing we confront on this earth; the weirdness of being here one minute, alive, alert and warm, then a second later, dead, cooling and inert. Death is meant to appear strange to us, for it is the evidence before us that we are not permanent inhabitants here, but simply playing out a part as we pass through. This is not a place we are meant to get attached to.
3. The death of believers is a precious thing to the God who has given his life to save us from the judgment of sin and death. 1 Samuel 26:21, 2 Kings 1:13-14, Psalms 49:8, 72:14, 116:15, 1 Peter 1:7, 2:4.
4. We all must die, but that is not the end. 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Hebrews 11:13. The mature believers facing death see through it, to the other side where they meet with the Lord face to face. 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10.
5. Dying grace is provided to all believers who are looking to their Lord as they die, for his perfect provision for each of us from eternity past has everything we need provided in advance of our life, let alone our death itself. There are no surprises to God, and all things we face have provision for them there to be claimed by faith. 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 2 Peter 2:9, Jude 24-25.

CHAPTER 2**INTRODUCTION**

David moves quickly but prayerfully over the next days after hearing of the death of Saul and his sons. He moves to follow through on the promise and anointing of God that he is to be king. It is the time to announce this now before all the people and call the people together to resist the Philistine threat in the north. Saul knew of the anointing of David and resisted it. I can only conclude that Abner must have also known of this, for he was Saul's counsellor and general. He had overheard the conversations when David had spared Saul's life, and he must have known of Jonathan's belief in David and acceptance of him as his king. 1 Samuel 20:11-15, 23:16-17, chapters 24, 26.

Abner betrays his own designs by several actions he takes after the death of Saul and his older and military sons. Saul has one son left, and he is not a military man, nor a strong leader. This apparently suits Abner who seeks the throne himself, or at least to be the power behind the throne. Power has corrupted this man and he will pay for it with his life, for his lust leads him to fight against God's will. More tragedy unfolds in this chapter, and more good men die because of the power lust of Abner and the surviving house of Saul who cannot let go of the power and position they once had. Acts 5:39, 28:9.

2 SAMUEL 2:1-32

2:1 And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron. 2 So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite. 3 And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron. 4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabeshgilead were they that buried Saul. 5 And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabeshgilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. 6 And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. 7 Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them. 8 But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; 9 And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. 10 Ishbosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But 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. 12 And 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 Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool. 14 And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise. 15 Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which pertained to Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. 16 And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkathhazzurim, which is in Gibeon. 17 And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David. 18 And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe. 19 And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner. 20 Then Abner looked behind him, and said, Art thou Asahel? And he answered, I am. 21 And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him. 22 And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother? 23 Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still. 24 Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that lieth before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon. 25 And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill. 26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren? 27 And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother. 28 So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more. 29 And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim. 30 And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel. 31 But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, so that three hundred and threescore men died. 32 And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which was in Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4a. David asks the High Priest through the ephod and the Urim and Thummim what he is to do, and the answer is leave Ziklag and go up into Judah proper and head for Hebron to proclaim his kingship. Had he stayed longer in Ziklag he would have been summoned by Achish to fulfil his oath to him and serve in the Philistine army of occupation in the north. David had to disappear from the now burned and destroyed Ziklag and be ready to fight Achish. He knows the celebration in Gath over the death of Saul, and they will expect him to be part of them. The day of division has come; he now must stand for Judah and for Israel.

He comes up and is settled in the cities around Hebron and he is there anointed by the elders of Judah as their king. This will be the seat of his power until he moves up to seize Jerusalem several years later. He will later have Philistine guards in his army and they will be very loyal to him, so he does not fall out permanently with Achish in the years that follow Saul's death.

Verses 4b – 7. Men of Judah that may have been part of the fallen army of Saul report to David there in Hebron, and they tell him that it was the men of Jabesh Gilead who buried the bodies of Saul and his sons. He immediately sends message to them thanking them and honouring them for their bravery and dignity in doing this. His message is one of kingly thanks and spiritual blessing.

He announces to them that Judah has anointed him king and invites them to fulfil their oaths to Saul by welcoming him as their new king also. He does not mention that Samuel anointed him as king in years gone by, because he cannot prove that, as it was done in secret. It is however known, as we will see in the comments of Abner in the next chapter. David must wait and let the Lord acknowledge him by victories in the field as the rightful king over the entire land, and then, those who do know of David's anointing will finally speak up and all will know the full truth.

Verses 8 – 11. Abner is clearly and rightly blamed by the writer here for the civil war that erupts between the two parts of the land. He is clearly to be blamed for his actions, as before God he knew that David was the replacement for Saul, not the weak son he finds and sets up as a puppet. Abner takes Ishbosheth over to Mahanaim and there proclaims him king in Saul's place as the surviving son. He makes him king over Gilead, Jezreel, Ashur, Benjamin and Ephraim. Ishbosheth is forty years of age when he begins to reign and he lives only two years before he is murdered at the end of the civil war.

The writer then records that David is king over Judah in Hebron for seven and one half years. Part of this will be over both parts of the land, but this is the total time he rules from Hebron before seizing Jerusalem. Some commentators believe that the civil war may have run for seven years, but my belief is that Abner's attempt at seizing power runs out of steam within two years before he surrenders to David. It is interesting that most personality disordered people run out of steam in their work places within around the two year time frame even today.

Verses 12 – 17. Abner pacifies the north and brings Israel to allegiance to Ishbosheth, and then heads to Gibeon, to the north of Jerusalem, to challenge David's power and try to conquer him. This is completely wrongful and is driven by his arrogance as a military commander. He takes the spilling of Hebrew blood lightly and this will be his undoing. He challenges the men of David's army to bring out a dozen champions and he produces a dozen men from his side and they engage in single combat. Each man kills the other and twenty four men fall dead, so the champions do not achieve any result.

This contest should have been settled by the high priest and the oracle of God, but under the rules of war once the challenge had been refused the side that refused to fight had to surrender. Abner sets up the contest of arms rather than seek the verdict of God, for I suspect he knew what that would be. The sadness of this stubborn mental attitude is that others will die as a result. After the twenty four men have fallen dead in a minute or two the two sides launch into a bitter fight and David's men prevail over Abner's men. Abner's forces flee for their lives to the north.

Verses 18 – 23. There were three sons of David's older sister and they were great fighting men; Joab, Asahel, and Abishai. We met Abishai in the night attack on the hill where Saul slept, when he urged David to slay the helpless Saul, or give him permission to do so. 1 Samuel 26:7-11.

These three brothers were great warriors and Asahel was also a very fast runner and easily closes on the older Abner. Abner tries to warn Asahel off the pursuit and tries to tempt him to chase and seize another warrior and so win some renown, but Asahel is fixated on Abner. Abner warns him three times and Asahel keeps coming after him, but a sudden thrust with the end of his javelin straight through Asahel's body kills him stone dead on the path. He didn't need to do this, but could have just as easily wounded his leg and stopped the pursuit. This is a deep wound to the remaining brothers of Asahel, and Joab will not forgive Abner for this death. This is a popular man and his death has a big impact on the army of David.

Verses 24 – 28. Abner gathers the men of Benjamin around him on a hill north of Gibeon late that day and they prepare to make a last stand against David and his men. Both generals are hesitant to fight to the last man, for the surviving army will be hated by the families of those slain and unity in the nation will then be impossible to achieve. Abner now is the one to call for an end to the killing. He calls for a truce and safe passage away from the hill for his men. This will open the door for negotiations and allow peace to be settled, rather than a "last stand" creating heroes that must be avenged by their relatives.

It is a good thing, but sadly too late for over 360 men of the northern tribes and twenty of David's men. Joab quite rightly blames Abner for the slaughter of those who have fallen, for had he not challenged to the single combat the battle would not have been fought at all. They should have talked earlier. Joab does the right thing and blows the trumpet and recalls his men from chasing Abner's any more.

Verses 29 – 32. Abner's men walk all night and return across the Jordan to Mahanaim to their capital where Ishbosheth waits for news. The great discrepancy of the casualties tells us that the men of Israel are not as good in warfare as the men led by David. Their best men fell on Gilboa and this is a "scratch army" whereas David's men are all warriors from a long time back. The small numbers may indicate the two sides numbered no more than a few thousand each anyway. These are not large armies at this point or the casualties may have been far more. There is also a hesitance to kill their brethren and that also may account for the lower numbers of casualties.

Both groups walk all night after the confrontation on the hill of Ammah, one towards Jordan and the other towards Hebron. Each group arrives the next day and reports to their two kings. Asahel is taken up by his brothers and carried back and buried in his father's tomb in Bethlehem. This is a reminder for the first time since the earliest account of Samuel meeting David that Bethlehem is the place where David originates and it will be the centre of the world from that time to present day. Ruth 4:11, Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1ff.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Lightly regarding the lives of men is a dangerous and evil thing. Abner's arrogance leads to the death of nearly four hundred men and the blood shed creates not just great grief, but prolongs the civil war and leads to more deaths. Both Joab and Abner ought to have sought the Lord's answers to the questions of rulership, but Abner's lust for power hindered the will of the Lord for him and Israel. Lust is the enemy of man, and we need to question our motives with vigour to ensure we are not led astray as Abner was.

2. The Lord decides the victories in this world. Abner cannot win long term, because he fights against God's will and that is foolish and futile. Let us be sure we are walking with the Lord, and challenge ourselves regarding the paths we are passionately walking.

We must always be ready to examine our motives and our walk, to ensure we are not following our own desires and simply sanctifying them with pious phrases and fake prayers. It is easy to refer to our desires as the "lord's will", but the lord in question is our Old Sin Nature! Let us be careful as we walk through this evil world.

3. David praises the men of Jabesh-Gilead, and this sets us an important standard ourselves. When men do good work be quick to praise them and reinforce their doctrinal behaviour.

Notes

CHAPTER 3**INTRODUCTION**

The civil war that was started by Abner went on for at least two years before there was any surrender. After the battle at Gibeon the opportunity existed to make peace, but Abner didn't take advantage of it, and David didn't apparently push his claims, preferring to work slowly and prayerfully. David's diplomacy worked over time and the northern tribes accepted his rule, but many died due to the sin of the house of Saul and the plotting of Abner. Abner will finally recognize that he is beaten and will surrender, but it will be for anger at Ishbosheth, not any desire to serve the Lord. He will pay for his many sins at the hands of Joab.

What we see all through the life of David is that those who have tried to thwart the plan of God by their own wiles and plots are all eliminated one by one by the hand of God. David will keep on showing patience and compassion upon those who wrong him, for he leaves his life in the Lord's hands, and this is why he remains a mentor of character for us all.

David will show great compassion upon the family of Saul and Jonathan, when the norm in the ancient world was for all male members to be killed straight away when the new house took over. Nearly all the adult males will be executed eventually, but that will only be after they have taken an active part in the rebellion of Absalom, (although even that David forgives), and it is the Lord alone, who three years after those events, directly orders their deaths. 2 Samuel 21:1-14. This is still nearly twenty years away at this point.

2 SAMUEL 3:1-39

3:1 Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker. **2** And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; **3** And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; **4** And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; **5** And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron. **6** And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul. **7** And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine? **8** Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ishbosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to day with a fault concerning this woman? **9** So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him; **10** To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba. **11** And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him. **12** And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee. **13** And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face. **14** And David sent messengers to Ishbosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines. **15** And Ishbosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish. **16** And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned. **17** And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you: **18** Now then do it: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, 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 their enemies. **19** And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin. **20** So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that were with him a feast. **21** And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace. **22** And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: but Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace. **23** When Joab and all the host that was with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace. **24** Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone? **25** Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest. **26** And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew it not. **27** And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother. **28** And afterward when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before the LORD for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner: **29** Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread. **30** So Joab, and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. **31** And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Rend

your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David himself followed the bier. 32 And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. 33 And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? 34 Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him. 35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David swore, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down. 36 And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people. 37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner. 38 And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel? 39 And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 5. It is in these verses that we discover that David has begun to practise serious polygamy while he is king in Hebron. While he was a guerrilla leader in Ziklag he had taken two wives. 1 Samuel 25:40-43. After he becomes king formally at Hebron he accepts the common practise of the day and takes beautiful princesses from surrounding kingdoms as his wives. This was the common way to make military alliances in the ancient world, but he had God's Word to quote as a reason why he could not do this. He does not gain by polygamy, except to produce more dysfunction within his household. God's Word regarding the multiplication of wives, chariots and horses was absolutely clear. Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Israel's kings were not to follow the standards of their pagan neighbours, but set a new standard.

David did what was expected of him, under the political pressures of others around him, and he was 100% wrong in this. The Lord will hold him personally responsible for this sinful disobedience, and his lack of doctrinal application. This practise of multiple diplomatic wives was the "norm" in the ancient world, but God's people were to be visibly different! We still are to be visibly different to the pagans that surround us.

We are not to follow the "norm" of paganism, but follow the principles of God's Word, even if the whole earth says it is "old fashioned". Leviticus 18:24-30, Numbers 23:9, Deuteronomy 4:1-9, 9:1-7. God could not have been clearer, and David's errors here will come back to haunt him all the days of his life, just as Jacob's polygamy created carnage for him through the years.

Note the names here, for his first born Amnon will rape his own sister, and we will meet Absalom as the murderer of this brother, and then rebel against his father's throne, and the man who sleeps with his father's other wives. We will meet Adonijah as another who plays for power.

All this is to come later, but let none say at this point that God approves of this political game playing and immorality. Three of these six sons are rebels against God and the other three are nobodies. David does not get by with his sin, but pays a terrible price for any pleasure he takes with these women.

David is loving towards his women and protects them, but the household of David is not a happy one, and his pre-occupation with the business of government means he does not bring his children up to know the Word of God as they ought to. He will be a distracted father, and the young men will not be as mighty as their father was. Sadly even his best son, Solomon (still to be born of another "wife" Bathsheba), will grow up in a palace surrounded by beautiful women and he will develop a weakness for unrestrained sexual pleasure that will destroy all the good things he does over time. 1 Kings 11:1-13.

Verses 6 -10. The civil war went on through this period and although no other major battles were apparently fought there were skirmishes and Abner loses ground and popular support to David every month that passes. David's alliance with Achish is not referred to in this chapter, but it must have played a significant part during these two or more years of the civil war period, as no major Philistine assault is launched at this vulnerable time. David later has a major guard contingent of the Philistines in his own army, and even when Absalom's rebellion occurs they remain loyal to him. 1 Samuel 15:18.

The writer is recording things here in our account to demonstrate David's main focus through this time, but a great deal is happening behind the scenes of this record that we are not told here, but see the results of down track. The six hundred man guard of the Philistines tell us that David was successful in diplomacy with these previously inveterate enemies of Israel and over time he will make them his friends. This won't stop all trouble from them, but David has split their loyalties.

Abner's political ambitions are made clear when he makes his move to enter into a sexual relationship with Rizpah, Saul's concubine. She has bourn Saul two sons, Armoni, and Mephibosheth II. This woman is no wilting violet, but a power player herself and will, over twenty years later, encourage her then adult sons in their active participation in the rebellion of Absalom. 2 Samuel 16:5-12, 21:8-14.

Notice the five sons of Michal also mentioned here. They apparently also will be a part of the great rebellion of Absalom and will be identified as men to be executed later for Saul's sins. Keep this fact in mind when we read the next verses

about David's request for Michal back as his wife, for she already has a significant family that David will demand she leaves behind to resume her place as his senior wife.

Abner's rage at being confronted with his sexual sin indicates his motivation. In the ancient world, to sleep with the king's wife or concubine was to claim the king's position and seek the king's place. Abner may have sought to rule as the power behind the throne, or even take over from the weak and ineffectual Ishbosheth; we cannot know his previous motivation or plans, but at this point they change. Abner sees that he cannot use Ishbosheth any longer, and this last son of Saul sees that he is in great danger. Ishbosheth lacks courage and intelligence, for his only hope to live was to seek a treaty with David, and accept his rulership as his uncle Jonathan had done. Ishbosheth is now surrounded by men who know that he cannot win the renown and permanent positions they seek for themselves.

The court is filled with impending doom, for they now all know David will win, and Abner starts to directly negotiate with David. Had he done so at the first meeting of the armies he would have been blessed by God, but his change of heart here is not genuine repentance, it is just that he is "sorry he is caught". Too many good men have died by this point. These verses prove that Abner knew all along that David was the anointed king, and they underline his sin in resisting the will of the Lord to try to get power for himself. 1 Samuel 15:28, 16:1-13, 23:17, 28:17. Abner shared his master Saul's weakness for trying to hold onto power, rather than letting it go and allowing God to lift him up in a different place. 1 Peter 5:5-9.

Verses 11 – 16. Abner's actions here are straight treason to his master Ishbosheth, and the king rightly fears him. It is only his own weakness that stops him ordering the death of this man immediately. His failure to act at this point will seal his own doom. A man who commits such treason cannot be trusted by the new man he claims to support either, for a man that will break one oath of allegiance will break the next one. This is why fornicators cannot be trusted by their new lovers; for if they have betrayed their last marriage oath, why will they keep their second or third one?

Abner has one chance to save his life and that is by leading the entire house of Saul in repentance before the Lord. He uses God's name, but he does so in vain. Behind his apparently high sounding words are the motivation of lust and the heart of treason and rebellion against the plan of God. This is a fake, cynical, and political process all the way. Abner seeks his own position all through this, not David's majesty and glory, nor the Lord's will. His words here betray him. He asks David to "make league/alliance with me". It is as if this old general believes he is the senior partner in the alliance. He is not speaking like a beaten general, nor a believer who acknowledges the truth that he spoke to Ishbosheth.

Notice the words of Abner in his plotting with David. Notice his first question; "whose is the land?" The answer to this is clear; it is God's to give and to bless, and He has given it to David, but is this Abner's meaning? It is an open statement that may have several meanings. The message stops short of total acceptance of David's lordship and surrender; it is the work of a politician seeking a role for himself later in David's government. He promises to bring all Israel over to David, but he is coming as an equal, not as a servant of the Lord who acknowledges his sin.

By accepting a brokered deal David avoids more bloodshed and so he advances in this plan. David agrees to make a deal with Abner, but he asks one condition first as evidence of good faith, acceptance of his authority and acknowledgement of past wrongs done. He seeks the return of Michal, who has been settled with her new husband for over ten years now.

This appears at first sight to be a cruel and heartless act on David's part, for he forces her to leave her husband, and possibly sons and daughters behind, and Paltiel will give plenty of evidence that he loves her by following her to the borders of Judah. Or is his behaviour an act to try to uphold the honour of the family of Saul, and it's on-going moral claim to the throne? We are left wondering and the writer doesn't help us because in his day the reasons were well known.

David's demand is addressed to Ishbosheth and carried by Abner's men, and it is a demand for the return of his wife. He is biblically right in this for she ought not to have been given to another, for she was David's. The new man has loved her, but he had taken another man's wife, and such deliberate adultery was wrongful. Exodus 20:14. The act of taking David's wife was a deliberate insult to David and to the promise of God concerning him. We can only surmise at the extent of David's love for Michal and cannot be sure of it's depth, but his last contact with her was testimony to her love for him, and it may be this and his own love that drives him. 1 Samuel 19:7-18.

The Lord does not impugn his motives and we must be careful of speculating negatively about David here for this reason alone. Michal will later be judged by the Lord for her despising of David's worship as the Ark is brought into Jerusalem, and will have no child to David to share the throne after her. In addition, she may lose the sons she previously had. 2 Samuel 6:16, 20-23, 1 Chronicles 15:29, 2 Samuel 21:8-9. (There is clearly a copyist error here in 2 Samuel 21, but whether it is Merab or Michal, Adriel or Paltiel referred to we cannot be sure).

Her later judgment does not mean that she was unhappy about being restored to David at this point however. She will later sin against David, but at this point, she has been used as a political pawn by her father and will have had no choices to make in her marriage to Paltiel. David may have rescued her from a terrible situation, and he had every right to believe that he was doing this by sending this order to Ishbosheth. This woman has been in an arranged marriage where she would have had to submit to sexual advances by her husband, and would have been expected that over the previous ten years she would have fallen pregnant to him as a result.

There is nothing here that means certainly that she was happy in her marriage. Paltiel's behaviour may mean love, but later events, probably indicate that his behaviours may be more about his loyalty to the house of Saul than any love for Michal. He gets her as his wife for personal service to Saul, and if the sons of chapter 21 are his and Michal's, then he certainly brings his sons up to hate David and serve any who will cast over David's rule.

At this point we do not have the further information that would assist us to make any definitive judgments, but God does not say that David was wrong, and when he is, our Holy Spirit led writer points it out. My conclusion is therefore, that Michal was a victim of power politics, and David's rescue of her was legitimate.

Verses 17 – 19. These words of Abner also betray more facts that assist us to see why Abner is judged by God. He mentions in his speech that the elders of Israel had previously asked for David to be king over them. Now the only time this could have first occurred was when Abner made Ishbosheth king over them. It appears that the elders were divided at that point, and only went with Abner because of his military might. From his words it would appear they have asked again and again for David to be their ruler, possibly after the defeat of their army at Gibeon. 2 Samuel 2:8ff. He then speaks a prophetic word that he has previously heard about David being the legitimate king after Saul. By quoting this Abner condemns himself, for he knew the will of the Lord and yet he fought against David!

When he dies we cannot be as sorry as David indicates he is. Abner knows that it is David alone who can deliver Israel from their enemies, for he has been unable to deliver Israel from either the Philistines, or from Joab! Abner also speaks specifically to the tribe of Benjamin, for Saul was of their number and there is some resistance there to acceptance of the tribe of Judah as their ruler, even though the Patriarchal blessing had foretold it. Genesis 49:8-12. The tribe of Benjamin accept the inevitable. Where is Ishbosheth in all this manoeuvring? He is apparently left out in the cold, alone in the palace, and paralysed by fear on all sides. His inability to act decisively with God's Word as his sole guide, will cost him his life.

Verses 20 – 22. David has been careful in his dealings with Abner and has not told Joab, or probably anyone else, of the plot that is going on. David practises what all leaders must practise, and that is secrecy in important dealings. Trust no man if power is being discussed. Remember, the Lord trusted no man. John 2:24-25. Abner now pays a formal visit to Hebron, and Joab has been sent safely away to pursue after some raiders, so he is out of the way when Abner arrives. This time Abner is not speaking of David making a league with him, but of all Israel bowing to David. He has the order right this time and has his own obedience to David now clear in his mind. The feast celebrates the deal and David sends Abner away "in peace" to bring the elders to him, so that he may formally receive their homage as their king.

The writer will repeat that David sends Abner away "in peace" three times, for he wants everyone to understand that David acted in good faith, and that he gave Abner a solemn "safe passage" back to Israel. No harm was to come to him by order of the king, and he thought that Joab was out of the way. Joab returns after Abner's departure, and he comes back laden with booty from raids against the enemies of Judah, and he discovers what has been going on in his absence.

Verses 23 – 27. David does not believe his uncle Joab will act without orders, and thinks he has his own standards of mercy, but he ought to have known Joab better. Joab has no understanding of the word mercy, but he does understand revenge. Joab will prove through his life that he is "flexible" with orders also and will disobey them and kill when he believes it is better to do that than show mercy. At times he will be right, but he is a dangerous man.

Joab wants to know why David has let Abner go, for he is the author of all the wars over the last two years and Joab believes he should be killed on a number of counts. He is right in this; Abner ought to be executed, but that is not possible at this point in the negotiating process to bring over all Israel without further bloodshed. Joab's weakness is that he does not see the national good, only his own grief and sense of wrong over Asahel's death. Joab is self centred in his thinking, even though right and just in his demands. He directly accuses Abner of simply coming as a spy which is false, for he doesn't trust him after the battle at Gibeon. He sees correctly, for Abner is evil, but his next action is equally evil, and God's Plan is not advanced by murder. Exodus 2:11-15.

Joab sends a message to Abner by a fast runner or horseman to wait, indicating that David has another word for him. The writer reminds us that David did not know of this, but he does share some of the guilt, for he didn't order Joab to stay put in Hebron, nor take him into his confidence about the importance of the plan at this point. When you have a hot headed staff member it is vital that at the right time they are "ordered" to sit still and are told what God is doing and what they are to do! Abner waits in response to the message and Joab catches him up at Sirah, and stabs him with his dagger in the same place on his chest that Abner ran Asahel through.

Verses 28 – 35. David hears of the murder and reacts with passionate fury. All his plans to bring together the twelve tribes in peace may now be shattered, and it is vital he distances himself from Joab's actions. Remember, Joab and his brother's are David's nephews, and so the family's close bonds make separation difficult and judgment awkward. Joab had joined David early, with the rest of his extended family, so there is a great family debt of loyalty to Joab and his surviving brother. 1 Samuel 22:1ff.

Joab is a mighty general with few peers, and Abner has not been able to stand against him, and so David needs Joab's military skills at this point. It is not a good time to be changing his general. The evil done however may cause all to be

lost, and so David does the best thing he can do in the evil circumstances; he calls all of Judah to national mourning for the death of Abner.

David utters a fearful curse upon the family of Joab for this murder. He calls the Lord to judge them severely with death, disease and poverty for this evil. We find out in verse 30 that Abishai is involved in the killing of Abner also, likely holding his arms pinned behind him, while Joab thrusts the dagger into his heart. The death of their brother was regrettable, but certainly was not a murder that could be avenged under Levitical rules. Deuteronomy 19:4-13. Joab is wrong in spirit and in deed here, but his passion was understandable to his own people, and even later to the people of Israel.

The mourning that David orders will appease all the people, for most recognize that Abner should be killed anyway for the war he caused. David orders Joab and Abishai to mourn also and follow the bier of Abner to its place of burial. Both men are humiliated for their murder of Abner, and David makes it clear that while he shows them mercy, they are under judgment for this act because of the dangers it placed David's throne in. David's ode over Abner looks strange to our eyes but it was truthful. Abner ought not to have trusted Joab and Abishai, for he had killed their brother. He had twenty armed men with him and did not need to lower his guard with such old enemies as these two warriors who he knew showed no mercy. He died a fool. It is a warning to us all; that we need to keep our guard up at all times.

Verses 36 – 39. David is very careful of his diplomatic words here. He identifies that he is anointed king. In this he is referring to what is now commonly known; that Samuel had anointed him. 1 Samuel 16:13. He speaks soothingly to Israel and acknowledges Abner's greatness and does not mention his evil in starting the civil war. David speaks of Abner's past greatness, and of his present kingship. The balance in his speech is correct, for it forcefully identifies that he is king, and it does not mock or put down Abner. Abner is not blamed for the evils he did, but is mourned as the great man he was before sin got control of him.

There is a time to tell the truth at a funeral and there is the time when you simply mourn and do not mention the sins of the dead. At times it is vital that the sins and evil of the dead are mentioned in order that others do not follow them in their path to hell, but the judgment call is made in the basis of the needs of the people who live, not the reality of the person's life who has died.

There are people to mourn, even if they did evil at some point, and there are people to bury and move on quickly from the grave with minimal words. We must be ready to tell the truth at the funerals of evil men, otherwise the mourners will think that God's Word is weak and God accepts all into heaven. The lost must be told bluntly that they are lost unless they accept the Lord. Isaiah 43:10-12, Luke 12:16-21, 16:23-31, John 3:16, 36, Acts 3:14-21, 4:12.

David then speaks sadly of the "sons of Zeruah" (Joab and Abishai) as being "too hard for me". He openly speaks, with them right there in the front row of mourners, of their harshness in killing Abner. They are "too hard" and as they have judged and acted, so they will be judged and die. We must be careful in this matter of "toughness", for while being tough is useful, there are limits to it's value. Those who become hardened to harsh deeds will do more and more evil things until they fall into judgment.

David's last words at the grave of Abner are a biblical principle that we all need to heed. We are judged according to our own harshness. These words will come back to haunt David when Nathan the prophet convicts him of his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. 2 Samuel 12:6-9. They will come back to mind for Joab when he is killed. 1 Kings 2:5-6, 28-34. As we judge others so we will be judged. Psalms 7:14-16, 28:3-5, 62:12, Romans 2:1-11, 14:4, James 4:11-17.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Just because a practise has become normalized does not make it righteous and good. God's Word is clear and the absolute authority for all of our behaviours. What God forbids we are to respect, and what the Lord states we are to pay attention to, or we will have suffering multiplied in our lives.
2. Satan's fruit is self centeredness, rebellion and lust. Satanically influenced people are ruled by their passions and their plotting betrays their self interest. Abner is cunning, but he cannot out think God's plan. He has his time to repent of the evil that led to civil war and he has used it to satisfy his sexual lust for Rizpeh. He has his time to lead the house of Saul into full acceptance of David's right to rule and he wastes it plotting to betray them and so he seals his own fate and the house of Saul itself. Wise believers accept the Plan of God for their lives and walk in it wherever it leads; all else is temporary pleasure and long term pain.
3. When decisive action is called for, it is fatal not to move forward and seize the opportunity God gives. Ishbosheth dies a fool and a coward. To be paralysed by fear means you are not motivated by Bible Doctrine, and we are called to stand in the truth, in strength and with a sound mind. Fear is the sign of satanic interference in a life, and is to be seen as a fruit of the Old Sin Nature or worse. Let us cast off any fear that binds us and embrace the truth of God in love and power.
4. Trust is to be earned not ever lightly given. Men as a whole are not to be trusted by intelligent leaders. Fallen men all have Old Sin natures and we forget this at our peril. Many people start to trust people because they hear they are Christians, but this is to play the fool like Abner. No person is to be trusted until they have proved themselves a spiritual believer, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, and certified by their good works. Jesus words in Matthew 7 are to haunt

the corridors of power for safety's sake. By their good fruits good men are known and on the basis of facts you build trust in them, but the evil deeds of evil men prove their origin and their untrustworthiness. If in doubt do not trust a person and quote the Lord as your reason, for this is not being unchristian, but it is being smart!

5. Let us be quick to pray for others and slow to cast judgments upon them and try to destroy them. Many commentators are quick to judge David or Michal, but we do not have facts enough to judge either. Let us leave judgment with the Lord, except in cases where He calls us, as His leaders, to judge and eliminate one who perverts or abuses the people of the Lord. If we judge another, let it be for reasons centred in the health of the believing community, not for any personal desires for vengeance. The Lord alone is safe when vengeance is needed, for He alone is just and fair. Psalms 94:1, Romans 12:19, Hebrews 10:30-31. The Lord does such a good job of judgment, that it is foolish for us to get in the way! To pray for the lost is always better than to condemn or kill them!

REFLECTION UPON BIBLICAL SEPARATION

1. Believers are instructed to be separated from habitually carnal believers. (1 Corinthians 5:10, 11)
2. Separation is ordered from apostate religious organisations. (2 Corinthians 6:17)
3. Separation is commanded from unbelievers where scripture is compromised by the relationship or marriage, business partners. (2 Corinthians 6:14 ff)
4. Separation is commanded from the human viewpoint. (Romans 12:2, Romans 16:17, 18)
5. Separation is commanded from pseudo spirituality. (Romans 16:17, 18)
6. Separation is commanded from those who seek pleasure in fast living - pursuit of parties, immoral situations. (1 Peter 4:4)
7. Separation is commanded from other believers who reject Bible doctrine. (2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15)

Notes

CHAPTER 4**INTRODUCTION**

Over the tragic events of this chapter we must write; "What would Abner have done on his return?" The two men who murder Ishbosheth are wrong, but did they develop this plan themselves or were they the men that Abner had set aside to do this deed anyway? We cannot know what Abner would have done when he returned to the palace of Ishbosheth, but he cannot have been under any misapprehension about what was required. Ishbosheth either had to be brought to David, or killed by Abner.

No-one with a legitimate claim to the throne of Saul was to be left alive unless they had pledged total loyalty to David, and unless the people who would be their supporters had pledged their own total loyalty to David. Abner had the promise of the elders of Benjamin to support David and so the power base of Ishbosheth was zero! He is outplayed and his murder is grisly but sadly predictable given the devious politics that ruled over this rump kingdom he had allowed Abner to establish. When we are outside the will of the Lord we are on unstable ground indeed.

2 SAMUEL 4:1-12

4:1 And when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled. **2** And Saul's son had two men that were captains of bands: the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin. **3** And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.) **4** And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth. **5** And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, who lay on a bed at noon. **6** And they came thither into the midst of the house, as though they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth rib: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. **7** For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bedchamber, and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night. **8** And they brought the head of Ishbosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ishbosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed. **9** And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, **10** When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings: **11** How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth? **12** And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. Ishbosheth is totally without strength when he hears of Abner's deal with David and the death of Abner. His spies have been useless to him for they all report to Abner. This man is isolated and powerless in his own palace and he is slow to react to a clear crisis that requires immediate and strong action. What ought he to have done immediately?

Firstly, call for prayer for the land and for peace between the two houses, then secondly send a message to gather all the elders of Israel, and formally hand the kingdom over to David by leading the elders to make their pledge of allegiance to David. Had he acted quickly and decisively he would have saved at least three more deaths.

When we have accepted a smooth path associated with wealth and power we will tend to find that it makes us weak, flabby and unfit, and a little too relaxed. God calls us to the "narrow way", or the more mountainous path through this life, for it alone keeps us alert to danger and ready for instant action. Matthew 7:13ff.

The writer introduces us to the key players in the drama that is about to unfold. Under Abner are two senior officers; Baanah and Rechab. They, like Asahel, Abishai, and Joab were brothers. Their families will have to flee to escape vengeance once the murder they commit becomes known, and by the time of the writer recording this their descendents are still living away from their tribal lands to ensure that vengeance does not reach them. They are captains of the host and would have been there with Abner in the disaster at Gibeon. He would have left them with orders to follow if anything happened to him at the hands of David.

These men will have enemies amongst the men of Judah also, for like Abner they will be men who slew men of Judah and led the attacks at Gibeon. They know that they are seen as enemies of Judah and seek a way to make their peace with David. Submission is the only way for them to go, but they are ruthless, like their master was, and so they think of Ishbosheth as a "peace offering". There is another son of Jonathan alive also, and the story of Mephibosheth is also told

here, for he is in direct line to the throne of Saul now, and his life would also be forfeit by these same two men. He will escape the murder plot, but Ishbosheth will not be so lucky.

Verses 5 - 7. Do not feel sorrow for Ishbosheth. Ishbosheth is a lazy and foolish man. He knows what has happened and yet he has not taken any decisive action. Fear has paralyzed him and he is unable to think and act, and he is responsible for this short coming. Do not feel sorry for those who do not act against evil, and choose the good, and so suffer because of it. We are responsible to the Lord for our choices, and if we fail to do what is right, then the consequences will overwhelm us over time.

This man sleeps when he should be acting decisively, and so these two evil men act decisively and murder him. They clearly seek Mephibosheth also, for the mention of him in verse four is the indication of that, but they fail to find him. They behead Ishbosheth, and with the head in a bag, they ride all night along the plain to Jordan and cross it and head for Hebron, and what they think will be great reward. They should already know David's attitude to those who murder kings from his response to the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. 2 Samuel 1:13-16. This murder plot was dumb in the extreme, but violent men do not think outside the square they have painted themselves into!

Verses 8 – 12. Ishbosheth did apparently seek to kill David, for this statement by the two murderers is not challenged by David. This is apparently true, but irrelevant, for they have not taken God's path to a solution, they have taken the devil's path to their own destruction. This man Ishbosheth would have been personally known to David and was at one time his brother in law! David's answer makes it clear to both men that the Lord has delivered him from all adversity, and will continue to do so. He didn't need their murder to achieve his goals, for the Lord is with him.

David will later fall to this level with Uriah the Hittite over Bathsheba, but at this point he is firm in his trust in the Lord and stands still before God and will not give any place to such evil tricks. David makes it clear that he is judging the two men in accordance with the Mosaic Law. They have acknowledged murder and they are to be killed immediately. The blood they have shed is upon their own heads. Exodus 20:13, 21:12, 14.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Ishbosheth dies a lazy and fear paralyzed fool, just as Abner died a self centred but careless plotter. He does not take timely action to deal with the reality he faces and the knowledge he has. Both men knew God has called David to rule and yet they rejected this information and instead lived like kings until the day of reckoning came. He is asleep on his bed when he should be up and heading for Hebron. He fails to get to Hebron in time, but his head does get there! Let us not be slow in acting in accordance with the will of the Lord.
2. Sinful lives catch up with those who refuse to make the changes needed to deal with their previous choices. Both Baanah and Rechab are evil men, but have the opportunity to confront the truth and like Abner finally did, bow before the new king and serve him. They seek to ingratiate themselves rather than seeking God's path forward. Murder, fraud, theft, lies, nor any other evil act, ever advances the plan of God, for the Lord will not deal with "filthy things". 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:2, James 1:19-24.
3. God is not honoured by the deeds of evil. There is only one way to serve the Lord, and that is in spirit and in truth. The Lord seeks for us to serve Him in holiness and He will bless us in all our paths, but if we plot, scheme and plan with men to get what we think God wants, then we will get what our plots produce, but it will not be lasting blessing. The most dangerous place to be in this world is anywhere outside the will of God for us.

Notes

CHAPTER 5**INTRODUCTION**

The parallel passage to the one before us is in 1 Chronicles 11:1ff, and Chapters 13-14. Please pause now and read this section of Chronicles, remembering that the account there is written from the Temple perspective and centres upon the spiritual significance of the events described in 2 Samuel. While most details are identical, the omissions, additions and observations are important to see. The events described here may take around five years to be all completed, as David was king in Hebron seven and a half years and Ishbosheth was king for only two years. 1 Samuel 2:10-11.

2 SAMUEL 5:1-25

5:1 Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. **2** Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. **3** So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel. **4** David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. **5** In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah. **6** And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither. **7** Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David. **8** And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house. **9** So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward. **10** And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him. **11** And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house. **12** And David perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake. **13** And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David. **14** And these be the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammuah, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, **15** Ithar also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia, **16** And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet. **17** But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold. **18** The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. **19** And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand. **20** And David came to Baalperazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baalperazim. **21** And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them. **22** And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. **23** And when David enquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. **24** And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. **25** And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 5. Soon after the death of Ishbosheth and the burial of Abner the elders of Israel's northern tribes come to Hebron to recognize David as their king. They begin with a statement of unity, brotherhood in Jacob, and their belief in the "family" of all the twelve tribes, even though for two years they have been raising troops to fight him! They remind David that it was he who led the armies of Saul at times and that he was the one who gave them their best victories. They recognize David as a "winner" and these people love winners as long as the cost isn't too high.

The writer gives us David's age again and tells us that he was thirty when he started to reign in Hebron and is now at least thirty two, and he was king in Hebron for seven years, and then from Jerusalem for thirty three years, for a total reign of forty years. Now there is still confusion in my mind over these comments. If Ishbosheth reigns only two years, I cannot see the meeting with the elders and David coming five years later, for Abner dies before Ishbosheth and there was a leadership vacuum in the north after his death! My conclusion is that Abner's death prompts the speedy fall of Ishbosheth and that the elders are there in Hebron very quickly thereafter.

The writer records the years in Hebron and the years in Jerusalem, and thereby gives us the time frame for the next main event; namely the capture of Jerusalem. Lots of other things must happen through these five years but there is no Philistine threat until David is settled in Jerusalem. This also tells me that David has been a successful negotiator with Achish and is working to divide and rule the Philistines, and he will later be their acknowledged ruler and they will serve him and pay tribute to him.

Verses 6 – 10. The next big event in David's reign is the settling upon a new, non tribal capital city that is further to the north than Hebron and not tied to any tribe. While at least part of the city of the Jebusites had apparently

been taken initially by the army of Joshua it was just as quickly lost and remained a pagan stronghold in the midst of Benjamin and Judah throughout the days of the judges. Joshua 10:1ff, 15:63, 18:28, Judges 1:8, 21, 19:11-12. The people of Jerusalem had strengthened their stronghold and the fortress was, as far as they thought, impregnable.

The old city citadel was on the hill to the south of what is called the Ophel today and was quite small, but with extensive hilly areas to the north to settle upon and expand into. It was a capital that could be seriously built up over the years and that is why it appealed to David. The hills around it were actually higher than the walls of the citadel, and so when David went into his fortress he spoke of going "down into the hold". The strength of the city was not its height but its walls and the steepness of the slopes of the walls to the three valley floors on the various sides of it. Its topographical weak point was to the north only.

The modern topography of Jerusalem is very different to this time, with the rubble of centuries filling these then very steep valleys, that it is hard to even visualize the city as it was in David's day except with computer technology which gets back to the bed rock of that day.

The Jebusites were very sure of themselves and their fortifications. They had withstood the threats of the Israelites for four hundred years, and whatever part of the city the Israelites under Joshua had taken and burned with fire was well and truly rebuilt at this point. Archaeological excavations have not been able to be done under the Temple Mount area where the Jebusite city may even have stretched to. They were confident and mocked David and his men, but they mocked too soon. They invited David to attack and said even if their defenders were blind and lame they could hold David and his men off. David's men seize the city by a single man (Joab) climbing up a drain pipe of some sort, killing the guards there, and opening the gate to the others in the night. The city fell and David rebuilt the fortress from the area called Millo and then worked "inwards" and expanded the living areas.

Slowly the archaeologists are coming to an understanding of these terms, but much detail is lost to future conquerors and the thoroughness of their destruction/rebuilding. Solomon rebuilds around this area as a part of the Temple building program. 1 Kings 9:15-19. What the writer means by all this is pure speculation, and while some of it is archaeologically interesting it is still not at all clear what is meant here. The writer speaks as if he is looking at these actual areas, and this is evidence that the writer is working close to the days just after David's reign, for after the rebuild of the walls by Hezekiah, around 720-700 BC, and the total destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BC, nothing is left of David's city, and all such references become meaningless by that point.

Verses 11 – 16. Hiram may have been a young man at this time himself. He will live on and form a close bond with Solomon also, to the mutual benefit of both kingdoms. Hiram admires David and this would be for more reasons than just his rulership over the Israelites. My belief is that David's diplomatic skills made him the man to be worked with by all the kingdoms around, and his prowess as a soldier and his youth made him the "pin up boy" for all the kingdoms. There are phenomenal men and women who rise up at times to rule over kingdoms, and David is one of those men, for whatever he does works well, for the Lord is with him. Hiram is the first named to fully recognize his genius and his closeness to the will of God for the land, and actively seeks a strong alliance with him.

One of the attributes of a pastor, is that he is "well spoken of in the world". 1 Timothy 3:7. A good solid reputation amongst unbelievers is a good sign of a mighty man or woman of God. God's greatest servants are those who stand out amongst all people as those upon whose heads the power of God rests. The fruit of the Holy Spirit attracts even the unbeliever. Galatians 5:16-26.

Hiram does not give millions of dollars worth of goods to David for nothing. This is a treaty deal that we see here. Hiram and David have worked out a deal, and I suspect it was related to David's military might inland, which would have protected Hiram's back door. The Phoenicians were the great traders of the ancient world and so Hiram is a man who David can use for obtaining all forms of goods (at a price that is good but predictable). There is mutual benefit for the two men and their kingdoms in an alliance. David is not under the rules that Joshua had to obey and so he could make alliances with these people of the land now, and he not only does that, but a number appear to be led to the Lord away from their previous paganism. Exodus 23:20-33, Deuteronomy 7:1-5, 16-26.

Look now at the sons born to David in Jerusalem and see that if there are as many girls, there are at least a dozen wives and concubines here in the household, yet only two boys are significant for the history of redemption; Solomon and Nathan. Solomon is the ancestor of Joseph, and Nathan the ancestor of Mary. Matthew 1:7, Luke 3:31.

David sees that the blessings he has received are not for him, or because of him, but are because of the blessing of the Lord upon the people, and the Lord's desire to glorify his name and the name of the people of Israel. Having noted the Lord's gracious blessing upon him, David started to seriously collect women to fill his house, or rather houses! Each woman and her children required quarters. Stop for a second and work out how large the palace had to be for this polygamy!

Once again let me note clearly, that future events in the house of David prove that he did not "get away" with this area of sinful weakness, and the Lord did not approve of him in this. The present area known as the "City of David" is far too small to act as a fortress for his 600 Philistine Guard, let alone the other royal troops and their families, and then if we add the wives, concubines and their children, plus their servants, we have a group of over 3000 adults plus children.

Even if no-one else lived in the citadel of the city, the present area to the south of the Ophel is too small for the city that David uses. The archaeologists have just found (2007-2008) what they think may be David's palace and the defensive stone and brickwork of what may be the Millo, and they are both substantial structures. The word Milo means "the filling" and indicates that this structure was built by using a retaining wall that protruded into the valley and the associated fortress was on top of that. This is what appears to be being uncovered by the archaeologists at present.

I suspect the full size of David's city was far larger than has previously been thought. The citadel may be to the south of the Ophel area, and David may have lived there with his own household and guards, but the city itself must cover a vaster area, and under Solomon it spreads further still and becomes a wonder of the ancient world. My suspicion is that it covers the hill to the north and the west of the citadel.

Verses 17 – 20. The Philistines are spoken of here as if they act as soon as David is anointed king over all Israel, and yet their attack is launched against Jerusalem, and David only takes that seven years after being crowned king of Judah and probably five over all Israel. The Philistines delay may be related to his clever diplomacy with Achish through these seven years, and the trade that he encourages, and the acceptance of David by men like Hiram through this time also would make them think twice before attacking him.

The great wealth that is now flowing into Jerusalem after its seizure would have been a great temptation to them however. They fought for renown but also for loot, and after seven years of rule, at the tender age of thirty seven David has seized the Jebusite fortress and made it the repository of all the wealth he has gained to date. David has become like the great icon of the God of Israel and the most important figure of his age; he is the "hero" who the men of Philistia seek to put down in the name of their gods. It is for this reason that their army brings so many statues of their gods with them at their first attack. Verse 21.

Just after the time of the seizure of the fortress would be the right time to attack, as the Philistines may believe that David hasn't had the time to strengthen the place after his capture, and the associated destruction of some of it. They are nervous, even fearful of David, but they can't help trying their hand to attempt to knock him off his perch, and they will attempt to destroy him and seize his kingdom on two important occasions in the first years he is in Jerusalem. 1 Chronicles 13-14 records these events as if they occur after the Ark has been brought into Jerusalem, which would place them a year or more after the city is taken. We cannot be absolutely sure of time frames here and discussion of it is speculation.

David is not likely to be in his palace yet, but in the city itself above and to the north of the Ophel, when he hears of the invasion by the Philistines, and he "goes down" the hill into the fortress to seek the Lord's guidance as to the next step. He may have been there overseeing the building of new defences to protect the citadel from that direction. David is not a fool who would build his "house" before he repaired and strengthened his fortress. This would support an early attack, shortly after he seized the fortress and when building is needed to protect the northern approaches.

Why pray about attacking these great warriors? Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:17. It is vital to pray about everything in the believer's life, and in this first great challenge he faces the question as to whether he fights defensively in a siege, or goes out and fights offensively in an open battle. The defences may not be fully built, and a siege has two disadvantages; it makes the soldiers passive, rather than active, and it places the enemy in the position where they have the initiative.

Even though it is always best to keep in open ground where you can manoeuvre, the Lord must guide the decision making process, and David rests in the Lord's hands. This may also be a clue to his previous dealings with the Philistines. If he has been using diplomacy to control them to this point, he may seek the Lord's specific guidance regarding this attack; as to whether this is the time to talk or attack them. The Lord's words to him, probably through the High Priest, are clear. This is not the time for defensive strategies or talk, but for a significant battle.

The battle field is called Baalperazim; meaning the waters breaking forth from the Baal statues. The Philistine camp is in the valley of Rephaim, to the west of the city and separated by a ridge from it, and David takes his troops and marches out to engage them on ground that is suitable to him in an open battle, but with surprise on his side. The Philistines apparently expect him to fight a siege war and are not ready for his sudden attack upon them. They have set up their god statues in their camp and when David attacks they are over run and defeated and all the statues of their gods may be swept into the stream in the valley floor. They are collected up and burned with fire.

This is phase one of this campaign, and phase two begins soon afterwards with a second army arriving from Philistia and camping in the same area as before. They are ready for the sudden attack this time and will not (they think) be defeated this way again.

Verses 21 – 25. Once again the enemy arrives to challenge David, and once again David goes to prayer about the right course of action. This is the mark of David's early greatness; for he is a mature believer at this point and prayer is his normal response to all challenges. He does not think he knows what to do apart from the Lord's specific guidance, but seeks the Lord's counsel every time. This is the model of behaviour for ourselves. We are never to advance without prayer and assurance. Our motto should be, "Let the Lord do it in His power, or let it not be done!" Proverbs 3:1-8.

In this second attack, possibly launched quite quickly after the first defeat, the enemy is to be out flanked, and the Lord is very specific in his instructions as to what David is to do. He is to silently move around behind the enemy army and wait, hidden in a grove of Mulberry (or possibly pear) trees. The army is to wait, silently and well hidden, in this forest of trees until the wind in the top leaves of the trees move and make the sound of a mighty army. The army is then to surge onto the attack following the direction of the wind.

The wind blows and stirs the tree tops exactly as the Lord predicts and the army surged forward at that signal and the enemy fell back, one group to the north towards Geba (or it may be Gibeon), and the other towards the north west and Gezer. If Geba is the actual place the northern group flees towards, it will fall victim to the Israelites from that region and the army of David pursuing, but the other one may escape, although the writer indicates it is a massacre and the Philistines do not threaten David again.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Every situation we face is to be faced with prayer. We are not to confront any decisions with anything other than openness to what the Lord wants and we are to seek His will alone. David does not jump to any conclusions about the guidance from the Lord. Even though David has been told to attack once, he does not jump to the conclusion that he is to attack the second time. He quietly seeks the Lord's counsel again. This is the model for our behaviour. Pray about everything! Luke 18:1-10, 21:36, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Timothy 2:8.

2. After a civil war it is easy to fall into revenge taking and pay back old scores. Joab has committed this great sin in the murder of Abner, but David will not accuse any of the elders of Israel with any sin at all. He is willing to forgive as he knows he is forgiven. Matthew 6:12-15. Let us examine our own hearts, whether we have forgiven those who have offended against us.

3. Each of us has an Old Sin Nature weakness, just as David had in the sexual area. His sin in this area will bring him extensive divine discipline and great suffering for his nation. Many suffer and die for David's sin and the Lord does not let him get away with it. Do not give in to sinful desires, for the Lord is not mocked, and all sin will lead to discipline. Galatians 6:7.

4. There are no "small things" and no "big things" in our life. In God's sight all the details of our life are small things and all things are to be brought before the Lord with prayer.

THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer. We are commanded to allow Him to fill (or fully control) our lives (Ephesians 5:18).

2. The filling (controlling) of the Spirit can be broken by:

- a) Grieving the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) - sin, doing something you shouldn't.
- b) Quenching the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) - not doing something you should (like quenching a fire, allowing the flame to go out).

3. The filling (controlling) of the Spirit can be restored by confession of sin and full surrender to do the will of God (1 John 1:9)

4. The Spirit produces the very character of the Christ in the believer: (Galatians 4:19, 5:22, 23, Ephesians 3:16, 17, Philippians 1:20, 21, 2 Corinthians 3:3)

a) The fruit of the Spirit:

- i) Galatians 5:22-23 - Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control.
- ii) Romans 14:17 - Righteousness, Peace, Joy.
- iii) Colossians 3:12-15 - Compassion, Kindness, Humility, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, Love, Peace, Thankfulness.
- iv) 1 Thessalonians 1:3 - Faith, Love, Endurance, Hope.

b) Rejoicing in Christ (Philippians 3:1, 4:4).

c) Loving one another (John 15:12, Romans 12:10, Ephesians 5:2).

d) Striving for the faith (Philippians 1:27, Jude 3).

e) Putting away all sin (1 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 12:1).

f) Abstaining from all appearances of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

g) Submitting to injuries (1 Corinthians 6:7).

h) Subduing the temper (Ephesians 4:26, James 1:19).

i) Shunning the wicked (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

j) Abounding in the works of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58 1 Thessalonians 4:1).

k) Showing a good example (1 Timothy 4:12, 1 Peter 2:12).

l) Following after that which is good (Philippians 4:8, 1 Timothy 6:11).

m) Perfecting holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1, 2 Timothy 3:17).

n) Hating defilement (Jude 23).

o) Overcoming the world. (1 John 5:4-5)

- p) Adorning the gospel. (Philippians 1:27, Titus 2:10)
- q) Forgiving injuries. (Romans 12:20)
- r) Living peaceably with all. (Romans 12:18, Hebrews 12:14)
- s) Visiting the afflicted. (James 1:27)
- t) Sympathising with others. (Romans 12:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- u) Honouring others. (Romans 12:10)
- v) Submitting to authorities. (Romans 13:1-7)
- w) Being content. (Philippians 4:11, Hebrews 13:5)
- x) Walking worthy of the Lord. (Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12)
- y) Walking in the newness of life. (Romans 6:4)
- z) Walking as children of light. (Ephesians 5:8)
- aa) Glorifies Christ in his body. (Philippians 1:20, 21)
- bb) Christ is at home in his body. (Ephesians 3:16,17)
- cc) A lifestyle which honours God in the presence of men. (2 Corinthians 3:3)

5. The filling of the Holy Spirit in every believer only occurs in two dispensations:

- a) Church age Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23
- b) Millennium - Joel 2:28, 29 (characterized by ecstasies)

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

In the account in Chronicles the bringing up of the ark is placed before the Philistine attack, but there are two reasons why the account here is to be preferred for chronology, while the Chronicles account gives us more worship detail. Firstly, 2 Samuel has all the evidence of being the earlier manuscript, and closer to events, and secondly the Chronicles account emphasizes the spiritual and religious aspects of the story, and so priority is given to the ark's restoration before all political stories. Spiritual significance is always placed ahead of chronological considerations in Chronicles.

In light of these things, I have taken the Philistine attack as being first, and then David's decision to bring up the ark second, once the enemies are scattered and the building work completed which will make the city secure and provide a place for the ark to rest. This makes sense because the city needed some work before the selected area was ready for the Ark to arrive and have somewhere to be placed. It may have been supervision of this work to the north of the citadel that was preoccupying David when he heard of the Philistine advances.

It is up there, on higher ground, below the area that the threshing floors were to be found, and this is the place that will be chosen for the site of the tabernacle that David has erected ready for the Ark. It will also be the area that David will later use to stockpile the material to be used by Solomon for the building of the Temple itself.

David has been careful about consulting the Lord over the two Philistine invasions and operating only under the Lord's specific orders, but in his religious enthusiasm to bring the Ark to Jerusalem he omits to seek the Lord's counsel regarding the correct process. If the chronology of 2 Samuel is correct, David has been careful regarding the preparing of the area for the Ark's arrival and in the elimination of the Philistine threats, but relaxes after these things, and does not consult the priests about the process for bringing the Ark up. We can all do this sort of thing ourselves; after a great challenge we relax, and then we do something so obviously good that we do not do it prayerfully and carefully enough!

There is another possible reason why he may not ask the right priests about the correct way of bringing the Ark up to Jerusalem. The priesthood had been split after the massacre of the priests at Nob. 1 Samuel 22:17-23. The surviving eleven courses carried on the service at the tabernacle, which was moved to Gibeah to be under the eyes of Saul at all times, and Abiathar the priest went to David with his ephod and served as his High Priest.

By the time of David's rulership from Jerusalem there are two high Priests, Abiathar and Zadok. Abiathar may not have known the correct process, and may not have sought the answer from the Mosaic Law, or not fully understood it. He may not have even had access to a complete copy of the Law, for he had fled from Saul's massacre in haste. There is not necessarily unity amongst the priests at this time, and reforms later under both David and Solomon will be required to sort the priesthood out fully and finally. 1 Chronicles 24:3ff, 25:1ff.

Remember also, that different altars on "high places" also operated through the land at this time, and David desired religious reform. This process is nearly always fraught with opposition from those who have held the spiritual power for more than a generation. David wanted there to be one focus for worship, and he wanted it to be at the new capital, with a new tabernacle, then a new temple, as a unifying factor for the people. His desire was to cement the unity of the tribes again through true worship that involved dynamic communication between God and His people. This was a good and worthy thing, but in his enthusiasm for the right idea, he forgot to look into the right book for instructions, or there was confusion initially!

Was it politics amongst the priests, malice by some, ignorance, or some other thing? We cannot know the true reasons for the initial failure of David's plan from this distance, and the later writer of Chronicles doesn't give us the detail we wish for, although he hints at David being the cause, not the priesthood. 1 Chronicles 13:1-4, 11-13. The writer here clearly indicates that David's desire was personal and political, and only after three months of reflection will it become spiritual, and he will take the time to bring it up correctly. Once again let me emphasize, we cannot be 100% sure of any of this until we hear David's viewpoint in heaven of these things. Let us be careful and prayerful over all significant worship issues for people's passions are strong regarding these things.

The Ark has been out of sight for many years in hiding in the house of Abinadab. It had been brought up by Saul once for a confrontation with their enemy, but returned to its place of hiding and rest. It has not been a central part of the worship of Israel for over fifty years. David knows that it is the right thing to bring the Ark and the sacrificial system back together eventually, and he moves forward with this process, but without seeking the specialist advice that was required. He also doesn't move the Ark back to the tabernacle itself, now operating at Gibeah, nor does he bring the entire tabernacle, with all the surviving worship items to Jerusalem. Even Solomon will not do this, but rather replace the entire thing. 2 Chronicles 1-4.

This plan side-lines Zadok the priest there and makes Abiathar the sole keeper of the Ark in Jerusalem. David wants to bring the focus of power to Jerusalem, and for another twenty plus years the Tabernacle will continue to function independently in Gibeah, under Zadok, using the sacrificial system and an empty Holy of Holies. This use of the old tabernacle without the Ark in the Holy of Holies sets the precedent for the restoration temple (from 515 BC – 70 AD) which will also not have the Ark in the Holy of Holies, for by then it is lost. The temple that the Lord comes to in His earthly advent is without an Ark in the Holy of Holies.

David has a plan to bring the two priests together, but it is over a time frame that does not create an all powerful priesthood. His reasons for continuing to keep the two priests apart through his entire reign is unclear from this distance in time, but it may centre in the court's desire to keep the priesthood divided and subservient, while having the Ark handy for purposes of direct communication of the king with God. The old tabernacle of Moses and all its furniture may be completely worn out, and after 500 years of solid daily use be unable to be moved again without the whole thing falling apart. The Ark is intact and able to be moved around but the rest of the old tabernacle may be in a very bad state and be past its "use by date".

The Ark was last moved by the Philistines on a cart and David knows this, and so he prepares the same technique, but he should have known better, and no-one corrects him (or he doesn't ask the Levites to check the Law of Moses). Only the Levites are to carry the Ark. Numbers 3:30-31, 4:15, Deuteronomy 10:8, 31:9, 31:24, 1 Samuel 7:1-2, 7:2, 14:18, 1 Chronicles 15:1-2. David's enthusiasm and careful planning for the ceremonial to accompany the move is no substitute for his obedience, and he realises this, although through great sadness and shock after the death of Uzzah. When he finally brings the Ark into Jerusalem he will worship with abandoned joy, and he writes the twenty fourth Psalm to celebrate this occasion.

2 SAMUEL 6:1-23

6:1 Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. **2** And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims. **3** And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. **4** And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. **5** And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. **6** And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. **7** And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. **8** And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day. **9** And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? **10** So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obedom the Gittite. **11** And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obedom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obedom, and all his household. **12** And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obedom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obedom into the city of David with gladness. **13** And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. **14** And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. **15** So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. **16** And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart. **17** And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. **18** And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. **19** And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed

every one to his house. 20 Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! 21 And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD. 22 And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour. 23 Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. David calls up his entire army, and all the people who can gather, for the bringing up of the Ark. The army is there to honour the process, unify the people (for the army now comprises all tribal elements), and also protect against any last gasp Philistine attack. They head for the town called here, Baale-Jehudah, which is another, more ancient name for Kirjath Jearim. Joshua 15:60, 18:14. The Ark is described as the object named after the God who spoke from between the cherubim that were formed upon the lid of the box.

This is the writer reminding us that the High Priest's ephod had been the means of guidance but the Ark opened up a whole new dimension for the Lord's communication with His people through the High Priest. The writer of Chronicles records that re-opening this old means of communication from the Lord is David's desire. 1 Chronicles 13:3.

The army went first to Kirjath Jearim, where the people were ordered to gather, and then marched across to Gibeah, the capital of Saul, to the house of Abinadab where the Ark was then stored. David honours the places where the Ark had been stored by this route of march, and possibly also gathers the other items of furniture together that have been stored after the destruction of both Shiloh and Nob. This may explain the wagon for the Ark also. If all the surviving items of tabernacle furniture were being collected together, they would have been loaded into wagons. The story centres round the Ark, but there may be much more going on here which the writer omits to tell us.

2 Chronicles 1:1-6 tells us that the Ark was brought to Jerusalem, but that the brazen altar made by Bazaleel under Moses orders, was still in Gibeon (Nob being considered part of the city of Gibeon) with the tabernacle tent itself set up there. Zadok the priest will operate there, and Abiathar will operate in the new tent David erects in Jerusalem, and this state of affairs will continue for around thirty years. When Solomon prepares for the sacrificial system to operate from the new Temple, he prepares an entirely new set of furniture to be used in the new Temple, and it is on a far grander scale than the old Tabernacle. 2 Chronicles 4.

We are not told what happens to the old furniture, or the old tent material of the Tabernacle that Moses made. My suspicion is that the furniture became part of the new temple, but was simply added to with other items, and that the old tabernacle tent material was folded up and stored in a compartment above the holy place within the new Temple. We will only know this in heaven with any surety.

The Ark had initially been in hiding at Kirjath Jearim, and it may be that some of the other furniture from the old Tabernacle had been stored there still, and was also brought up at the same time. 1 Samuel 4:19-22, 6:19-21, 7:1-2. Refer back to our earlier Commentary on those passages. The Ark was at Kirjath Jearim for twenty years, and then taken by Saul to Gibeah to the house of Abinadab there. It may be that Abinadab had two houses, or that Saul built him another one at Gibeah when the Ark was moved there.

Saul had kept the Ark close to him, but not allowed the priesthood to function with it through the sacrificial system, which operated a little way further away at Nob. The Chronicles writer had specifically noted that Saul had never inquired of the Ark. 1 Chronicles 13:3. David wants to bring the worship together as it had been before Eli's sons lost the Ark the first time. Saul, possibly for political reasons, kept the Ark, and possibly some of the other original items from the Tabernacle, away from the priests. Maybe he feared the Ark's return to the priesthood would give them the power to gather all the people to oppose him.

Great national shame was felt because of the loss of the Ark, the destruction of the original Tabernacle at Shiloh, and then the murder of an entire course of priests at Nob. The house of Eli and Saul are both blamed for these national religious catastrophes. The writer wants to record the positive aspect of the actions of David, but avoids the facts about what was lost, as the national sense of shame was such that a cover is drawn over the awfulness of the events at Shiloh and Nob. The writer leaves out some details and we are left to speculate about what was, and what was not, recovered for the establishment of the new national worship at Jerusalem.

Verses 5 – 9. Eleazar was the son of Abinadab who had care of the Ark while it was in his house, and it may be that he has died, for two other sons are tasked with its transport. 1 Samuel 7:1-2. The two men have the poles and are able to load the Ark onto the cart for travel without anyone touching it, but as they travel over heavily rutted roads the Ark looks as if it is going to fall off the cart. It shouldn't of course be on any cart at all! Uzzah, who should know better, for he has had many years to study the Mosaic Law and know what can and cannot be done, reaches out to steady the Ark. The glory and holiness of the Lord flashes out in a millisecond and he lies dead on the ground beside the Ark.

He was driving the cart with his brother, so this tells us that he is literally blown out of his seat by the power of God onto the road beside the cart in a way that the entire crowd sees. The entire procession to that point has been a glorious celebration, with music, praises and worship to the Lord. It is full of what we would call Pentecostal fervour, but it's heart was wrong. They were not doing what God had made very clear needed to be done. The Lord is merciful, but if we disobey the clear instruction of the Lord we are outside the mercy of God and enter the place of judgment.

God gave them several hours to get it right, for someone to say, 'we shouldn't do this!' Everyone is culpable, for all should have known that this was wrong, but they got side tracked by their emotions, and no-one raised their voice and corrected David. David is very angry at the Lord for spoiling his parade, and also fearful of the Lord, and he has to meditate for at least three months before he tries again, but this time correctly, to bring the Ark to its resting place in the city. 1 Chronicles 13:9-14, Hebrews 10:30-31, 12:25-29. We forget the holiness of the Lord at our peril.

Verses 10 – 13. There is a man of Gath living close by to the city. It may be that he was a Philistine who had become a believer through contacts with David, and possibly was in his Cherithite Guard. This man is placed in charge of the Ark. It is ironic that when the Ark had been seized all those years ago that it had been taken to Gath and been mocked there, but that it is a man of Gath who guards it now, for he knows it's power, and his ancestors discovered it's power at their great cost. 1 Samuel 5:8-9. These people learned that the Ark was an object to be venerated and respected.

This man guards the Ark and keeps it holy and the Lord blesses him and his family while the Ark is protected there. This tells me that this man is a stranger but a believer. It also reminds us that the Israelites sought the conversion of the pagans around them, and that many came to the faith in the one true God and were accepted as full members of Israel. This man Obed Edom later became a servant at the door of the Tabernacle. 1 Chronicles 15:24.

David has taken three months to pause and reflect upon the right way to bring the Ark up to the city itself, and he has consulted the Mosaic Law, and this time the priests carry it upon their shoulders and when they have advanced six paces with the Ark, probably just carrying it to the door of the house, David offers sacrifices in thanksgiving that this time he has got it right and the real procession can begin in safety. The entire procession is magnificent and the worship this time is both emotional and doctrinal. 1 Chronicles 15:1-29. This passage is a reminder that there is nothing wrong with emotional expression in worship, but it is to be guided and directed by Bible doctrine.

Verses 14 – 16. David is very formally dressed for this occasion, wearing the full dress linen coat, and over the top of that the formal jacket, or "ephod". He is in pure white clothing, as are all the priests, and David is singing a psalm or psalms, and possibly also playing a musical instrument. As the Ark comes down into the city itself David is dancing for joy before the Lord and Michal looks out the window of the women's quarters of the palace that overlooks the parade route, and has a look of absolute contempt upon her face, and this is noticed by people around about. She despises David for this public show of enthusiasm.

It may be that she felt it beneath the dignity of the king to mix with the common people, or that she felt he ought to be above all celebration or open worship. Perhaps she expected David to simply stand with dignity on a podium and salute while the parade passed. David was not going to be a spectator at worship, he was going to be an active participant.

David had actually written a Psalm especially for this occasion, and very likely it was taught to the Levitical singers, and they all sang it as they entered the city. 1 Chronicles 15:22, Psalms 24. Whatever the reasons she had, Michal mocked her husband's joy in the Lord, and the Lord saw her, as well as many others that day, and the Lord judged her. It is a terrible thing to mock the worship of another who loves the Lord in spirit and in truth.

Verses 17 – 19. All the offerings that established the Tabernacle worship under Moses were offered this day by David. Leviticus 8-9. Whether these offerings were offered on the restored great altar of Moses or on a stone altar we are not told. Refer to the EBCWA Commentary on Exodus 37-38 to read about the items of furniture that may have been used here. The offerings of the Mosaic Law spoke of forgiveness for sins and restoration of the people to full fellowship with the Lord their God. Each offering spoke of the person and work of the Redeemer who was to come; they spoke of Christ.

Having overseen the High Priests making each of the many offerings, David gave a blessing over the people. He possibly used the ancient Mosaic Blessing as recorded in Numbers 6:24-27. David is clear in his mind that he is called to be the new Moses to his generation and restore the ancient ways of Israel and bind the twelve tribes together in their worship of the Lord their God. This is David's heart desire and why he is great, and why he is at the centre of the Angelic Conflict of his day. David faces more pressure than any man, and he falls under that pressure at times, but his heart is towards the Lord and he returns to the altar of the Lord and finds forgiveness there in the heart of God. So can we!

Verses 20 – 23. All the people are given a large "take away" meal of meat, bread and wine to restore their spirits after their long march and send them on their way home with full stomachs and food for the way. David has been thoughtful and ensured that the people can worship and be fed and watered in the entire process. He is thoughtful of their comfort as well as ensuring there is plenty for all to eat so none faint on their way home.

This is a reminder of that later day when Jesus feeds the crowd who have walked into the wilderness to hear Him and worship with Him. Matthew 14:14-21, 15:30-38, 16:9-12. The common people are there in the streets rejoicing but the

harem of the king was locked away behind closed doors, away from public gaze (except when they sit in windows and gaze out).

David has given his blessing over the crowd and enters his palace in high spirits and great spiritual joy in order to give the same blessing upon his own household. Michal, as the senior wife, meets him in the entrance way with abuse for his “display” of emotion, possibly chastising him for not behaving as her father would have! She says far more than the words recorded here. Her despising of David is a rejection of his household and background; she is seriously expressing contempt here for his worship, his family, and his kingship.

Such a display by a royal wife in the ancient world would normally lead to her execution. David is not petty in his response, although the spirit of worship for the household is broken by Michal’s outburst. All arrogance and contempt for others is a sign that Satan’s power has become dominant in the soul of that person. The fruit of the spirit is humility and acceptance of others, the fruit of the devil is arrogance and all forms of contempt. Galatians 5:14-26.

Notice her attack on David for behaving like a “vain”, or poor person. It is snobbery, arrogance and malice that drive this woman now, who once risked her life for David. 1 Samuel 19. It is sad to reflect upon the reasons why she has sunk to this place. Did she resent being dragged back to the palace? We will never know the reasons, but this woman has become bitter, and despises David and worship itself.

She speaks of him “uncovering” himself, and yet we have been told that he is formally dressed, not stripped down to his under-wear, although he may have danced in this under-clothing, and then replaced his robe and ephod when he had finished. We are not told this, but certainly he is always dressed. He does not become naked like a pagan priest.

David very specifically reminds her that he was chosen by the Lord to replace her evil father, and so his house is above her house, and his posterity will rule, not hers. David makes it clear that he will join himself with the “base” or common people in the worship of the Lord, and he will be honoured by them, and their honour he seeks, for their hearts are right before the Lord, whereas hers is clearly not right before the Lord.

Michal will as a result of this have no children who will sit upon the throne after her. Her line and her father’s will be extinguished, but David’s will prosper. It may be that she had children before being restored to David, but she certainly has none afterwards. 2 Samuel 21:8.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Enthusiasm is no substitute for obedience. David was wrong in not studying the Mosaic Law and ensuring he had the way of bringing up the Ark correct. We are also not excused by the Lord if we get something wrong, when we have had plenty of time to get it right beforehand. Let us study the Word of God and so get things right before Him. Emotions are to be enjoyed, but only when in accordance with the holy demands of God.
2. Worship may be public or private, but it is always to be personal, and to involve our body, mind and spirit. Colossians 3:20, 1 Timothy 1:5, 2 Timothy 2:22, Hebrews 10:22, 1 Peter 1:22. When the Lord is being worshipped we ought not to be looking at others, but only into our own heart and the heart of the Lord who loves us and gave Himself for us. The posture, expressions and words of other believers should not be a concern to us. We worship the Lord, and we respect the right of others to do it their way, our only focus is the purity and devotion of our own heart. Let us lose ourselves in worship and not be concerned how we look to others, for only the carnal and the pagan will care!
3. The Holiness of the Lord is a doctrinal reality that must be central in all our service for the Lord. Worship should be an expression of holiness before the Lord. At its heart holiness is “separation” from all that is temporal and carnal and a devotion that is totally God centred. Let us be sure in our worship that there is no carnality in our dress, our behaviours, or our words, but a sense of holiness before the Lord that draws us closer to Him.

The best test for worship is to ask the following questions.

- i. Does this activity centre our thinking upon the Lord alone?
- ii. Does this activity unite all present in the love of the Lord?
- iii. Does this activity still our soul and encourage and strengthen our spirit?
- iv. Does this activity assist us to draw close to the Lord and contemplate His mighty works?
- v. Does this activity prepare, enthuse, and empower us for service?
- vi. Would unbelievers entering the service be struck by the Holiness of the Lord?
- vii. Would people see people focused upon Jesus?

If we cannot answer these questions with a strong “YES!” then we ought to reflect further upon our behaviours, for they might not be worshipful, and we may have strayed into emotionalism and be in the same danger of judgment as David was here.

Notes

CHAPTER 7**INTRODUCTION**

Time has moved on when we open this chapter. David is sitting comfortably in his palace with its cedar walls and ceilings. David's heart's desire remains however to serve the Lord and honour His name. He seeks the right to build the Temple that will truly sum up the glory of the Lord, as the old Tabernacle once did. Very likely the old Tabernacle was destroyed at Shiloh and replacements have been used that are pretty basic, unlike the ornate and expensive object that Moses had ordered built.

If it has survived it is no longer able to be set up and used and so a temporary tent is there. There is some indication in the building of Solomon's Temple that the old Tabernacle was preserved there in a secret chamber above the Holy of Holies. We will examine that as we look at the building of the Temple.

David knows that his solution is not up to standard and seeks a better dwelling for the Ark than the present tent. He has had his palace built for some time now and it is a beautiful building with ornate cedar panelled walls and ceiling from Lebanon, and it is as grand as the Phoenician workers can make it. He is embarrassed to be living in a palace while the Ark lives in a tent. He feels the indignity of this, for he values the Lord above himself, and seeks to worship and honour Him in truth.

In this chapter we glimpse the heart of David again and we see again that emotional decisions are not necessarily the right ones. David's desire is good, but the Lord says that he has a better plan in mind for David than the one he suggests.

2 SAMUEL 7:1-29

7:1 And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies; **2** That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. **3** And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee. **4** And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, **5** Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? **6** Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. **7** In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar? **8** Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheeppcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: **9** And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. **10** Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, **11** And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. **12** And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. **13** He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. **14** I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: **15** But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. **16** And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. **17** According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David. **18** Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? **19** And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD? **20** And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy servant. **21** For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. **22** Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. **23** And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? **24** For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God. **25** And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said. **26** And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. **27** For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. **28** And now, O Lord GOD, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: **29** Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. We have no idea when these events occur. They are well after the attacks by the Philistines and he has now made them his allies. There is literally rest at this time, and David's thoughts go back to the Tabernacle and the roughness of the tent he has had erected, and he desires a better and more noble structure for the Lord that is grander than his own palace. He calls the prophet Nathan, who we are introduced to here without any other introduction.

This is another indicator of the writer working close to events, for he doesn't explain things and people who were very well known at the time of writing. Nathan does exactly the same thing that the people did when David suggested that the Ark be brought up to Jerusalem. 1 Chronicles 13:1-4.

People are used to seeing David as the "sweet psalmist of Israel". He is their king, godly poet, and theologian and they see his holy life every day and cannot believe that this task is not God's will, for this is the greatest man that has lived for five hundred years. They have to go back to Moses to find a man greater than this man David. Nathan doesn't even bother to seek the Lord's face on this issue, for it appears to be so obvious.

Verses 4 – 7. The Lord corrects Nathan later that very night and gives him a totally different message to the one he believed was obvious. Even if "the Lord is with us", we are not to do all that is in our heart, for while it may be good, it may not be for us to do! Each of us is called to play a part during our brief life upon this earth, and it is not with us to select the gifting we have, nor the parts we are to play! 1 Corinthians 12:11, 14-30.

Look at the Commentary on this passage and especially on verse 31 of first Corinthians twelve. We are to seek to discover the Lord's gifting for our own service, and seek the best, and most useful gifting to function when we gather with others in our worship assembly. David is able to do many things for God, but he is not allowed to build the temple, for the Lord has another to do that. There will be just as many things we are NOT to do, as things to do, and sorting out the difference is our daily prayerful challenge.

The Lord challenges Nathan about the project David has suggested and gives him the words to speak to the king. David is to be told that God doesn't need a "house", for a tabernacle has been perfect for the Lord through the years of the Exodus and beyond them. The tent was a sign that the people were to be his pilgrim people, and so the tent itself had teaching significance for Israel. The Lord reminds David that He has spoken through a number of the tribes by means of their leaders, judges, and prophets, but by none of them has He ever asked for a house of cedar.

The challenge to Israel was to have the mental attitude of pilgrims through a strange land, separate themselves from evil, and allow the Lord to be their God and follow Him with all their heart and souls. Each person was to be the living tabernacle of the Lord to their fellows, showing the character of God in all their daily dealings. Exodus 29:45, Leviticus 26:12, Jeremiah 31:33, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 2 Corinthians 6:16-18.

Verses 8 – 11. The Lord's words to David remind him that he has been lifted up to serve the Lord. The Lord took him from being a shepherd and made him king. It has been a gracious operation by God all the way so far in David's life and it will continue that way. It is in God's power that he has been victorious in all the battles he has fought. The Lord has delivered all his enemies into his hands, for the Lord is with him. It is the presence of the living God that has made David all that he is in majesty, and he will not lack for anything that he needs to serve the Lord. All he is to do is to walk humbly before his God. This remains our daily challenge as the Lord's leaders of his flock.

David has been appointed by the Lord in the place of the Judges and he is to lead, protect and teach the people in righteousness. God will not allow David to build him a house, but the Lord's promise to David is that He, the Lord God over all the heavens and the earth, will build him a house. David is to rest in the Lord and leave his future in the Lord's hands. 1 Chronicles 17:1-15, 22:1-10, 28:3, Psalms 89:3-8, 127:1-2.

Verses 12 – 17. David has seen the house of Saul fall and become nothing, and he has thoughts now about what will befall his own offspring. He is given the promise that one will descend from him who will rule the kingdom of God "forever". He is also told that he will have a son who will enjoy rest around about him and he will be the one who will build the Temple for the Lord.

He is told that if his sons depart from the correct and godly path then they will be disciplined by the Lord through "the rod of men, and the stripes of the children of men". It is a reminder of the Mosaic Law and its warnings in Leviticus 26, and Deuteronomy 27-28.

Verses 18 – 24. David does the right thing when he hears the news from Nathan the prophet. He goes and sits before the Lord and pours his heart out to God. At this time the king apparently had access to the Ark's presence, as had the priesthood. This will change with the Temple ritual that will return to the practise of Moses totally, but at this time there was apparently nothing that David could not do. He may even have functioned as a priest before the Lord and offered up some sacrifices as Moses did before the full consecration of Aaron. This is a matter over which we cannot be dogmatic, as the writer here and later in Chronicles does not give us enough information to be absolutely certain.

The writer of the book to the Hebrew Christians refers back to Melchizedec as the origin of the king-priest, and he is certainly the first we meet in the scriptures, but David may have functioned in some way like this at times. David certainly had access into the Holy Place, and possibly even into the Holy of Holies, and could sit before the Lord's presence. It

may be that he simply sat before the great dividing curtain that separated the two rooms of the Tabernacle he had made for the Ark, or even that he sat outside by the Altar, but the words here indicate to me he entered the Tabernacle and sat before the Lord. This man was special, and no other king dared do such a thing. David loved doing this and speaks of this in the Psalms. Psalms 8:4, 22:6, 25:12, 34:6-8, 40:4, 94:10-12, 103:15, 144:3-5.

David's prayer to the Lord is formal in nature, and likely was a written Psalm that was later sung by the people or at least by himself to remember this day. David humbly thanks God for the great mercy shown him, and the certainty of the promise regarding his house. He marvels at the "forever" nature of the promises. He rests in the perfect knowledge that the Lord has of his heart and opens himself to the Lord. He sees that all that the Lord does, he does for His name's sake and to bring glory to Himself. He sees that any glory he has as a man is reflected glory from the Lord. He meditates upon his place in the universe and in the plan of God and he accepts his place before the Lord of Glory.

Worship and service begin when we give the Lord His correct place in our hearts and lives. David sees with absolute clarity at this point, that the majesty of God is awesome above all else and he sits with the glory of the Lord filling his soul. This is true worship, and is to be the place we come to ourselves each day as we draw close to the One who made us and saved us and has had a plan for us since before the worlds were made.

David also sees that the nation Israel has a destiny that is unique upon the earth. He sees that the essence of Israel's position in the world is their role as the reflectors of God's glory to the rest of the world. They are blessed by God and in direct proportion to their blessing is their responsibility to be light bearers before the Lord. They have been saved from Egypt to be a people set apart for the Lord.

They are to be holy before Him and His people in the darkness of the world. They have a destiny through the Lord's choice of them. David gives thanks for the Lord's choice of them, but he moves on to pray for them, for every generation can lose this place if they walk away from their responsibilities to the Lord. Matthew 12:34-45, Luke 11:29-51.

Verses 25 – 29. David now prays that the Lord will indeed establish his house forever. He has God's promise and so claims that by faith in this prayer. His prayer is that the Lord's name be magnified for ever also. David's desire is for his house to be established "before the Lord", that is, he sees that his house will only have power and purpose when focused upon what the Lord wants for them. He praises God that he is in His hands and none other, and that he exists to do the Lord's will. Psalms 10:17, 40:6-8, 72:18. Asaph, another psalmist, will praise the Lord for the same glory and comfort. Psalms 73:21-28, 115:12-18.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. There are no small issues before God. All significant issues are to be taken before the Lord, and all needed things are to be sought of the Lord. The "obvious" issues are to be especially sought of the Lord, for it is there that David makes his errors of judgment. Let us come before the Lord with prayerful thought about the direction our life is to take, and the things we are to do. There is nothing too small or too large in our lives that ought not to be taken to the Lord in prayer.
2. Worship and service begin when we give the Lord His correct place in our hearts and lives. Let us meditate upon our smallness and the Lord's greatness far more than we do. Let us begin worship in silent contemplation of the majesty and glory of the Lord our God. Meditating upon the holy character of God is the starting point of all worship.
3. We are the people of God by His sovereign and grace choice. We have been chosen, called, empowered, delivered and provided with all we need to serve the Lord. We are to focus upon only two things; the worship of the holy God, and our service to Him in the place He has called us to stand and serve. There is nothing else of value upon this earth.

REFLECTIONS UPON OUR PILGRIM LIFE

1. A pilgrim is a sojourner in a strange place; a stranger in a foreign country.
2. The believer is a pilgrim in this world as our real home country is a heavenly one (John 15:19 Ephesians 2:19; 1 Peter 2:11).
3. This is illustrated in the lives of the patriarchs (Genesis 47:9; Exodus 6:4; Hebrews 11:8-10; 13-16).
4. When the people of Israel were living in the promised land they were, from a spiritual point of view, still pilgrims (Psalm 39:12; 119:54).
5. So too are Christians, even when living in peace and prosperity under a Christian government (Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 12:34).
6. The life of a Christian is a pilgrimage. This theme is worked out in great detail in John Bunyan's well-known allegory, "The Pilgrim's Progress".

7. Our heavenly home will not come gradually. The existing system will be destroyed and replaced by God Himself (2 Peter 3:12-13; Revelation 3:12; 21:2,10).

Notes

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

The parallel passage to this one is 1 Chronicles 18. Both passages read as if the victories won were easy ones, but pause and read Psalm 60 at this point and see that the battles were hard and at times they were touch and go.

David had to bow before the Lord and recognize that the set backs he had and the near disasters that some battles became were simply tests of faith. He was to strengthen himself in the Lord and advance to victory through struggle. There are few guerrilla warriors who are used to small scale battles who can graduate to large scale operations and be successful. David was a military genius and he had Joab, who although ruthless was also an intelligent commander for both siege warfare and open battles, even against the feared chariot forces.

Psalms 60:11-12. "11. Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.
12. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies."

When the great Prime Minister of Great Britain was asked to speak at his old school after World War Two he wondered what he might say to the boys to encourage them. Nearly an hour was spent just introducing Churchill and he arose to his feet, and looked at the sea of faces of these young boys and he put aside his speech. He said simply these words, "Never, Never, Never give up!" He then sat down. It was his greatest speech, and the most important for those boys, for that is the heart of victory against great odds. By adopting this "never give up" mental attitude David defeated all the traditional enemies of Israel and ensured that the land had peace and prosperity for all his reign and into the reign of Solomon.

2 SAMUEL 8:1-18

8:1 And after this it came to pass that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines. **2** And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts. **3** David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates. **4** And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots. **5** And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. **6** Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. **7** And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. **8** And from Bethah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass. **9** When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, **10** Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass: **11** Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued; **12** Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah. **13** And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men. **14** And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. **15** And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people. **16** And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; **17** And Zadok the son of

Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests; and Seraiah was the scribe; 18 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. David's campaigns in the early years involved dealing with the Philistines firstly, as they were the greatest risk to the safety of the kingdom. He would build up two Philistine guards for his own palace; the Cherithites (this may have been made of Philistines, or may have been made up of men from Crete or Mycenaean Greece), and the Pelethites, (named for what the Egyptians called the "plst" tribe that established the Philistines). The word "methegammah" means "bridle of the mother", and refers to the formal rulership of the Philistines over Israel in times past, and the seizing of sovereignty back from them, and making them subject to him.

The first two battles against them just after he took Jerusalem were just the start. The words here indicate he besieged their cities and forced them to make a peace with him and recognize him as their lord. The key town was apparently Gath by this time, 1 Chronicles 18:1. David had previously been in a vassal relationship with Achish, king of Gath, and so this is seriously over-turned by the events described in these verses. The city of Gath, and all the towns of the Philistines submit now to David as their sovereign lord.

Moab was the home of his ancestors through Ruth and the place he sought refuge when Saul chased after him. Ruth 1:2ff, 4:13-22, 1 Samuel 22:3-5. Moab must have fought against him, for I cannot see David attacking the place where he had taken refuge without any just cause. The strange words used in verse 2 indicate that there were two factions in the ruling group of Moab; one that submitted to him and wanted him to rule, and one that resisted his rulership. He fought against them, captured the lot, and then literally laid them all out on the ground and divided them into the two groups. He killed all who had opposed him and established those who supported him.

Some commentators have argued that his killing these men was arbitrary and that simply two thirds were killed, but I cannot see David doing that and still being honoured by the Lord. Those who die are men who fought against him and resisted his rulership and the God of Israel. Given that he had settled his family amongst them when they were threatened by Saul, I suspect some great evil had been done against his family, or their supporters, and those personally responsible for that evil paid with their lives.

The next king he deals with is the king of the kingdom of Zobah, and then those that come to their assistance, the Syrians based out of Damascus. The likely location of this kingdom is to the north of Israel. Their king tries to re-establish his rulership over all the land to the north, right up to the Euphrates River. No other detail is given us, but the battles here are clearly difficult due to the superior equipment and power of these northern kingdoms. It is likely that Psalm 60 reflects an early defeat of David and the need to really apply themselves to prayer to gain the victory.

This victory gave David a "security zone" right through to the Euphrates River and made his kingdom a significant one, incorporating modern Jordan and some of Syria into the land area of Israel. This meant he had control of the trade routes through to Egypt from Mesopotamia, and that meant significant passive income flowed into David's kingdom. It would all be lost because of Solomon's pagan and sexual foolishness and his resultantly stupid son. 1 Kings 11:1-15. David is clear thinking, and faces opportunities as "God given" when they truly are, and seizes what is useful to his people and his kingdom's security.

Verses 4 – 8. David had to fight a significant battle against the Aramaeans. The number thousand is the Hebrew word "eleph", and may mean groups of any size, so we don't need to speculate upon how 1000 chariots could be used in one battle. There were significant numbers of chariots and cavalry and the foot soldiers of Israel defeated them. This was a significant victory over vastly superior forces and is tribute to David and Joab's generalship, but even more to the Lord's over ruling power and grace.

The horses captured are rendered partially lame so as to stop them ever being used to pull chariots again, but to be of use on a farm or for food only. David keeps 100 horses for cavalry guard duties, and in this he begins to compromise with the rules Moses had recorded from the Lord. Deuteronomy 17:16. It was only a small compromise by David, but his temptation here leads to Solomon's total compromise and abandonment of the Mosaic Law. 1 Kings 10:26-29.

David seizes vast quantities of gold and other precious metals and brings them back to Jerusalem and start to stockpile these things for the building of the temple. While Solomon will actually build the Temple, it is David who gathers all the things needed for it, and develops the plan for it from what the Lord reveals to him. 1 Chronicles 28:1-19. David is focused upon the Lord, and he seeks to honour the Lord in all he does, and all he does is to bring glory to God. He does not seek anything for himself. All he seizes is put aside for the kingdom's expenses or for the Temple; he does not consume wealth to fulfil his own lusts. This is a mark/fruit of greatness in true biblical leadership, just as self centred consumption of wealth is the fruit of Old Sin Nature control, and is always the path to further and finally fatal evil.

He has allowed Hiram to build him a house, and it is done quickly, is appropriate for his needs, and he settles into it. 2 Samuel 5:11-12. Solomon however will take thirteen years to build a vast palace for himself and his many wives and concubines. 1 Kings 7:1-12. Solomon seeks wealth for the sheer joy of it, and he spends much upon himself, and his families, and his heart steadily moves away from God over time, whereas David held his focus upon the Lord for most of his life. The great and terrible exception to this is coming in the next chapters.

Verses 9 – 11. The surrounding kings start to realise that David is more than just a tribal Israelite king like Saul before him, and when the two main Aramaean kingdoms fall, their enemies make a treaty with David and recognize him as their protector and lord. King Toi of the kingdom of Hamath sends his own son Joram to David with expensive presents to win his favour and cement a treaty to submit to his authority. David accepts the presents (read “tribute”) and dedicates it all to the Lord and brings it back to Jerusalem to dedicate to the “building fund” of the new temple.

David is a “God captured” man and so all he has is seen by him as the Lord’s to be used for the Lord’s glory. This is the attitude of a great believer. Small minded men hold onto their goods as if they own them! We are all here by the grace of the Lord and in truth we own nothing upon this earth. Luke 12:16-26, 16:19-31, 18:18-27.

Verses 12 – 18. The final battle against the Syrian forces was in the valley of the Dead Sea. It looks as if these forces had circled around Edom and Moab and had decided to attack from the south and surprise David, but Joab meets them in the Dead Sea area and he defeats them and eighteen thousand are slain. Once again remember the numbers here may be anywhere from 1800 to 18,000.

David’s reputation was supreme in the whole area. He placed garrisons in Syria, Moab, and Edom, to keep the peace there and collect tribute. The Edomites are heavily garrisoned and submit to his rulership reluctantly, and they will be a thorn in the side of Israel for the next 900 years. David has many great men in his team of rulers and generals and we have some of their names here, and more in 1 Chronicles 11:10-47.

Like all great leaders David ruled by means of good men to whom he could delegate power and responsibility. Unlike satanic and all weak leaders, David was not threatened by competence, but sought it out and promoted all who excelled into further opportunities for renown and service. Godly leaders rejoice in the achievements of their subordinates and give them glory. Weak and evil managers (Satanic leaders) always feel other’s renown threatens their celebrity status, and so they eliminate their best people over time.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. David confronts the challenges to his rulership and mobilizes all his armed resources to deal with them. He prays and fights, and has a mental attitude that means he will not give up until the enemy are defeated. This “never give up” mental attitude is the one to which we are called. God seeks mental and physical toughness from His servants, and we ought to work at this daily so we are not flabby of mind or body.
2. David was solely focused upon blessing the name of the Lord. He saw all his resources of wealth as God’s to use, and his to use when required for the Lord’s glory. David did not get tempted by wealth and power, but lived humbly as kings live. He sought the glory of the Lord at all times, and this is our example to follow. Let us focus upon the use of all we have for the glory of the Lord, that we might serve Him with all our substance. Luke 8:3.
3. The “fruit” of godly leadership is able and celebrated members of the management team being lifted up for praise and promoted whenever they can be. The fruit of the Old Sin Nature of a manager/leader is always jealousy and envy towards genuine leaders beneath them, and their elimination of them over time. Look at the team of a manager/pastor/leader/officer and by the excellence of the team you will discover the excellence of the leader. If all you find is incompetence, and “yes” men, then the leader above them is a narcissist who is threatened by competence. If you are able always fire such a person, for their impact will be evil, and they often are themselves.

Notes

CHAPTER 9**INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important fruits of the Holy Spirit is kindness, and David shows this towards the descendants of his friend Jonathan. This kindness will later be insulted during the rebellion of Absalom, but it will never stop. 2 Samuel 16, 19:17, 24-30. David loved Jonathan and he sought out a descendent to bless in Jonathan's place. Remember, in the ancient world, the new king would normally kill all potential rivals from the old royal house. David's behaviour here is most unusual and would have testified to all who saw it that this man was motivated by a power far different to the gods of the surrounding pagans.

David led many of the Philistines to the Lord by his life example and this is to be remembered when we examine his failures and failings, as these can dominate discussion of David instead of his greatness and his Spirit led work for the Lord. This was a man who kept producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and when he fell always rose again and served the Lord in humility and with a pure heart. This man mentors recovery from sinfulness, and as a leader he did not pretend he was perfect, but repentant and so he was forgiven. Psalm 103:10-18.

2 SAMUEL 9:1-13

9:1 And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? **2** And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. **3** And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet. **4** And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar. **5** Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar. **6** Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant! **7** And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. **8** And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am? **9** Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house. **10** Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. **11** Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons. **12** And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth. **13** So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 6. David has a thought one day about his friend Jonathan, possibly thinking of how much easier it would be to rule with that older and much loved man at his side. He calls his servants and asks if there are any descendants of Jonathan still alive so that he can show kindness to them. Notice it is the "kindness of God" that is to be shown. It is a fruit of the love of God in David's heart that is to rule over him. This is the pattern for us also.

The men of David discover a servant of the house of Saul by the name of Ziba who is still alive and well known in the tribe of Benjamin. This man must have been a courtier in the palace of Saul at Gibeah and who has kept his position in society even though Saul's palace may have fallen into disrepair and the administration is no more. It was a clever wheeler-dealer who was able to survive such upheavals.

This is a clever and still very wealthy man, and he will remain so through David's life. He must be a man in his fifties at this point and he will be a cunning player in the court politics of the day until near the end of David's reign. The writer of Samuel does not tell us who is the liar in the end; whether Mephibosheth or Ziba are the liars. David does not even attempt to find out in the end, for he seeks to bless both, even if they are crooks, for he blesses them for Jonathan's sake, not their own. We must remember that we are blessed for "Jesus' sake", in grace, not because we deserve the blessing necessarily at the time. God operates under grace, and David shows the fruit of the Holy Spirit by graciousness.

Ziba has kept informed of the where-about of all the house of Saul. He knows where they are and who they are staying with. He is of the tribe of Benjamin and within this tribe all was an "open secret". They had tried to keep the survivors of the house of Saul safe, and many may have sought to get them back on the throne one day. They did not accept that their day was over, and they plotted against David, and did not see that the "Lord was with David". It was a fatal error for many of Saul's household.

There was amongst some a hope to raise Benjamin high again, and during the rebellion of Absalom some amongst them would try, and they would use the sons of Rizpeh and Merab, who apparently were active co-conspirators. They

supported yet undermined Absalom and apparently tried to unseat him in the end, but God's hand was with David, and the Lord acted to eliminate the last of this part of the house of Saul as a result. 2 Samuel 21:1-9.

When Mephibosheth is brought before David he is quick to fall on his face and do homage before the king, for he fears for his life. His response to the calling of his name is a deliberate recognition of David's lordship, and his place as David's servant. Later events may indicate that he was seeking the opportunity to rebel, but I cannot be sure of that from the context of 2 Samuel Chapter 19, and from David's response to Mephibosheth, in verses 24-30. I suspect that David didn't know the truth either, but the real suspicion falls upon Ziba as far as I am concerned. We will examine this closer when we get to that chapter.

Mephibosheth is not the man his father was, and Ziba is not a man who can be trusted at all. David will do what he can for Jonathan's family, but he will discover over time that neither of these men are men he can have the sort of deep fellowship with that he may have sought. The saddest thing about the children of some friends is that they do not resemble the friend we loved, but resemble their own bad choices in life.

Verses 7 - 8. David sets his mind at rest regarding his fear of death. David tells this man that he will be the recipient of God's grace from him. There are two blessings given. The royal lands of Saul are returned to him. These will be lands far more extensive than the lands that his grand-father Kish controlled. Kish was wealthy but not as wealthy as Saul became by being king. What is restored here is all of Saul's lands that he enjoyed as king.

Who controlled the land and was using it at this point? I suspect that it was Ziba, although at this point we do not have full and final evidence of this. In addition to land, which will give him cash flow, and an inheritance to pass on to any children he has, he has the right to sit at David's table continually and eat from the king's table. This was an uncommon blessing given to men who were once kings, who acknowledged the new ruler, and were blessed by the Lord. 2 Kings 25:27-30.

Verses 9 – 10. It may be here that we have the first glimpse of what Ziba has been up to since the fall of Saul and the chaos that descended upon the tribal area of Benjamin after the defeat at Mt Gilboa. Abner had been required to leave the area of Benjamin to establish his kingdom over the Jordan, as he couldn't hold the old tribal lands. The courtiers appear to have had a scramble for the land of Saul their previous master, and the number of servants Ziba maintained, and the size of his family, indicates to me a man with multiple wives and possibly the one who had seized most of the land for himself. This is a narcissistic and opportunistic man – a true satanic and devious power player.

David was able to order him to farm the land without ordering him to dispossess those already there. One explanation for this is that Ziba was already there and pocketing the produce and its resultant wealth. We cannot argue from silence in the text, but the suspicion is clearly made by what the writer does not say here about this man. This will also explain why he supports David as he flees Absalom so as to keep his options open to receive all the land for himself and his sons when Mephibosheth is dismissed. We will see this later in chapters 17-19.

Verses 11 – 13. Ziba is formally obedient to the orders of David. He speaks like the courtier he has been for years, and is obedient, and also will continue to make a tidy fortune still from the land. Mephibosheth is not a paraplegic with spinal injuries, but his feet are damaged in some way that he is unable to walk unassisted, but he has been able to father a son and his name is given to us here, Micha. In 1 Chronicles 8:34ff we have the sons and descendents of Micha, who are numerous.

Mephibosheth dwells from this point onwards in Jerusalem with David, and the produce of the lands around Gibeah that were his fathers flows into the coffers of Ziba who is responsible for the entire upkeep of the land on Mephibosheth's behalf. Ziba will also dwell close to Jerusalem, possibly in the old palace at Gibeah, which is under 10 kilometres from Jerusalem. He will keep a close eye on the politics of Jerusalem and be ready to move when Absalom moves to seize the throne. The writer repeats that Mephibosheth is lame on both feet, indicating again that he is dependent upon the servants of Ziba to carry him to the table of David and report all things to him. This dependency may be the root cause of the misunderstanding that develops at the Great Rebellion of Absalom later.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. David shows kindness, from a desire to bless those who are related to the man he loved above all others in his life. It is a sign of David's character that he sought to bless the family of Saul rather than exterminate it, that was the norm for kings in his day. Let us challenge ourselves in this matter. Do we seek opportunities to show kindness to others, or do we operate with elements of self centeredness directing our path? A spirit of kindness is an indicator of the working of the Holy Spirit within us. If we do not seek to be kind, there is something missing at the centre of our soul.

2. By their fruit men are known, and the words of Jesus are clearly seen in the behaviour of Ziba and those around him. The son of Jonathan is not a patch upon his father, but he is loved by David for his father's sake. David's character is easy to abuse because of what is to happen next with Bathsheba, but his base character is good through the work of the Holy Spirit within him, and we see it here. David is a warning to us all, to keep on walking in the filling of the Holy Spirit. He errs in his attention to the things of God, and he relaxes in prosperity, and it undoes him.

GRACE

1. Grace is all that God is free to do for man on the basis of the cross. Therefore Grace is unmerited favour from God.
2. Grace depends on the character of God therefore Grace depends on who and what God is. Grace is what God can do for man and still be true to his own character.
3. The believer must recognise the difference between legalism and grace. Legalism is man's work intruding upon the plan of God.
4. The greatest thing God can do for the saved person is to make him exactly like His Son Jesus Christ. This is accomplished in three stages of sanctification.
5. Positional Sanctification: At Salvation every believer enters into union with Christ. (Hebrews 1:2) Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father and is therefore superior to all angels in his humanity. At the point of salvation we are entered into union with Christ thus we are positionally higher than angels. We are positionally seated with Christ at God's right hand.
6. Experiential Sanctification: During the Christian's life on the earth the time spent under the power of the Holy Spirit. During this time we produce the character of God in our lives - gold, silver, precious stones. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)
7. Ultimate Sanctification: When the believer receives a resurrection body he loses the sin nature and all human good. At this point the believer is physically superior to all angels. He remains in this perfect state eternally.
8. All believers have tasted of Grace at least once (1 Peter 2:3). This refers to the point of Salvation at which the believer receives at least 34 things which he did not earn or deserve. (Ephesians 2:8, 9) Disorientation to grace is the believer's greatest occupational hazard in his Christian life. (Galatians 5:4, Hebrews 12:15)
9. The divine attitude to grace is expressed in (Isaiah 30:18, 19) God is constantly waiting to pour out his blessing on all believers in the Christian life.
10. Grace in salvation is expressed in many ways. It is always the same - believing in Jesus Christ (Psalm 103:8-12, Romans 3:23-4, Romans 4:4, 5:20, Ephesians 2:8, 9)
11. There are many ways in which the Christian life expresses GRACE:
 - a) Prayer (Hebrews 4:16)
 - b) Suffering (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10)
 - c) Growth (2 Peter 3:18)
 - d) Stability (1 Peter 5:12)
 - e) Lifestyle (Hebrews 12:28, 2 Corinthians 1:12)
 - f) Production of Divine Good (1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 6:1)
12. Grace is the correct attitude in relation to giving. (2 Corinthians 8 & 9)
13. Grace is the only means of coping with suffering in the Christian life. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) Through Grace God is able to bless the believer in the midst of the pressures and adversities of life. (1 Peter 1:6,7)
14. Implications of grace:
 - a) God is perfect, his plan is perfect.
 - b) A perfect plan can only originate from a perfect God.
 - c) If man could do anything in the plan of God the plan would no longer be perfect.
 - d) A plan is no stronger than its weakest link. Grace therefore excludes all human merit, all human ability.
 - e) Legalism, human works is the enemy of Grace.
 - f) The works of human righteousness have therefore no place in the plan of God. (Isaiah 64:6)

CHAPTER 10**INTRODUCTION**

When men are ready for judgment they behave like fools; they fail to act decisively upon the truth, and they listen to foolishness. Wise and godly men think carefully about their actions and behave decently towards all men until the facts are all in, fools react quickly to half truths or are deceived easily by lies. The intelligent king only acts to declare war when they have thought through the issues and seen the truth clearly. Proverbs 8:12-21, 16:12-15, 18:12-13, 25:2, Luke 14:31-32.

The new king of the Ammonites is not like his father, and will listen to false advice and be destroyed, but David himself is starting to unhinge around this time also, and the consequences of his polygamy start to work out in his palace. His family becomes as dysfunctional as Jacob's was. A slow, secret, but terrible decline has begun, and it will culminate in the adultery of David and Bathsheba, the murder of Uriah, and the consequential rebellion of Absalom. This chapter marks the watershed in David's rule, and it is just before the start of the slide that will cause great pain to David, but the initial campaign brings the greatest glory to him of all his victories to date.

2 SAMUEL 10:1-19

10:1 And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. **2** Then said David, I will shew kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father shewed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon. **3** And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it? **4** Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away. **5** When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return. **6** And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Bethrehob and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ishtob twelve thousand men. **7** And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men. **8** And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ishtob, and Maacah, were by themselves in the field. **9** When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians. **10** And the rest of the people he delivered into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put them in array against the children of Ammon. **11** And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee. **12** Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good. **13** And Joab drew nigh, and the people that were with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him. **14** And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city. So Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem. **15** And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together. **16** And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that were beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer went before them. **17** And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him. **18** And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there. **19** And when all the kings that were servants to Hadarezer saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 5. Now king Nahash of the Ammonites was no friend to Israel. Read 1 Samuel 11 and reflect upon the character of this man and his attack upon Jabesh Gilead. He was cruel and heartless and he was defeated by Saul. Over forty years have passed since those days. What does David mean by Nahash showing kindness to him? We do not know the incident, as the writer has omitted any reference to it in his record, but it may have been at the time of his flight from Saul. Whatever the reasons David felt some kindness towards the old enemy of Israel. David was forgiving of people if they assisted him, and he was ready to make peace if he could. Romans 12:18, Hebrews 12:14.

If there is the chance for peace David will take it, but if the behaviour of the people indicates they want war, then he would fight to the end against them in God's name. David's good intentions here are evil spoken of. Romans 14:16. This can happen to us all in the Lord's work and we must be ready to act decisively to stop the evil spreading.

The young king follows the evil thoughts of his councillors and does a disgraceful thing as far as the ancient world was concerned. To half shave the beard of a man was to publically humiliate him and insult his family and nation. To then cut away his clothing so that he had to walk semi naked was ultimate humiliation and was reserved only for war captives. This act was a declaration of war upon David. The men crossed back into Judah by the Jericho road and David meets

them at the ford and comforts them for the insult they have bourn on his behalf and they stay in Jericho until their beards grow again.

Verses 6 – 12. The Ammonites realise that they have seriously offended David. They also realise that their own army is not up to the task of fighting David and his seasoned troops. They should have thought of this before they took such foolish actions, but the impulsive behaviour of the king will be paid for dearly. David's Army has defeated the Philistines and so they know they are up against one of the best armies in the Middle East at the time, so they hire the best mercenary army they can get. They get 33,000 (33 "elephs" – units) of Syrian troops and must have paid the money up front for their services in the coming battle, for there is no loot to be won that would pay their wages.

Mercenary troops fight well when they are with winners, and there is loot to be gained, but poorly when they are up against serious troops and they have their backs to the city wall. Money is poor compensation for your life and when they fear they will lose that, mercenaries normally run away at that point. "Professional" soldiers need to be organized in homogenous groups, be well led, and to serve faithfully they need to have a warrior code that does not allow them to surrender, or realise they cannot surrender against the enemy they face. Unless these elements are present, such troops will run for the hills when confronted by well led and passionate soldiers who would rather die than lose the battle.

Joab crosses the Jordan and advances on the capital of the Ammonites, Rabbath-Ammon; now called Amman. David may have returned and stayed back in Jerusalem to gather the reserves and have them ready, for when they are needed David is able to move very quickly. The Ammonites put their army on array in front of their city gates, and the Syrian mercenaries take their separate position on one flank of the Ammonites. Facing Joab there are two distinct armies and he sees that this is their weakness, for there is little or no coordination between them.

Joab places himself in front of the Syrians on the flank, and Abishai in charge of the second division facing the Ammonites. The best troops are put against the Syrians, as they will break first if enough pressure is applied upon them, and then he can "turn the flank" and attack the Ammonites from their side and rear. It appears also from this account, verse nine, and the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 19, that the enemy outnumbered Joab, and had some battalions actually behind the Israelite army. Joab does not attempt to defend himself from those behind him, his plan is to attack with all his strength forwards, without reserves, and break the Syrian Army at it's centre. He moves quickly to do that before they can co-ordinate any attack upon his rear.

Abishai's role is primarily to hold the Ammonites until Joab can turn the flank and defeat the Syrians, but he is to break through if he can. The orders are that the first to break through will wheel around behind the other enemy army and attack them from the rear, and if they are under pressure on their front, the first to fall back will draw support from the other. Joab is confident that they can win if they surge forward; they cannot fight a defensive battle, for they are outnumbered.

Joab's words to Abishai and his troops are words of doctrine and truth; they are to behave in a manly manner in their attack, and remember that loss in this battle opens all the cities of the East Bank of the Jordan to attack by the Syrians and Ammonites. Joab places himself in the Lord's hands to receive whatever the Lord gives from the battle, and he expects victory. Exodus 14:15, Nehemiah 4:14.

Verses 13 – 19. The battle goes exactly as Joab had foreseen. The Syrian mercenaries break before his disciplined Israelite Veterans and the men behind him are not able to close on him and interfere with the attack. When the Syrians break, his men cut them down from behind and drive them away to the north. They then quickly wheel around behind the Ammonites who then also break ranks and surge back inside their city. Many will be killed in their uncontrolled retreat. The Ammonites are totally at David's mercy now locked up in their city. At this point Joab returns to brief David in Jerusalem.

When the Syrians realise that their mercenaries have been cut down, they feel threatened and draw on all the men they can, even from beyond the Euphrates River. They place the army they gather in the hands of their general Shobach. Their army assembles at Helam (or Helem) and trains there to form a tight unit and be able to operate together in the coming conflict with Israel. Helem is about 60 kilometres to the East of the Sea of Galilee. Rabbath-Ammon is about forty kilometres east of the Jericho ford. Their plan is then to march south and relieve the siege of Rabbath-Ammon, and David means to stop that occurring before they have had the chance to co-ordinate and manoeuvre their forces.

David himself calls up his entire army, with all reserves and personally leads them across the Jordan River and joins the other army in the field, and leaving a force to hold the Ammonites, he leads his men quickly to Helem and arrives there well before the Syrians are fully ready to advance to the south. They have mixed forces, with chariots, cavalry, and infantry, and so are harder to co-ordinate and control than David's infantry based army that is used to working together from the recent Philistine campaign.

David does not wait around, but immediately challenges the Syrians and they set their battle line in array and battle is joined. David's tough and experienced infantry get amongst the mobile troops of the Syrians and kill them in large numbers. Shobach himself is killed and his army is cut down and the remnants of them flee to the north. The power of the Syrian confederacy is broken, and all the kings of the Syrians are scared to assist the Ammonites any longer. All the surviving Syrian kings make peace with David and he has tribute flowing from them from Geshur to the Euphrates River.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. What is our response when our good is evil spoken of? Do we act in a godly fashion and deal with things for the glory of God? Let us be careful in our actions, and thoughtful in our responses, for all we do will reflect grace or disgrace upon the name and glory of the Lord God who we serve. Let us be jealous of the reputation of the Lord.
2. When action is required, we are called to advance, with prayer, fortitude and courageous energy. We are to be totally focused upon advancing in the Lord's work, and we are not to give the enemy time to regroup and overwhelm us. Are you fit, strong and ready to move forward to whatever task the Lord gives you believer? Let us train to be ready for the Lord call up into action on any front.
3. David does not give his enemy time to coordinate their actions and build their expertise. Often we are guilty of under-estimating the malice of our opponents and giving them time to build expertise and momentum. David makes no such mistake, and he launches his attacks with speed, vigour and expert leadership. The enemy is to be destroyed, never debated and compromised with. Evil simply grows stronger with time, never weaker.

CHAPTER 11**INTRODUCTION**

Having led his troops to victory at Helam David could have stayed in the field and completed the siege of Rabbath-Ammon (Rabbah) with his regular troops, and that indeed was his task and responsibility as the king. The writer tells us here that the annual season for armies to be in the field was nearly over, but even though the fighting season is apparently over soon after the battle, (and the conscript army returned to their work in the fields), David's professional army possibly stayed at Rabbath-Ammon to ensure the Ammonites were contained there, ready to be defeated totally the next year.

The writer makes sure we get the message, that while it was alright for David to return to his capital for the next pastoral sowing and harvest season and their associated religious holidays, it was correct and proper for him to lead the full army back to Rabbath-Ammon after the harvest was in. The issue here is an important one for each of us as believers, but especially for all Christian leaders. We must be careful and prayerful to be in the geographical will of the Lord for our life, as when we stray from the correct and called "path" we are to walk temptations will enter and we are not where we ought to be, and so do not have the spiritual resources that we ought to have. David faces a test here that he should not have faced – for he shouldn't have been where he was!

There was nothing to do in Jerusalem except get into trouble; his job was to be in the field and ensure the Ammonites knew he was there to punish them. He is starting to enjoy the "good life" and is forgetting his responsibility. It is always dangerous to "holiday" when the call is to work and serve elsewhere. It is not wrong to holiday, but only when called to for recharge! David is around fifty at this point. We cannot be sure of ages to the year here, but he dies around age seventy, and Solomon is around twenty at that time. He is at what we now call the "mid-life crisis" point, and he has a crisis he doesn't need to have, which sadly, is what most people have!

Notice the way the chapter ends. The writer tells us bluntly that David does not get away with his great sin here, nor does he have peace, prosperity and happiness as a result of his actions. Read the following Psalms, called the penitential Psalms, as they tell us his mental state as he faces his great sins here. No believer who gets out of fellowship through sin ever enjoys the down stream effect of that sin in their life! Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.

2 SAMUEL 11:1-27

11:1 And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem. **2** And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. **3** And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? **4** And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. **5** And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child. **6** And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David. **7** And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered. **8** And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king. **9** But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house. **10** And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go

down unto thine house? 11 And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing. 12 And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow. 13 And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house. 14 And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die. 16 And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were. 17 And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also. 18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war; 19 And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king, 20 And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? 21 Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. 22 So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for. 23 And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate. 24 And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. 25 Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him. 26 And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27 And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. The writer starts recounting this story, bluntly telling us that David, as the king, ought to be with his army. The professional army is sent out with Joab, but also “all Israel” joins them; namely the entire conscript army goes also, and they are victorious, and the Ammonite’s power is destroyed. The word “but” in verse one introduces the great temptation that David **should not be fighting** at this time! There are times when we will face and must fight temptation, but there are times and places when we have no business fighting temptations, because we ought to have been elsewhere fighting the real battles on the Lord’s called path for our life.

The order in James 4:7, to resist the devil, is a relevant one, but David should not have been in Jerusalem to fight the devil there and then! He is out of God’s place for him, and so when David saw Bathsheba naked, he was not thinking about the devil! We are to remember the tactics and strategies of the devil because he is the “Angel of Light” and deceives mankind by making evil appear to be so good. 2 Corinthians 11:14.

This woman Bathsheba is not an obviously “wicked” and evil woman, for she clearly is a great believer later, but she is probably a game player at this point, and is clearly used of the devil to lead David into great evil. He is the one judged most harshly by the Lord however, for he responds quickly to the temptation. The temptations of Satan rarely come with horns and a pitch fork; Satan is a master of packaging and marketing!

What is going on here? It is the hot time of year, winter is coming but the days now are long and hot and the weather is dry. People at this time of the year spent most of their time on the roof of their houses where it was cool in the night. Bathing was however still normally done within the house, as modesty meant that the naked body was never to be seen, except by the marriage partner. If bathing was done on the roof, it was done in a “booth”, a lattice work frame/screen of palm fronds that provided complete privacy for the bather.

When people bath/shower with all their windows open and the blinds not pulled they betray an aspect of their nature that indicates foolishness, instability, or a certain deviousness. Modesty is demanded of God’s people. We are not to be sexually careless or flirtatious. To expose yourself to another person is to play a game that believers are not to play. We are not to flirt or entice any other person into sexual thought or overt sin.

This remains the rule of the Lord, even today. Public Nakedness is a shame, and indicates that the people who display themselves are neither holy, nor intelligent. Nakedness or semi-nakedness inflames sexual passions, for it is meant to. The Lord has made us to be exciting to our marriage partners and we ought to be, but not for anyone else. Paul and Peter correct the believers who are dressing inappropriately in the church services and challenge them to dress in ways that do not distract from the Lord’s work amongst them. 1 Corinthians 11:4-15, 1 Timothy 2:9-10, 1 Peter 3:1-5.

Bathsheba is a game player at least. She is not however labelled as “evil” by the writer, nor is she spoken of as such later in the text, so we must be careful of our language regarding her. She will suffer the death of this first child born in adultery, and she will, like David deal with her sin, and become the mother of Solomon. Given that our writer may be writing in the reign of Solomon he will be careful of what he says about the King’s mother, but he does not indicate evil, just a game playing that opens the door to it. At this point she is playing for the king’s attention. There is no other reason to be bathing on her roof in full view of the palace, where she knows David will be walking. It may be that this bathing

was at the end of her period cycle, when women did a ritual bathing to prepare for sexual activity again with their husbands, and this is the clear indication of the writer in verse four. Leviticus 15. As we will see the pregnancy gives us additional information as to timing of this “affair”.

If this is the case, then her behaviour is sinful in the extreme, for her husband is away at the front, and only David, or one of his servants, is there to be tempted. She appears to be deliberately playing for his sexual attention and, when she gets it, she willingly throws herself into the sexual affair. David sees her, lusts after her, and inquires concerning her. He is judged by God remember for this, she is not except in the consequences of her actions. Her child of this adultery will die and she will not enjoy a long and loving relationship with David, as the unfolding text of Kings will illustrate.

At this point David is told that she is the wife of one of his most trusted, loyal, and most able warriors, and the daughter of another great servant in the palace. At this point he faces a test of his character; will he turn away and say, “this woman is another’s, and my loyalty to him is such that I could never defile his wife”.

The picture is even more complex that it initially appears. Bathsheba is the daughter of one army officer, and the wife of another, and she is the grand-daughter of Ahithophel, his chief advisor. It is not Ahithophel who tells David these facts, but the person who informs David of this woman’s father, and therefore grandfather, gives him enough information to know that any tampering with this woman is going to spoil relationships with the Army and the Court. Ahithophel is David’s older counsellor, and the father of Eliam, 2 Samuel 23:34-39. This foolish and evil act of David’s is going to bring thousands of men to their death in the Great Rebellion of Absalom, and Ahithophel will be a player then.

Eliam was in the army as one of the thirty senior commanders like Uriah. Bathsheba is an “Army Wife”, the daughter of one commander, Eliam, and given by him to his close friend Uriah another key commander. The subsequent actions of David may have made it impossible for him to be respected by his Israelite Army, and by his court. Ahithophel will be active in Absalom’s rebellion, and it may be that this is because of the seduction of his grand-daughter and the betrayal of his son Eliam. On David’s part it is a thoughtless act, and we can find ourselves in such places when we are away from the geographical will of the Lord for us.

Verses 4 – 5. David is out of fellowship with the Lord at this point. He is physically where he shouldn’t be, and that tells us that he is not in a spiritual state, but in a carnal one. God’s place for him was on the battlefield with his army. When you are out of the geographical will of the Lord you face things that you should never have faced. When we are walking after the Old Sin Nature, rather than under the filling of the Holy Spirit, we are in mortal danger from every temptation that the Old Sin Nature throws up. Romans 7:12-24.

David fails the testing situation and follows his Old Sin Nature rather than his moral character and the Holy Spirit. He sends for her and she willingly comes. Forget about those who say she could not have refused, for she could have politely refused on the religious grounds of an oath. Numbers 30. She was keen to come to the palace, and she knew what the invitation meant. To fall pregnant just after her period cycle ended is not possible, as the egg is released at mid-cycle, around the fourteenth day.

This means one of a number of things here. Either she delayed her bathing until the second week of the new cycle, has bathed every day, or she had bathed at the correct time, but David delayed for a couple of weeks before fully weakening and sending for her. It may also be that David kept her in the palace for multiple sexual encounters and only released her back to her own home towards the end of this period cycle. Whatever the reason for it, the pregnancy is God’s reminder to them both of the truth of Numbers 32:23. “Be sure your sin will find you out”.

Verses 6 – 10. David hatches a plan to hide the parentage of the baby to be born. He invites Uriah back to the palace and gets a personal battle report from him, and then sends him back to his house with a present of food so that he might bath and have sex with his wife, and so hide David’s sin. Uriah has however taken an oath, as was common with soldiers of the time, not to have sex until the battle was won. This was an oath that meant they were singularly focused upon the war and would not be distracted by any loving thoughts of home during the battles. Men who long for home are easily broken by the rigours of the battlefield, and men who long to be in their wife’s arms will soon be in death’s embrace. This soldier is focused and does not go down to his house and play David’s sinful game.

Verses 11 – 13. Uriah’s reasons for staying in the palace guard room are correct given the oath he has clearly taken, and David is caught out by this man’s nobility and his own sinfulness. This also tells us that the Ark is being used in the field for guidance and direction, and that David should be with the army there given the presence of the Ark under its war tent. All of the tribes are united in the field and they should have their king with them, as Saul was with his army. Saul was there in sinfulness, but he was right to be there, and David’s absence is even rebuked by the late and sinful king Saul! David has started to fall into the same arrogance as Saul, and is in the dangers he was in.

David gets Uriah very drunk, but even then he doesn’t go down to his house and see his wife. Now this man’s character is that of a noble fighter, and he is a moral and religious man, but he may not have been giving his wife much attention. Now even if this is the case, there is no reason under heaven that is legitimate to steal her away from him. Every fornicator can think of a hundred reasons why the other person is better with them than their husband or wife, but there is one reason why they should flee such temptations; it is a sinful evil they are contemplating!

Uriah is labelled a Hittite, and that may mean that he has been led to the Lord from paganism. This makes David's sin against him particularly heinous, for his good example has led this man to the Lord, but his bad example will lead to his murder. The name and reputation of the Lord is injured by the bad behaviours of his servants.

Verses 14 – 18. David's order to Joab is the order for murder, and he gets the condemned man to carry his own death warrant. It is cruel and callous, and sadly the expected result from any person who has left the truth and followed after error. Uriah is to be left isolated in an attack that is launched exactly for this purpose, and left to die in battle. Joab is as callous as David, and he sets up a suicide mission under the wall where the royal guard of the Ammonites are defending a strong point. It is nearby what was called a "sally point", from where the besieged forces would sally out and fight and then withdraw back behind the wall under the cover of extensive arrow fire from the strong point or tower above them.

Uriah launches a fruitless attack at that point with Uriah at the lead. He attacks and his men at the signal fall back and he is killed, with many others. David is guilty of the deaths of a number of good "servants of David" that day. It is this human sacrifice that God holds him responsible for, as the Lord does to every malicious, careless, or stupid military commander. We are held responsible for the unnecessary deaths of others, whatever the international courts of justice ruling may be.

Verses 19 – 21. Joab then sends a report on the progress of the war back to David. The messenger is briefed so that he can handle the king's anger if Joab is abused for attacking the city to the place where the arrows could find their mark every time. Joab knows that David has studied the wars of the Lord and read all the books that recorded the best strategic advice. Judges 9:50-57. Now this is a good story for Joab to raise, for the reason Abimelech died is because of his "wickedness".

David needs to stand in holy fear of the Lord's judgment himself over this order he has given. Isaiah 14:5-11, Ezekiel 16:50-52. It is a further piece of evidence that the accounts of the history of early Israel that we have before us in the earlier Bible books (Joshua and Judges) were known by these men and studied to teach them useful things.

Verses 22 – 27. The messenger doesn't wait for David to get angry, but immediately tells the full account of the sally and the losses experienced by the army under the murderous arrow fire from the walls. David isn't angry at all, for in truth he is relieved, thinking he has got away with his evil. David's answer to Joab is the height of pious and callous hypocrisy. Good men who trusted him are dead in the field. He has lost men who would have given their lives for him in a worthy cause, but he has squandered their lives to cover his adultery. This is an evil, a great evil.

His cold hearted callousness is further shown when he takes Bathsheba into his palace as soon as her days of mourning for her husband are over. This may be as short as a seven day period. Genesis 1:10, 1 Samuel 31:13. Adultery always has arrogance at its core, and those who think God does not see are deluded and awaiting destruction for their evil. God has however seen the whole evil and sinful thing and he hates what David has done. God hates sin, and every believer needs to remember that.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. A so called "Mid-Life Crisis" can occur to anyone, but the way it is handled will be determined by where that person is positionally in their fellowship with the Lord and geographically in the Lord's will. If we meet a time of crisis in the right spiritual state, and the right physical place, then we are able to work through the issues and have a godly outcome. If we are not where we should be, and we are not doing what we ought to be doing, then the outcome can be as disastrous for us as it was for David. His life was never the same and he faced great carnage for the rest of his life as a direct flow on effect from this great series of evil acts. Let us walk in the Spirit and deal with sins quickly lest we be found in a crisis that we are not spiritually equipped to handle!

2. Adultery is a violation of trust at all levels. It is a violation of trust between the people and between the believer and the Lord. It is both sin and evil, for it not only violates the moral code, it violates the divine institution of marriage. It brings severe discipline and disaster in its train, never blessing. Had David wanted sexual and family blessing with Bathsheba, then he needed to pray about her and wait for the Lord's provision of her without any sin on his behalf, or upon hers.

Let us resist temptations to any sexual sins, for these are still the main destroyer of ministries in today's world. We resist powerful sexual temptations by keeping our own marriages strong and sexually robust, by walking in the Spirit, and geographical will of the Lord for us, and by having very strong protocols to keep ourselves from any known situations that might predictably lead to temptations. 1 Corinthians 7:2-5, Hebrews 12:12-15.

3. Satan loves bringing shame and disgrace upon the servants of the Lord and undermining their evangelism and witness generally. David will lose his witness for a considerable time and many who know of this will never trust him again. His sin opens up a chain of evil that will destroy his family and undermine his kingdom. His secret sin is the worst kept secret in Jerusalem and many will die as a result. There are NO SUCH THINGS as secret sins. God sees, and He hates sin, and He will discipline us unto death if we do not confront the truth and act decently.

4. God hates sin. We must identify this and hate all forms of sin also with the same mental attitude towards it that the Lord has. If we fail to hate sin we will be enticed by it and eventually fall into it. The Lord calls us to set our guard against sin and evil and resist all temptations by walking away from the path that leads to destruction. Matthew 7:13-14.

SPIRITUALITY AND CARNALITY

1. All Christians have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. When we allow Him to control our lives, we are said to be "filled with the Spirit" or "walking in the Spirit" – this is referred to as being "spiritual", rather than Old Sin Nature controlled which is referred to as being "carnal".

2. The filling of the Holy Spirit can be lost by

- a) Grieving the Spirit - by sin
- b) Quenching the Spirit - by not submitting to His leading
- c) This is called being carnal, or controlled by the flesh, the old sin nature.

3. The filling of the Holy Spirit can be regained by

- a) confessing sin (1 John 1:9)
- b) surrendering your life to God (Romans 12:1-2)
- c) This is called being spiritual, or controlled by the Holy Spirit.

4. Only the Holy Spirit in us can produce good works acceptable to God - anything in our own strength is unacceptable (Romans 8:8-9, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

5. The spiritual believer

- a) Imitates God. (Ephesians 5:1, 1 John 3:9)
- b) To glorify Christ. (John 7:39, John 16:14)
- c) Fulfills the Law. (Romans 8:2-4, Romans 13:8)

6. In the Bible the human race is divided in three Categories:-

[a] **Natural Man** - A person born physically alive, but not regenerated. He may be highly sophisticated, civilised, gentle and kind, but is completely ignorant of any spiritual phenomena. (1 Corinthians 2:14) Equivalent to the cold person in the church in Laodicea.

[b] **Carnal Man** - A person regenerated or born again but living his life under the power of his old sin nature. Prolonged activity in this area produces a Christian who is still a baby. (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Equivalent to the lukewarm person in the church of Laodicea.

[c] **Spiritual Man** - A person regenerated and living generally in the power of the Holy Spirit. He discerns the difference between the things of God and man. (1 Corinthians 2:11-13) He has fellowship with God in his daily life. (Ephesians 5:18-20) Equivalent to the hot person in the church of Laodicea.

7. Carnality

[a] The believer possesses an Old Sin Nature after salvation (1John 1:8, Romans 7:14,15).

[b]. The Old Sin Nature is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

[c]. The believer under the control of the Old Sin Nature is called carnal (1Corinthians 3:1-3, Romans 7:14).

[d]. The Old Sin Nature frustrates bona fide production in the life of the believer (Romans 7:15).

[e]. The Old Sin Nature is acquired at the point of physical birth (Psalm 51:5).

[f]. We are therefore considered spiritually dead at the point of physical birth (Romans 5:12).

[g]. The Old Sin Nature has several facets: areas of weakness produces sins, areas of strength produces human good. It has trends towards asceticism or lasciviousness. In many cases asceticism is considered to be spirituality.

[h] The Old Sin Nature is not found in the resurrection body.

Notes

CHAPTER 12**INTRODUCTION**

The great evil of adultery and murder is going to open up one of the most precious passages of scripture regarding forgiveness, and also encouragement for those who have lost children when they are still young. By way of introduction let us recall the lessons of the Mosaic Law regarding this last subject. The Lord sets the age of accountability at twenty years for the Exodus Generation; all above that age were held responsible for the sinful rejection of the Lord's words, and died under the judgment of God in the wilderness. Numbers 14:18-19, 28-29.

All children who die under this age are, from this passage before us, and others, automatically considered to be under the Lord's protection, and if they die early they enter into heaven. Matthew 18:10, 19:13-14. These words are great comfort to all who lose children at a young age. David's faith is back to strength by the point of the child's death.

Read again the penitential Psalms, 6, 32, 38, 51, 102-103, 130, 143, and remember just how much suffering David has gone through over this year of separation from fellowship with the Lord. The battle to take the capital city of the Ammonites has raged through this period and David is called to be part of the last phase with the remnant of the army.

The chapter begins with rebuke, goes through intense suffering, and ends in military triumph. You will look in the Chronicles account in vain for this sinful episode in David's life, for he is forgiven this sin, and so it does not register in the priestly account. What is forgiven is forgiven. "As far as the east is from the west, that far the Lord removes our transgressions from us", but the passage before us records that the consequences flow onwards. David is forgiven, but is under divine discipline for this evil for the rest of his life. Psalms 103:12.

This incident is a challenge to us as leaders of believers. We are tasked with teaching the grace, mercy and love of God towards the sinner, and in Psalm 103 we see it proclaimed – forgiveness is total when we bring our sins before the Lord. 1 John 1:5-10. The all too often untaught truth is the reality of the on-going consequences of the sinful choices made. David is forgiven, and does not lose eternal blessing already won, and to be won after his confession, but he has lost this evil year forever, and the consequences of it will flow forward and many will die as a result. Sin and evil is destructive, and while it will always be forgiven when confessed, it rots the soul and hurts all around us.

2 SAMUEL 12:1-31

12:1 And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. **2** The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: **3** But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. **4** And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. **5** And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: **6** And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. **7** And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; **8** And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. **9** Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. **10** Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. **11** Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. **12** For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. **13** And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. **14** Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. **15** And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. **16** David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. **17** And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. **18** And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? **19** But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. **20** Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. **21** Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. **22** And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD

will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. 24 And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him. 25 And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD. 26 And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city. 27 And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters. :28 Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name. 29 And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it. 30 And he took their king's crown from off his head, the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was set on David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance. 31 And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 6. Shortly after the adultery and murder, David is relaxing and content in his palace, and he receives a godly visitor; the prophet Nathan enters and speaks boldly to the king. He tells the king a story and engages his attention in the story, for it involves as the central characters an arrogant rich man and a poor man who loved his sheep, and had one special lamb as his pet, that he treated as we do our loved pets. This is still a common thing in the Arab world today amongst the pastoralists. In a way, both men are like David; one is who he was, and the other is who he has become in his separation from God's purpose and will. Wealth and power has temporarily rotted David's heart towards God and his fellow men. Thank God it is a temporary thing, as David will repent. Psalm 51.

The rich man in the story is arrogant and selfish, and abuses the poor man by his theft, and in his selection of a loved pet to abuse and kill to feed a passer by. It is the thoughtlessness and callousness of the action that really makes David angry, and he reacts strongly. David judges the man as a murderer, for he killed the lamb that was loved as a daughter. He demands a death penalty for the killing of the pet lamb – way beyond the Mosaic Law. He also judges this man as a thief and demands the Mosaic Law's penalty for theft upon the man's estate of a four fold restoration. Solomon will go even further upon the thief who steals as a life style choice and demand seven times restoration. Exodus 22:1, Proverbs 6:30-35.

Verses 7 – 14. Nathan looks David in the eye and tells him that he is the man who he has just condemned to death. The shock that hit David was the shock of total conviction. He is stunned and speechless, and Nathan went on and reminded him of God's great grace towards him, and underlining that his sin was an insult to the love, grace, and mercy of God Himself. God delivered all David needed and if he lacked anything he needed to address his request to the Lord, not take the evil path of lust fuelled jealousy.

David received all that Saul owned, even down to his harem. While we are told that Saul only had one wife and later one concubine, it appears that he also kept a harem, and these women were given to David, as well as the wealth of Saul's kingdom. If David had considered God had sold him short he could have asked for more and the Lord would have answered him. We are encouraged to be thankful for all we have and ask for all additional things we believe honestly we need. Matthew 6:22-24, Luke 11:9-13, John 14:13-14, 15:7-17, James 1:5-6, 1 John 3:22-24, 5:14-15.

David's sin is spelt out bluntly before him. Nathan does not mince words, any more that the Lord avoids the truth over such things either. David has committed murder and adultery and for both he will be judged. Because he chose to use the sword of Ammon to slay Uriah the sword will never depart from his kingdom, and he will see good people killed violently until the day he dies. The child born of the adultery will be the first to die, but many others will follow it because of the evil chain of events that David sets in motion. God is not unfair in this and will be selective in those who die, and none will lose the opportunity of heaven because of David's sin.

The truth about his sin, is that David despised the Lord in and through his actions. He has brought the Lord's name into disrepute by his actions and caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme the name of the Lord. Because he committed adultery with another man's wife, his own wives will be taken by a man he thought he could trust and he will commit adultery with them in public view. What David did secretly will be done openly; what he thought hidden will be publically exposed.

David will bitterly regret his lust filled actions, and guilt will wrack his bones as he reflects upon the cost of his evil. Psalms 6:6-7, 32:3-4, 38:4-8, 102:1-11, 143:4-6. As we will see below when we study the Great Rebellion, David suffers from a deep and debilitating depressive disorder for many years before the Rebellion and only emerges from it in the midst of that terrible time. David pays a terrible price for this sinful time with Bathsheba and they do not have a happy ending to their "love story", but years of depression and estrangement.

Verses 15 – 18. Nathan leaves David with the word of conviction to sit with the full consequences of his sin and so come to fullness of repentance. As Nathan has encouraged him in verse 13, he will not die as he deserves to, because his repentance is real, but he must suffer, and so realise the truth behind all the events that will unfold upon him. We are well advised to "sit with" the reality of our sins so that we understand our Old Sin Nature, the better to defeat it the next time we are tempted. Do not be too hasty to urge people to "move on" after a great sin, for they need to sit,

weep and think for some time to really learn from their stupidity so that they might not repeat it. In the old revivals in America they had what they called “sorry/weeping stools” – places where the repentant could sit and weep as they reflected fully on what their sin had cost them, their family and their community. They didn't encourage people to just rush down to the front of the church, they urged them to “sit with” the awfulness of sin before confession was made.

David knows that the child's death is a settled thing from the words of the prophet, but he still takes his prayer to the Lord, for this child will die in his place and he seeks the Lord's grace that it might yet live. He knows the will of the Lord yet he still prays and through his prayer he and we learn more about the love of the Lord and the grace of the Lord, but also of the justice of the Lord.

The child goes to be with the Lord, so it does not lose anything other than a few short years of life here upon the earth, but David needs to understand things, and the entire court needs to know that the Lord is disciplining David for his evil. The elders try to get him to eat, but he fasts and prays for days for the child, because he knows it is his sin that has caused all this evil. He fasts and prays for seven days, and the child dies on that last day. His servants are frightened to even tell him the child has died because they have seen his grief when the child was sick. They fear he will seriously unhinge when he knows the child has died.

Verses 19 – 23. David spots that there is a conference going on at the door of his rooms and he bluntly asks the servants whether the child has died. They tell him the truth, and then are surprised at his response. He rises, washes, anoints himself, changes his clothes, and then goes to the tabernacle to worship, and when he has worshipped he comes back to his own palace and drinks and eats.

His servants are baffled and ask him directly why he has done what he has done. He tells them of his assurance of the salvation of his child. He makes it clear that his prayer was selfish, that if God would grant him a favour the child would have lived, but he will one day go to be with the child, and he is comforted by that truth.

He knows that he cannot bring that child back, and so the time to weep is over. Seven days were set aside for mourning and so he has completed the mourning period while he prayed for the baby. The little baby was innocent of any sin, but the parents are guilty and the child cannot live on the earth to be on the throne as illegitimate, but it can live on in heaven and be in glory forever. The little child's gift to David is the gift of powerful prayer again, and he recovers from his long night of sin and evil through the gift of this short little life.

Verses 24 – 28. David waits for Bathsheba to recover from her own second period of mourning and then they resume their sexual relationship. This time she conceives and the son born is named Solomon (meaning Peaceable one) and he is named by Nathan, as Jedidiah (meaning Beloved of Jehovah). While all this is happening in the capital city Joab is pushing on with the war against Ammon and after a tough year the siege is nearing its conclusion, with the fortress breached and the water supply captured.

The levies of the tribes are dismissed back to their villages each sowing and harvest season, leaving only the professional army to maintain the siege. The citadel is left and that will fall when Joab is ready to launch his last attack. He calls upon David to bring up all the army for this and personally lead the final assault and so win valour for himself, so that Joab doesn't get the glory.

This commander is thoughtful and careful. He well knows fallen human nature, and he knows that having assisted someone to commit murder, they are likely to turn upon you, and Joab does not need anyone singing his praises at this point. He wants David to get all the glory he can get and be content with that. He may also have heard of the birth and death of the child. The siege has been going for two+ years now; not an unusual time frame in the ancient world.

Verses 29 – 31. David gathers all the armies of Israel now and heads for Rabbath-Ammon and he leads the final assault personally and the city falls and all the survivors are taken and put into enforced labour, as hewers of wood, workers with iron, or brick makers. Some have interpreted this as cruel torture of the survivors. David is no torturer and would not have survived the Lord's judgment had he done any such thing. God's policy on cruelty in execution is clear. Proverbs 11:17-20, Amos 2:1-4. Later these people will support David in the Great Rebellion, so his treatment of them at this point does not create hatred of him.

After just being forgiven murder, if he celebrated his victory by murdering an entire population, he would not have been praised or forgiven by the Lord! There is no biblical warrant for suggesting that David cruelly tortures the Ammonites to death. They are enslaved for a time in punishment for their great insult to him and his ambassadors. These people survive and are alternately allies and enemies of the Israelites through the subsequent centuries.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God does not ever sell us short of any thing we need. All we need is provided by the Lord in the right time, and we must ask the Lord for anything we think we need beyond what we have received. Let us seek the Lord's face if we desire anything or anyone to be a part of our life. If God's hand is in it the request will be granted, and if the Lord's will is not for that we can relax in His provision. Let us be fearful of operating outside the will of the Lord in anything.

2. Nathan has cool and calm courage, and this is what we are called to as the pastors of the Lord. He tells the king the truth whether David is ready or not to face it. This is our challenge as the servants of the Lord; to tell the truth to troubled people, and be there to assist them with their confession and restoration.

3. David's faith in the Lord returns and he steps back up to the role he has been called to. David is not laid aside for any longer than his confession takes. He must sit with his sin for enough days for it to fully sink in and for thorough confession to be made, but then he returns to the kingship and leads his army to victory. When people are restored by the Lord we must welcome them back into our fellowship, lest the Lord punish us as He has them. 1 Corinthians 5:1-18, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.

4. The death of children is the toughest thing any servant of the Lord ever faces. It is an unnatural thing that is felt when parents bury their children and it tests the faith of all who do it. My own parents buried my eleven year old sister after a drowning accident at school. The impact on them was devastating, and they aged twenty years over the following two years. David's words in verse twenty three are the only words in ancient literature that give the hope of eternal life so clearly. The Lord adds to them. Each little child who dies under the age of accountability goes directly to be with the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. In their death they will give a "gift" of understanding to their godly parents that will transform the rest of their lives.

Matthew 18:10. *"10. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."*

REFLECTION UPON THE BELIEVER'S CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

1. Forgiveness is by the death of Christ (Matthew 26:28, Revelation 1:5)
2. Divine forgiveness is to all who believe in Christ (Acts 10:43, Acts 16:31)
3. The penalty of sin was paid by Christ on the cross. (Hebrews 9:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
4. When a believer sins his fellowship with God is disrupted. God forgives these sins upon confession and cleanses from the unknown sins in the believer's life as well as known sins. (1 John 1:9).
5. Jesus Christ is our propitiation. (1 John 2:1,2)
6. In human forgiveness we are told to forgive others even as God has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). This can only be accomplished by the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23)
7. Steps towards restoration of fellowship
 - [a] Examine yourself for genuineness of motivation. (2 Corinthians 14:5)
 - [b] Act on what you see (Romans 4:7-8)
 - [c] Deal with any sin by confession. (1 John 1:9, Psalm 66:18)
 - [d] Forget the sin you have confessed. Do not proceed into a pattern of guilt. (Philippians 3:13-14, Psalm 103:10-12)
 - [e] Resume your active spiritual walk. Avoid areas where you might be tempted by the sin which so easily besets us. (Hebrews 12:12-13)
 - [f] Be reconciled to others once you have been reconciled to God. (James 5:16)
 - [g] Get moving and grow up. (2 Peter 2:17-18)

Notes

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

The time frame here in relation to the previous chapter is uncertain. It may be that only months have passed, or that several years pass before the rape of Tamar. The events leading to the rebellion of Absalom take up at least a five to ten year period. David may be as old as sixty when the rebellion is launched. The writer isn't worried about exact dates here but exact actions. He wants us to see that the consequences of David's great sin with Bathsheba and Uriah flow on through the years. Evil once let loose keeps working out in willing hands. Once the leaven of evil is in the dough it keeps working. Luke 12:1-5, 1 Corinthians 5:6-13.

The two young princes who will die, will die of the same uncontrolled lust that brought their father to his knees. They will die because they do not deal with their sin before the Lord and so they let it keep growing to their own destruction. Matthew 7:13, Romans 3:16, Philippians 3:19, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5. Amnon, David's oldest son and heir, has sexual lust, and Absalom has a mixture of sexual and power lust. David's confession saves him, but not those who do not face honestly the same sins in their own lives.

Both these young princes sadly die in their own sins, and will face eternal judgment. Leviticus 20:9-13. David will see several of his children die, and the contrast between the last chapter and this one is total. In the last chapter David repented, but his sons do not. In the last chapter the baby's death, though sad was not final, for David had the assurance of meeting that child in heaven. 1 Thessalonians 5:13-18.

He has no such assurance in the case of these two young men for both are well over twenty when they commit their heinous crimes. Numbers 14:26-31 appears to set the age of accountability at twenty for the Exodus Generation.

David's despair in his grief is all the more heightened for he knows he will never see these young men again. He grieves for these boys because they have gone the way of paganism that his evil behaviours had mentored to them. For them there is "no hope".

This chapter reveals a major weakness that polygamy opens up for David. He holds back from direct discipline of his older children when they err after evil or sin directly. He does not correct and teach them as he should, nor act to eliminate those who work evil as adults. He may have been a doting father when they were young; we simply do not have this information, but he does not act decisively to protect Tamar's honour, nor judge Amnon as he should in accordance with the Mosaic Law.

He is caught in this of course. He cannot discipline them with death without condemning himself, for his sins are equal to theirs, but he does not deal with them to bring about godly repentance, and so in both the legal and spiritual realms he lets his sons down. He opens the door to disaster with Absalom and the entire nation because of this. He also fails later to completely forgive Absalom, and he does not have the talk with him to "clear the air" between them.

His "half forgiveness" of his son is unlike the Lord's total forgiveness of him. It is very human and understandable, for he cannot find the words to say to his son, but it is fatal for the kingdom. He does not deal with his son as God has dealt with him, and that is our call from the Lord.

Is a man like David unfit to rule under the principles of qualification for pastors? 1 Timothy 3:2-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4. He certainly is, and it is only the grace of God that lets him live and serve further until Solomon can take over. David, at this point, certainly illustrates what happens when a man is a ruler and his personal life has fallen apart in gross sin and immorality. He shows what happens when the ruler sets a bad example, and he illustrates why the Lord lays down higher standards for the pastor-teacher of the local church than he did for the king of Israel.

David is flawed but he is forgiven, however a man doing what he did IS AND ALWAYS WILL BE disqualified from pastoral leadership in the Church, because God wants us to avoid the church splits and disasters that flow from a life that has been so disordered at the crucial time of the latter days. We operate in the Church Age under a higher standard than the saints of Old Testament times, and we have the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit to assist us. While all can be forgiven, if confessed, these acts of sin and evil while acting as a leader, disqualify any person from leadership.

As we see his life unfold we see what a sinful pastor will create in any church – he will become Satan's best worker and destroy the lives of many! In the church such people are to be removed from their position and not restored to it again. In our stage of the Angelic Conflict it is just too dangerous to leave any pastor in his role if he sins in this manner and Paul and Peter make that very clear. The standards we operate under are far higher than in the days of David.

2 SAMUEL 13:1-39

13:1 And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her, **2** And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do anything to her. **3** But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man. **4** And he said unto him,

Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day? wilt thou not tell me? And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister. 5 And Jonadab said unto him, Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him, I pray thee, let my sister Tamar come, and give me meat, and dress the meat in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it at her hand. 6 So Amnon lay down, and made himself sick: and when the king was come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand. 7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, Go now to thy brother Amnon's house, and dress him meat. 8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was laid down. And she took flour, and kneaded it, and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes. 9 And she took a pan, and poured them out before him; but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, Have out all men from me. And they went out every man from him. 10 And Amnon said unto Tamar, Bring the meat into the chamber, that I may eat of thine hand. And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. 11 And when she had brought them unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister. 12 And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly. 13 And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee. 14 Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her. 15 Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone. 16 And she said unto him, There is no cause: this evil in sending me away is greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But he would not hearken unto her. 17 Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her. 18 And she had a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her. 19 And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that was on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying. 20 And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister: he is thy brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house. 21 But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth. 22 And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar. 23 And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baalhazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons. 24 And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now, thy servant hath sheepshearers; let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants go with thy servant. 25 And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he would not go, but blessed him. 26 Then said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee? 27 But Absalom pressed him, that he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. 28 Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant. 29 And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule, and fled. 30 And it came to pass, while they were in the way, that tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left. 31 Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent. 32 And Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother, answered and said, Let not my lord suppose that they have slain all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of Absalom this hath been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. 33 Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead. 34 But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept the watch lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came much people by the way of the hill side behind him. 35 And Jonadab said unto the king, Behold, the king's sons come: as thy servant said, so it is. 36 And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of speaking, that, behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice and wept: and the king also and all his servants wept very sore. 37 But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day. 38 So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years. 39 And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. For every wrongful desire there will be a satanic counsellor to aid the foolish believer along the path of evil. Every polygamous situation has half and step siblings around to create sexual mine-fields. Without good oversight such situations can easily spin out of control. Large numbers of young men and women together in close quarters will tend to produce sexual tensions and if uncontrolled by wise and sensitive older people sexual sins will abound. The studies within the early Kibbutzim in Israel illustrate this fully, with the young people's mixed dormitories being places for open sexual experimentation. This was predictable and understandable, but rarely led to rape and murder as the situation in David's harem does.

David's acceptance of the common practise of his day rather than holding to God's clearly different standards has opened the door to greater and greater evils. God's warnings through Moses about these things were very clear. Deuteronomy 17:14-20. The Devil is always ready to enter through any door we leave open. We are to be different to the world, and any time we start to follow the world's example, we will find evil grows silently, subtly, and destructively.

These verses remind us that strong emotions are not a guide to their correctness; they are just strong Old Sin Nature emotional patterns. Emotions, especially strong ones are to be challenged, especially where they involve sexual pleasures. What feels good is not necessarily either good or godly. Leviticus 18, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 18, 1 Timothy 6:3-12, 2 Timothy 2:21-22. Amnon does not speak with his father about this and so be guided, and he is not corrected by any godly person in the vicinity, so the devil sends his man in. The writer is careful to describe Jonadab, Amnon's cousin, as Moses described Satan himself. Genesis 3:1.

Verses 4 – 7. David should have noticed that his son was pining away for love, but David is not having regular fellowship with his sons and so is not aware of what is going on. Even at a regular weekly meal he could have fellowshiped with his sons and kept an eye on things. He is what we call an emotionally "absent father", too distracted by affairs of state, and his own sexual activity, to follow up on the result of that activity. Once we have children we have a responsibility before God to care for and pay attention to those children.

Jonadab's plan involves David in the deception, getting him to order Tamar to her rape. It is an evil plan when anything of this sort was absolutely forbidden. She could not have been given to him as a wife for they shared the same father, and under the Laws of Leviticus 18:9, 20:17, this was forbidden. There was no way around it; the love was forbidden and to be resisted, no matter what was felt by the people involved.

God forbade it and that ended the discussion. David needed to read the Law to his sons, but he had failed to do so, and Jonadab acted to secure favour with the boys, and possibly for his own voyeuristic pleasure. He certainly is an evil man who does not honour God in any way by his counsel. There are always people drawn to power and deviant pleasures where-ever there are rulers who can give favours. David is not mentally sharp at this point, and his lack of attention will lead to rape and murder.

Verses 8 – 14. David has been implicated in this evil and when it comes out he knows it. Amnon lies in bed pretending to be ill and his half sister quietly makes bread for him and brings meat and bread to him. He has been lying there quietly lusting after her, and waiting for the chance to grab her.

These are not youngsters, but mature young adults, and the choice he makes here will cost him the throne and his life, just as a similar act cost Reuben the rulership of Israel. Genesis 35:22, 49:3-4. Tamar pleads for him not to have sex with her, and implies that David would give her to him if he asked (even though the Law forbade it). This comment of Tamar's may indicate that David did not teach the Law to his children at all, and that she did not know the Levitical Laws on sexual relationships.

She pleads, but she does not cry out for help and resist, because she is not strong enough, and does not believe the servants will respond to her cries. Tamar is possibly covered by the Law, and Amnon is required to pay the bride price, and may be required to marry her and never let her go. Deuteronomy 22:23-24, 28-30. Now this case, because it is a half sister, would require Levitical decision, but David will not refer it to the priesthood for any decision, for I suspect he knows what the ruling would be. He is so embarrassed that he fails to act. His own sin has rendered him incapable of correct judgment.

Verses 15 – 19. Amnon's behaviour was sinful and evil, and having taken her virginity he was under a solemn obligation to treat her with dignity, for he had humbled her and removed from her any chance of future marriage. She speaks kindly to him, indicating she was open to staying with him and approaching their father to get a decision together, but he now hates her with the same passion that he once loved her. Most rapists act this way. Rape is sexual violence, and those who act to meet their own needs are not concerned about the impact they have on others, or about the feelings of others.

She is taken as if she is a common prostitute and cast out of his rooms by the servants, and even though she wears the dress of a princess, is treated roughly. She walks home to her brother's house weeping and with torn clothing in her great grief. For this alone Amnon is under a sentence of death, as are his servants. The writer makes it very clear that the treatment of this young woman is a great evil, and Amnon is beyond redemption, because he refuses to accept responsibility for his actions, covers them up, and then moves on in his life as if nothing has happened.

Verses 20 – 23. The "cover up" of the sin is now completed by the actions of Absalom and David. They know that Tamar didn't cry out for help, and that she would have stayed with Amnon if she was allowed, so there is doubt in both that she was covered by the Law. While she was forced to have sex, the rapist could argue she was in the end a willing partner, and if he succeeded in that, both would die under the Law. Leviticus 20:17.

Neither Absalom nor David want to put this case into the public arena and potentially have to stone their siblings/children to death under the Law of Moses. David however does nothing except fume and be angry to a high level. This is a great evil on David's part, for sin not faced will fester and break out worse. No sin stays the same; it always grows in destructive power. David should have acted against his own son, even to the immediate condemnation to death of this man and all his servants who assaulted Tamar.

The Septuagint translation adds into the text, that he didn't act against Amnon because he was his first born and he loved him. This may be correct, for he later will not act against Absalom for the same reason. Anger that is not sat with, thought through, and then dealt with in a godly fashion will open the door to greater evil. Absalom sits on his anger for

two years, and waits for his chance to avenge his sister, and makes a plan around the sheep shearing festival on his lands. This man is even worse than the lust filled Amnon.

Verses 24 – 29. Absalom shows the same animal cunning as Amnon had shown two years before, and the principle of scripture is illustrated; that as we treat/judge others, so we will be judged. Matthew 7:1-2, Mark 4:24, Luke 6:38. Absalom asks David and the entire court to come, but David knows that such a request would bankrupt Absalom, for the cost of feeding the entire court would be significant. He then changes his request, to just cover the princes. David clearly suspects something is not right, and initially forbids the visit of Amnon, but finally relents and allows all the sons to go for the feast, thinking that there will be protection in numbers. He does not however warn the boys, nor arm them to resist murder, nor have any words to them at all!

Just as Amnon had servants who would roughly handle a princess, so Absalom has servants who will kill a prince and not be fearful of the king's wrath. It is a mark of the slackness of David that these servants believed they would escape punishment for such a murder. When the king has gotten away with murder others lose their fear of consequences! Only definitive action against Amnon and his servants would have stopped the rot, but David's depressive state after his own sin paralyzes him and the decline in the nation deepens. We will see this unfold over the next chapters.

Verses 30 – 36. How does the news arrive at the palace before the king's son's return? They ride mules and they are restricted in speed, so a horseman must have arrived with the false report. Perhaps this is the plan of Jonadab or Absalom to soften the blow when the truth does come. Whatever is the truth behind these actions Jonadab knows too much to not be involved and implicated.

Had David wanted to know the truth, all he had to do was arrest Jonadab, put him under close questioning, and the truth would have emerged, but once again David doesn't want the truth out, because it makes him look bad. David acts to minimize the damage to the family reputation, instead of acting decisively to end the evil. Covering family reputation when you have a bad one is to cover evil! When evil is not faced nothing is protected except the guilty, who will deepen in their malice and become more bold in their actions.

All David's weeping is sinful here, for it does not lead to godly action to remedy the evil. Weeping is a bone fide expression of legitimate emotions at such a time, but it quickly becomes hypocrisy and evil itself if it does not lead to strong action to end the evil. David knows this evil is the punishment of his sexual sin with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah, and perhaps he feels with the double offence against his house by his two sons that the curse upon him is over. Whatever his reason for inaction, it is an evil in itself and he pays dearly for it within a few years.

Verses 37 – 39. Absalom flees to his father in law's house and was safe there. David could have sought him and requested the king of Geshur to take action for the murder, but he will not do anything. David's inaction is what the writer draws attention to throughout this sorry story. Had David done more than weep and wail, or just get angry, he could have turned the cursing into blessing, but he fails to act in righteousness and justice.

Absalom stays in Geshur three years before Joab hatches a plot to bring him back. David pines for his son Absalom as he did for his son Amnon but he fails to act in this case, just as he failed to act in the other. Emotion without godly and righteous action is hollow and of no value before man or God. Let us act upon God's Word believer, not wallow in human but pointless emotion! David's depressive disorder is starting to develop to fullness of debility, and it opens the door to the Great Rebellion. Depression if left unfaced and unresolved will destroy everything of value in the person's life.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. As we are forgiven, so we are to forgive when the one who has wronged us has repented, approached us, and requested it. Matthew 6:9-15, Luke 11:4, 17:1-4, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11. The standard for forgiveness is set by the Lord, and we are not to half heartedly forgive our children, but deal with them as the Lord Jesus Christ has dealt with us.
2. Let us pay attention to our children, and be the first ones they speak to about all matters of concern. We position ourselves as the first reference for them by being there for them through their lives and setting godly examples of goodness and righteousness to them.
3. Sin is always to be addressed and dealt with. Our precious reputation is nothing against the truth and righteousness of God's standards, to which we are called. Let us not concern ourselves over our or our family's reputation upon the earth, but rather build a godly report in heaven. Matthew 25:20-25.

REFLECTION UPON THE OUT-WORKING OF THE "LEAVEN" OF EVIL

1. Leaven in Principle: Denotes any substance used to induce fermentation as in a dough or liquid.
2. First mention in Scripture: Genesis 19:3 in connection with the angelic visitors to Lot's house prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot served them "unleavened bread".
3. First mention in Scripture relative to the Observation of a Feast: Exodus 12:8, 15-20 - Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

- a) Leaven was undesirable and became a symbol of evil.
 - b) Unleavened bread is a type of Christ and refers to His impeccability.
4. Leaven in Matthew 13:33 represents the infiltration of religious apostasy during the Tribulation.
 5. The Leaven of the Sadducees is rationalism, the sin of human viewpoint, resulting in gospel rejection. (Matthew 16:6)
 6. The Leaven of the Pharisees is the Satanic counterattack against sound doctrine by religion, legalism and ritualism. (Mark 8:15, Luke 12:1)
 7. The Leaven of Herod is the sin of worldliness (Romans 12:2) and power lust within a local congregation. (Mark 8:15)
 8. The Leaven of the Corinthians is the sin of licentiousness and perversion. (1 Corinthians 5:6, 7, 1 Corinthians 5:1,2)
 9. The Leaven of the Galatians is the sin of legalism, specifically their insistence upon circumcision for salvation. (Galatians 5:9)

NOTES