

Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 25, 2 Sam. 18-20 – O Absalom, My Son Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 25, 2 Sam. 18-20 – O Absalom, My Son, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert Chisholm's lecture analyzes 2 Samuel 18-20, focusing on the **battle between David and Absalom's forces**. The lecture details Absalom's death, David's grief, and the subsequent **political turmoil** as David reclaims his throne. Chisholm **interprets events** through the lens of divine justice and punishment for David's past sins. The lecture also **highlights the themes** of reconciliation, betrayal, and the persistent consequences of sin. Finally, it sets the stage for future lessons covering the remaining chapters of 2 Samuel.

2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Chisholm, Session 25 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → 1 Samuel).



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3. Briefing Document: Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 25, 2 Sam. 18-20 – O Absalom, My Son

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes, ideas, and facts from Dr. Robert Chisholm's lecture on 2 Samuel 18-20:

Briefing Document: 2 Samuel 18-20

Overview: This session covers 2 Samuel chapters 18 through 20, focusing on the aftermath of Absalom's rebellion and David's return to power. Dr. Chisholm divides the passage into two main sections: 1) The death of Absalom and David's mourning (18:1-19:8), and 2) The turmoil and lack of unity that follows David's return (19:9-20:26). The lecture emphasizes the consequences of sin, God's discipline even amidst salvation, and the complexities of leadership and loyalty.

Part 1: "Oh Absalom, My Son, My Son" (2 Samuel 18:1-19:8)

- **David's Battle Strategy and Orders:** David organizes his army, dividing it into thirds under Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. He initially intends to fight alongside his troops but is convinced by his men to remain in the city, emphasizing his value to them ("you are worth 10,000 of us"). David gives a specific order to his generals: "be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake" (or possibly, "protect the young man Absalom"). This highlights David's emotional attachment to Absalom, despite his rebellion.
- **Absalom's Defeat and Death:** Absalom's forces are routed by David's army, echoing the great defeat of Israel by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 4. Absalom's death is a central event: he gets caught in a tree by his hair (or head), and is found hanging by one of David's soldiers. Despite the soldier's refusal to kill Absalom due to David's order, Joab kills Absalom by plunging javelins into his heart. Chisholm highlights this as a clear echo of David's sin in orchestrating Uriah's death, using the same verb combination "to strike down and kill," emphasizing the consequences of sin. This event is characterized as "installment three" in David's punishment for his sin.
- **Absalom's Burial and Monument:** Absalom's burial is portrayed negatively. He is thrown into a pit and a large pile of rocks is placed over him. This is compared to the burials of Achan and the King of Ai, marking Absalom as a rebellious Israelite and a foreign enemy. Absalom's earlier erection of a monument for himself is

mentioned, highlighting his ego and lack of dynastic legacy despite having had sons.

- **David's Grief:** David's reaction to the news is one of profound grief. He repeats Absalom's name five times and calls him "my son" eight times. His anguished cry "Oh my son Absalom. My son, my son Absalom. If only I had died instead of you." shows a deep disconnect from the reality of Absalom's betrayal, causing the army to mourn instead of celebrate the victory.
- **Joab's Intervention:** Joab confronts David for his excessive mourning, accusing him of humiliating his loyal troops who risked their lives for him. Joab points out that David loves his enemies (Absalom) and hates his friends. He warns David that his actions risk losing his army. Joab's intervention is portrayed as wise, even if self-serving because he always does what is best for him while pretending to do what's best for David.
- **Consequences of Sin:** Chisholm notes that even when tempered by God's salvation, the discipline for sin can be very painful. He emphasizes the parallel between David's grief and Tamar's grief earlier in the narrative, highlighting a sense of justice.

Part 2: "The Return of the King Brings Turmoil" (2 Samuel 19:9-20:26)

- **Israel's Lack of Unity:** Following Absalom's death, the tribes of Israel are fragmented and conflicted. They are uncertain about whether to support David. This is largely due to David's poor leadership choices, particularly regarding Absalom and Joab.
- **David's Political Moves:** David seeks to solidify his support, especially from Judah, his own tribe. He sends messages to the elders of Judah, reminding them of their kinship ("my own flesh and blood") and appealing for their support in bringing him back. He also demotes Joab and appoints Amasa as his new army commander, to the displeasure of Joab.
- **Forgiveness and Mercy:** As David returns, he is confronted by several individuals, including Shimei, Ziba, Mephibosheth and Barzillai. He forgives Shimei's earlier cursing and restores some of Mephibosheth's property, though not all of it and he has them divide it between Ziba and Mephibosheth, even though Ziba's accusations were clearly false. He also displays mercy towards the Benjaminites, likely for political reasons, seeking to regain their allegiance. Chisholm questions David's motivations, suggesting they are not solely about forgiveness but also

about political expediency, noting how David later orders the deaths of both Shimei and Joab on his deathbed.

- **Mephibosheth's Loyalty:** Mephibosheth is portrayed as genuinely loyal to David, having mourned during David's exile. His humble demeanor and willingness to let Ziba keep everything if it means David's safe return contrast with Ziba's deceit.
- **Barzillai's Loyalty and Generosity:** Barzillai, an 80-year-old Gileadite, is recognized for his loyalty and for having provided for David in exile. David wishes to reward him, but Barzillai declines, asking instead that David show favor to his servant, Kim Ham. This shows both David's generosity and Barzillai's humility and shrewdness.
- **Growing Tensions:** The northern tribes of Israel grow jealous of Judah, feeling excluded from David's return and accusing them of stealing the king away. This highlights a growing lack of unity among the tribes and foreshadows the future division of the kingdom. "We have ten shares in the king... Why then do you treat us with contempt?"
- **Sheba's Rebellion:** Sheba, a Benjamite, exploits the tribal tensions and leads a new rebellion against David. He is described as a "man of Belial", indicating his worthlessness and wickedness. This rebellion initially gains support from the northern tribes.
- **Joab's Treachery and Return to Power:** David tasks Amasa with gathering the army, but when Amasa is slow, David sends Abishai after Sheba. Joab uses this opportunity to murder Amasa, his cousin and David's new commander, and seize control of the army again. Chisholm emphasizes Joab's ruthlessness and ambition.
- **Resolution of Sheba's Rebellion:** Joab pursues Sheba and lays siege to the city of Abel Beth Maakah. A wise woman in the city negotiates a deal with Joab, resulting in the city handing over Sheba's head to Joab, ending the rebellion.
- **David's Officials:** The chapter concludes with a list of David's key officials, notably including Joab as commander of the army, and also Adoniram in charge of forced labor, setting a troubling precedent for future oppression by Solomon and Rehoboam, ultimately leading to the split of the kingdom.

Key Themes:

- **Consequences of Sin:** David's past sins continue to have repercussions, impacting his family, his kingdom, and his personal life.
- **God's Discipline:** God's discipline is a prominent theme throughout, even in the midst of salvation, showing that God does not overlook sin.
- **Loyalty and Betrayal:** The lecture explores the complexities of loyalty, highlighting the contrasting actions of characters like Joab, Absalom, Mephibosheth, Ziba, and the tribes of Israel, as well as David's ambiguous behavior.
- **Leadership:** David's leadership is scrutinized and found to be flawed. His failure to bring justice or resolve his personal issues is a persistent theme.
- **The Fragility of Unity:** The passage illustrates the fragility of unity, both within families and among tribes. The unresolved issues sow seeds for the future division of Israel.

Important Quotes:

- David on Absalom: "Oh my son Absalom. My son, my son Absalom. If only I had died instead of you." (Demonstrating his grief and disconnect from reality)
- Joab to David: "You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that the commanders and their men mean nothing to you." (Criticizing David's priorities and showing his ambition)
- The tribes of Israel: "We have ten shares in the king... Why then do you treat us with contempt?" (Highlighting tribal tensions and a sense of exclusion)

Conclusion: This lecture provides a detailed analysis of the challenges and conflicts that followed Absalom's rebellion, emphasizing the lasting consequences of sin, the complexity of relationships, and the challenges of leadership. The narrative underscores the persistent presence of both grace and judgment in David's life, and it sets the stage for the final chapters of the book of Samuel.

4. Study Guide: Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 25, 2 Sam. 18-20 – O Absalom, My Son

2 Samuel 18-20 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. How did David organize his army before the battle against Absalom?
2. What specific command did David give to his commanders regarding Absalom?
3. Describe how Absalom died.
4. What is the significance of the way Absalom was buried?
5. Why was Ahimaaz not the first to tell David about Absalom's death?
6. How did David react to the news of Absalom's death?
7. What did Joab say to David to encourage him to stop grieving?
8. What were the tribes of Israel arguing about after Absalom's death?
9. What actions did David take to try to regain control of his kingdom?
10. How did Joab re-establish himself as the commander of the army?

Quiz Answer Key

1. David divided his army into three parts, giving command of each to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai the Gittite. David initially intended to march with them but was dissuaded by his men.
2. David commanded his three generals to be gentle or protect, the young man Absalom for his sake; he minimized the seriousness of Absalom's actions by thinking of him as a youth.
3. Absalom's hair or head got caught in the branches of a tree while riding his mule, leaving him hanging in midair. Joab, after learning of this, killed Absalom by thrusting three javelins into his heart.

4. Absalom's burial involved being thrown into a pit and covered with a large pile of rocks. This is similar to how rebellious Israelites and foreign enemies were buried, suggesting he was seen as a rebel.
5. Joab did not want Ahimaaz to tell David about the victory because it would upset him that his son, Absalom, was dead. Joab recognized the news would not be received well and was not considered good news for the King.
6. David was shaken and wept uncontrollably upon learning of Absalom's death. He lamented, wishing he had died in Absalom's place and disregarded the victory of his army.
7. Joab rebuked David for grieving, arguing that he was humiliating his loyal men by mourning his enemy. Joab also threatened that David would lose all his support and have even more calamities than before if he didn't stop.
8. The tribes of Israel were arguing because of a power vacuum resulting from Absalom's death and David's absence. They questioned why they were doing nothing to bring the king back.
9. David sent messages to Zadok and Abiathar to ask the elders of Judah to bring him back to Jerusalem. He also promised Amasa that he would replace Joab as commander of the army.
10. Joab murdered Amasa, the new commander of the army. This act was done out of jealousy, allowing him to regain control of the military forces.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the complex relationship between David and Joab in 2 Samuel 18-20. How does their dynamic contribute to the unfolding events, and what does it reveal about their characters?
2. Discuss the theme of justice and consequences in the context of David's actions and the events of 2 Samuel 18-20. How are David's past sins impacting his present circumstances and what does this say about divine justice?
3. Explore the role of grief and mourning in this section of 2 Samuel. How does David's grief for Absalom affect his leadership and the perception of his people? How does his grief relate to that of Tamar?
4. Evaluate the political strategies employed by both David and Absalom in their quest for power. How do their approaches reveal their strengths and weaknesses, and why does Absalom's coup ultimately fail?
5. Examine the concept of unity and division as presented in 2 Samuel 18-20. How does the internal conflict within Israel contribute to the instability of David's kingdom, and how do these conflicts foreshadow the future division of the kingdom?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Achitophel:** A trusted advisor to David who later turned to support Absalom. His counsel was renowned for its wisdom. He committed suicide after his advice was not followed.
- **Absalom:** David's son who led a rebellion against his father. Known for his great beauty and his ambition to seize the throne.
- **Amasa:** David's nephew who was appointed as the new commander of the army in place of Joab. He was later murdered by Joab.
- **Ahimaaz:** A loyal spy and messenger for David. He wanted to be the first to bring the news of the victory over Absalom.
- **Belial:** A Hebrew term often translated as "worthless" or "wickedness," used here to describe Sheba.

- **Etiology:** A narrative that explains the origin of something. In this text, the construction of Absalom's monument is used to explain why it existed in the King's valley.
- **Gilgal:** A significant location in Israelite history where the men of Judah gathered to meet King David as he returned from exile.
- **Hushai:** A loyal friend of David who infiltrated Absalom's inner circle. His advice led to Absalom's strategic mistake.
- **Ittai the Gittite:** A foreign loyalist to David, who was given command of a third of the army.
- **Joab:** The commander of David's army, known for his military prowess and ruthlessness. He played a key role in David's story, though his actions were often morally questionable.
- **Mahanaim:** The location where David established his headquarters during his exile when Absalom tried to take over his kingdom.
- **Mephibosheth:** Saul's grandson, who was lame. He was shown kindness by David. He was later involved in a situation of betrayal and deceit.
- **Sheba:** A Benjamite who led a revolt against David after Absalom's death. He attempted to exploit existing tribal tensions for his own political gain.
- **Shimei:** A Benjamite who cursed David as he fled Jerusalem. He was eventually pardoned by David, for political reasons.
- **Zadok and Abiathar:** Two priests who remained loyal to David. They assisted him by communicating with him from Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion.

5. FAQs on Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 25, 2 Sam. 18-20 – O Absalom, My Son, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on 2 Samuel 18-20

1. **Why does David instruct his commanders to be gentle with Absalom, and what does this reveal about David's perspective?**
2. David, despite Absalom's rebellion and attempt to usurp the throne, orders his generals Joab, Abishai, and Ittai to treat Absalom gently, even protectively ("cover the young man Absalom"). This reveals that David is primarily acting as a grieving father, minimizing the gravity of Absalom's actions and focusing on his love for his son rather than his role as king. He uses the term "young man," which further underscores his paternal concern. This demonstrates a conflict within David, between his personal feelings and the need for justice and security for his kingdom.
3. **What is significant about Absalom's death and burial, and how does it connect to past events?**
4. Absalom's death is marked by several ironic and symbolic elements. He dies while suspended by his hair in an oak tree, having his heart pierced by Joab's javelins, and then his body is further attacked by ten of Joab's armor bearers. He is then thrown into a pit and covered by a large pile of rocks, reminiscent of the burials of Achan (a rebellious Israelite) and the King of Ai (a foreign enemy), reinforcing Absalom's portrayal as a rebellious figure who threatened the covenant community. This burial contrasts with Absalom's monument to himself, showing the vanity of his ambition. The parallels with the death of Uriah further highlight the idea that David is experiencing consequences for his past sins.
5. **How does Joab's actions during Absalom's rebellion highlight his character and motivations?**
6. Joab's actions throughout this narrative display his ruthlessness and self-serving nature. He disregards David's command to protect Absalom, killing him despite the king's wishes. Joab does this not out of loyalty to David, but because he knows that Absalom is a threat to David and Joab's own power. Joab also later murders Amasa, the new commander appointed by David, to reclaim his former position. His actions illustrate a pragmatic approach to power, prioritizing his own position even if it means contradicting the king.

7. **How does David's response to the news of Absalom's death contrast with the views of his army and what does it show about his character?**
8. While David's army celebrates the victory over Absalom's forces and considers it a vindication from the Lord, David's response is one of intense grief and mourning. He expresses a wish to have died in Absalom's place, showing an overwhelming love for his son despite his betrayal. This response demonstrates David's internal conflict between his roles as a father and as king, and reveals that his deep personal attachments can cloud his judgment and lead to neglect of his kingly responsibilities and his loyal supporters. It shows his emotional vulnerability and highlights the lingering impact of his previous sins.
9. **What is the significance of the interactions between David and figures like Shimei, Mephibosheth, and Barzillai upon his return?**
10. These interactions reveal David's attempts to restore order and unity after Absalom's rebellion. David shows mercy to Shimei, a Benjamite who previously cursed him, which may be partly political to win support but is also seen as a way of not prolonging further conflict. He initially rebukes Mephibosheth but eventually acknowledges his innocence and divides the property between him and Ziba, showing the complexity of the situation. The interaction with Barzillai, who refuses rewards but asks for David to take his servant, demonstrates true loyalty and sets the tone for future interactions. These encounters portray David as both attempting to show mercy and trying to balance political shrewdness.
11. **How does the return of David lead to tensions and division among the tribes of Israel, and what does this foreshadow?**
12. The return of David is not a simple restoration, but rather brings further division. The tribes of Israel, particularly the northern tribes, are envious of Judah's quick support for David and accuse them of trying to steal the king. This argument over tribal loyalty exposes a lack of unity and foreshadows future divisions in the kingdom. This tension suggests that David's actions and the civil war caused by Absalom, while apparently resolved, have left lasting scars on the political landscape of Israel. This division directly leads to the revolt of Sheba.

13. Who is Sheba and what does he do? How is his rebellion brought to an end?

14. Sheba, a Benjamite described as a "worthless man," exploits the existing tensions between the tribes. He rallies the northern tribes to desert David, proclaiming they have no share in David or his kingdom. This rebellion is significant because it shows a continued challenge to David's authority. His rebellion ends when his head is thrown over the city wall after a siege. This event mirrors that of Absalom and continues the theme of rebellion against authority and the cycle of violence.

15. What is the overall message regarding the consequences of sin, leadership, and justice in these chapters?

These chapters emphasize that actions have consequences, both for the individual and the community. David's past sins have led to the turmoil in his kingdom, Absalom's rebellion, and the ongoing challenges to his leadership. Furthermore, it emphasizes the complexities of justice, where David's attempts at mercy are mixed with political pragmatism, and leaders such as Joab act with violence, often undermining the stability of the kingdom. The narrative shows that even a divinely chosen king like David is not exempt from the long-lasting consequences of his mistakes and the persistent challenges of governing a divided people. The section ends with a description of David's cabinet, including Adoniram in charge of forced labor, which foreshadows the future injustices of Solomon and the eventual division of the kingdom.