

## Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 17, 2 Samuel 1-3

© 2024 Robert Chisholm and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Bob Chisholm in his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 17 on 2 Samuel 1-3. Tell it not in Gath, chapter 1, the Road to the Throne is Paved with Blood, chapters 2 and 3.

In our study of the books of Samuel, we are now ready to begin 2 Samuel and in this lesson, we'll be looking at chapters 1, 2, and 3. 2 Samuel chapter 1 is set in the aftermath of Saul's death. Saul and his sons died in battle, 1 Samuel 31 at the Battle of Gilboa.

The Philistines defeated Israel, a humiliating defeat for the nation. And in 2 Samuel 1 David is going to find out about this and we're going to see his response. And I've entitled 2 Samuel 1, Tell it not in Gath, because that's something that David says.

This news should not be broadcast. Israel's great defeat. And then we'll transition into 2 Samuel 2 and 3 and really that whole section, chapters 2, 3, 4, and into 5, we see David ascending to the throne of Israel.

First, he's going to become king in the south in Judah, in Hebron, and then after seven years of ruling over Judah from Hebron, David is going to become king of the united nation of Israel. And so that's kind of where we're heading in this lesson and the lesson to follow. But we want to look at 2 Samuel chapter 2, 2 Samuel chapter 1 initially.

It begins with after the death of Saul, David returned from striking down the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag for two days. So, we're reminded again, that any fake news out there that David participated in the Philistine victory over Israel is not true. It's just that, fake.

David was gone. The Philistines would not let David and his men fight with them. They were suspicious of their motives.

And so actually while David was down fighting Amalekites, that's when the Philistines defeated the Israelites and Saul was killed. So, David wasn't even there when Saul and his men were killed and Israel was defeated. David had left the Philistine army and he was fighting the hated Amalekites.

So, on the third day, a man arrived from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor. So, this individual arrives.

He's obviously in mourning mode. His clothes are torn. He's got dust on his head.

And so, David asks, where have you come from? And he answered I have escaped from the Israelite camp. What happened? David asked. Tell me.

The men fled from the battle, he replied. Many of them fell and died and Saul and his son Jonathan are dead. David says to the young man who brings the report, how do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead? David wants verification of this report.

And so, this young man says, well, I happen to be on Mount Gilboa. And there was Saul leaning on his spear with the chariots and their drivers in hot pursuit. And when he turned around and saw me, he called out to me and I said, what can I do? And he asked me, who are you? An Amalekite, I answered.

Then he said to me, stand here by me and kill me. I'm in the throes of death, but I'm still alive. So, I stood beside him and killed him.

And by the way, we talked about this earlier. This is the verb form in Hebrew that is used for finishing someone off who's already been mortally wounded. It's that verb form that was used when David finished off Goliath with the sword after mortally wounding him with his sling stone.

So, I stood beside him and killed him, finished him off, because I knew that after he had fallen, he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my Lord. Now this raises questions.

Before we look at David's response to all of this, it raises questions. Because in 1 Samuel 31, remember what had happened. Saul had been wounded by the archers and he knew he was going to die.

He did not want to be tortured by the Philistines, so he asked his armor-bearer to run him through with his sword. The armor bearer didn't want to do that. Too much respect for Saul, just couldn't make himself do it.

And so, we are told there that Saul fell on his own sword and committed suicide. And then the armor-bearer did the same thing. Well, in this chapter we have a different story.

Now that story was the narrator speaking. In this particular chapter, it's an Amalekite. And any time anyone is quoted in scripture, you always have to ask yourself, is that accurate? You have to assess the status, and the reliability of the speaker.

You can't just assume that because someone says something, it's true. But this Amalekite is claiming that Saul was mortally wounded but not dead. And he asked this individual to finish him off, and the Amalekite did it.

So how are we to sort this out? Some people will argue that the passages need to be harmonized. 1 Samuel 31 is kind of a streamlined account. Saul fell on his own sword and died.

We get a little more detail here in 2 Samuel 1. We discover that even when Saul fell on his sword, he still was not dead. And so, this Amalekite finished him off. And in this case, there's an assumption that the Amalekite is telling the truth.

And this is the way it played out. Another option, of course, would be, no, Saul was already dead. And the Amalekite is concocting this story in order to get in good with David.

And so, he realizes, I have an opportunity here to get in good with David. If I were to take Saul's crown and his royal symbols to David and swear allegiance to David, David would thank me for doing this and probably be happy that I killed Saul, his enemy. So I'll come up with this story.

I tend to lean toward the fabrication view, but not everyone does. Some good commentators would argue more for a fusion of the stories. I don't think there's a contradiction.

I wouldn't say there are two different somebodies, the narrator would be wrong. I wouldn't choose the Amalekite over the narrator. The narrator is correct in some way.

He's either giving a streamlined account that's filled out in more detail, or this Amalekite is making this up. At any rate, it's clear that the Amalekite is trying to ingratiate himself with David. And I think his assumption is that David's going to be happy about this, and he is going to reward me for bringing Saul's royal insignia to him.

So, let's see what David says in response. Verse 11. First of all, David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them.

They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the army of the Lord and for the nation of Israel because they had fallen by the sword. David is not thinking in terms of individuals. Yes, Saul's gone.

Jonathan, who was next in line to be king, he's gone. This is all part of a devastating defeat that took place. And it's the army of the Lord and the nation of Israel that the men are ultimately most concerned about.

And the death of Saul and Jonathan just epitomizes all of that. And so, they're mourning and they're weeping and they're fasting. A series of verbs that emphasize the depth of their grief.

And it's the only place in the Old Testament where all three of these verbs are used together. So, great suffering emotionally for the army. So, David, first of all, mourns what has happened to Saul, Jonathan, the army, and the nation.

And then he says to the young man who brought the report, where are you from? He says I am the son of a foreigner and a Malachite, he answered. And David asked him, why weren't you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed? Uh-oh. And then David called one of his men and said, go, strike him down.

So, he struck him down and he died. And David said, your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, I killed the Lord's anointed.

So, we see again, David has such great respect for Saul, that he would never have struck him down. It's inappropriate to strike down the Lord's anointed. And even though this Malachite could have defended himself by saying, I just did what he told me, David's attitude is, you have no right.

You have no right to do this. That's the Lord's business. And you don't strike down the Lord's anointed.

And you showed a lack of respect for the Lord and for his anointed. And you're going to pay with your life. So, no matter what happened, if this really happened the way the Malachite said, or if he just made the story up, it didn't turn out well for him.

And hopefully, you see how this fits into the apology, the defense of David here. Not only was David not even near the battlefield when Saul died, but when an individual brought Saul's crown, an insignia to him, that individual paid with his life because he claimed to have struck Saul down. So, we see David's loyalty to Saul continuing here.

Because on the fake news side, they might have said, you know, David ended up with Saul's crown. How did he get that? Well, this is a story that tells how he got that, and how he responded to the one who brought it to him when that individual said that he had struck Saul down to end his life. And so hopefully you can see how this account fits into that defense of David.

David is not guilty in any way of the death of Saul. And in fact, when he heard about it, he mourned terribly. It had a tremendous negative emotional impact on him.

And then we get a lament. In the rest of chapter 1, we get a lament that David sang concerning Saul and his son Jonathan. And he ordered the people of Judah to also sing this song.

It's called Bo, it's called Keshet Bo, the Lament of the Bo. And it's written in the book of Yashar. I wish we had access to that book.

There would be lots of interesting information in that volume. But it was in a book that Israel kept that included some songs. And in this lament, David, it's clear that he is not celebrating.

He is not celebrating the death of Saul. He's not saying, ah, finally, the door is wide open, and I am ready to occupy the throne of Israel. I'm ready to take over my destiny and fulfill my destiny and God's promise.

He's not celebrating at all. And so, it's very poetic. A gazelle lies slain on your heights, Israel.

How the mighty have fallen. Tell it not in Gath. Don't broadcast this in Philistine territory. This is an unmitigated disaster. Tell it not in Gath. Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon.

Lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad. Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice. We don't need to be broadcasting all of this.

He continues in this vein, and down in verses 22 and 23, he remembers what great warriors Saul and Jonathan were. They were loved and admired by many. In death, they were not parted.

They were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions. And then he calls upon the daughters of Israel to weep for Saul. And he says again in verse 25, how the mighty have fallen in battle.

Jonathan lies slain on your heights. I grieve for you, Jonathan, my brother. You were very dear to me.

And of course, we know this. Jonathan and David were close friends. And on more than one occasion, a covenant was made between them.

Whether they were reaffirming earlier promises, or supplementing those earlier promises. They had a covenant relationship. And they were loyal to each other.

And then David says, your love for me was wonderful. It was unique, I think is the idea. More wonderful than that of women.

Well, there is a modern view that David and Jonathan had some kind of homosexual relationship. It's ridiculous. If you understand the context of the Old Testament, that would have been considered wrong in the law.

And David and Jonathan were not engaging in that kind of behavior. So, what does David mean here? He doesn't mean that the love that he had with Jonathan was of the same type or variety as what he had with women. I think what he is saying is that the love that he received from Jonathan, which was loyalty and allegiance, it formed a stronger bond in many ways than the mere romantic love that he experienced with women.

The covenantal relationship that he had with Jonathan was unique. And it surpassed anything that he could ever experience with a woman at a strictly romantic level. It doesn't imply that the love was the same or expressed in the same way at all.

It's simply saying that the allegiance that I received from Jonathan was more profound and unique than anything I ever experienced with a woman. So, Saul and Jonathan are dead and gone. And what we see here is that it's cause not for celebration, but for mourning and lamentation.

And we could kind of bring 1 Samuel 31 and 2 Samuel 1 together and sort of state the main theme this way. Rebellion against the Lord culminates in a humiliating defeat. We see that with Saul.

But the demise of the Lord's rebellious servants is to be lamented, not celebrated. And we need to remember this. Sometimes Christians go astray.

They bring dishonor to the church. And God will sometimes punish them for their actions. In many cases, they will have hurt other people.

And there might be a temptation to celebrate their fall. But David didn't view it that way at all. The fall of Saul brought humiliation to Israel and the Israelite army, and he viewed it that way.

And it's never something to celebrate when one of our brothers or sisters falls. It brings dishonor to the cause of Christ, and it's something that should be lamented and avoided. Their example needs to be avoided at all costs.

And so, once again, David, I think, provides us with a good example here to follow in these kinds of situations. But, in fact, the door to the throne has been opened for David. It is wide open now.

And David is now in a position where he can indeed fulfill his destiny. And so that begins to happen in chapter 2. Actually, this entire next section is all about David coming to the throne of Israel. All the way from the beginning of chapter 2, verse 1, all the way through chapter 5, verse 5. We could see it as one large unit.

There are a lot of individual episodes along the way. But I entitled this whole section, The Road to the Throne is Paved in Blood. It's not going to be a simple matter of David simply walking in and saying, Okay, Saul's gone.

I'm the new king. There's going to be a struggle because the followers of Saul are not going to accept David readily. And, in fact, the northern tribes are not going to accept David right away.

They had aligned themselves with Saul. One of Saul's children, Ish-bosheth, is going to be set up as a king among the northern tribes. And so, it's not going to be a simple matter of David walking into the throne room, sitting on the throne, and becoming the king of Israel.

It's going to be a long and difficult road. And that road is going to be paved in blood. There's going to be some violence along the way.

If you haven't had enough violence yet in reading Samuel, there's more coming. It's just the fallen world in which the history of Israel takes place. So, we come to chapter 2, verse 1, and it says, In the course of time David inquired of the Lord.

You don't get the impression that David's in a big hurry to fulfill his destiny here. He's learned that he needs to wait on the Lord's timing. He has been tested for a long time in this regard, and he's come to the place where I think he's willing to wait on the Lord.

Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah, he asked. And the Lord said, Go up. And David said, Where shall I go? To Hebron, the Lord answered.

And so, David went up there with his two wives. He also took his men with him and their families, and they settled in the Hebron area and among its towns. And then the men of Judah came to Hebron, and there they anointed David king over the tribe of Judah.

This makes perfect sense. David is one of them. He is from this tribe.

And so, it's natural that the men of Judah, there is a power vacuum, as it were. Saul is gone. Jonathan is gone.

Who's really going to be king over Israel? And it's natural that the men of Judah would look to David. They know that David had been chosen by the Lord. They can't control what other tribes do, but they can get the ball rolling.

And so, I can understand why they would want to be in good with David. David is from their tribe. He's been chosen to be king.

So, this is a natural decision on their part. And David, of course, goes along with it because this is his destiny. What David does next is he's told how the men of Jabesh-Gilead had buried Saul.

And so, David is going to reach out to them. They were obviously loyal followers of Saul. And David is going to reach out to them.

And in the process of doing, some of the things that David will be doing in these chapters will seem kind of political. And in some cases, we will look at them as, well, there's nothing wrong with this. This is natural.

David's destiny is to be king. And he should reach out to the tribes of Israel. The Lord would want him to do that.

In other cases, we're going to look at them and we're going to say, that's a little too political. That's very self-promoting, and I'm not so sure that the Lord would endorse what he did. So, as with David, everywhere there's always ambiguity swirling around him.

And you have to assess his actions in light of the larger context and what the Lord says and what the Lord intends for him. And sometimes David looks better than at others. It's as simple as that.

I don't see anything wrong with what he's doing here. He reaches out to these men of Jabesh-Gilead who are loyal to Saul and his family. And he says the Lord bless you for showing this kindness to Saul, your master, by burying him.

So, I think this is an opportunity for David to once again demonstrate, I did not want Saul to die. I wasn't behind that in any way. And I'm going to reach out and commend those who were loyal to him.

Because I was loyal to him. I refused to raise up my hand against him. May the Lord now show you kindness and faithfulness.



And I too will show you the same favor because you have done this. So, David says, hey, I commend you for what you did for Saul. I commend your loyalty to him.

And I'm asking the Lord to reward you for that. You deserve that. Now then, be strong and brave.

For Saul, your master is dead. And the people of Judah have anointed me, king, over them. It's as if David is saying, I commend you for your loyalty to Saul.

But the reality, men, is this. I know that you're grieving over this. But the reality is, Saul's gone.

And the men of Judah have decided that I should be the king. And so he's probably hoping that the men of Jabesh-Gilead will understand that, you know, God did choose David to be the next king. So, David is reaching out to them.

Yes, there's a political dimension to it. If I can reach out to some of Saul's loyal followers, and get them on my side, that may help me. Because we need to unify Israel.

We need to unify Israel. And the Lord has chosen me to do that. So I don't read what David is doing there as negative.

Meanwhile, Abner, son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, where is he going to stand on all this? Well, he had taken Ish-bosheth, son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim, which is Transjordan. It's east of the Jordan. You may be thinking, why aren't we setting up the king right back home in central Israel somewhere? It's because the Philistines have pretty much overrun Israel.

He made him king over Gilead, Ashuri, and Jezreel, and also over Ephraim, Benjamin, and all Israel. Officially, Ish-bosheth has been declared king of Israel. Now, this would be minus Judah, because Judah has already declared for David.

But it's very telling that he sets up shop over in Transjordan, because the Philistines have overrun the place. We can say you are the king of Israel, but practically speaking, that's not happening yet. Ish-bosheth, son of Saul, was 40 years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned two years.

The tribe of Judah, however, remained loyal to David. The length of time David was king in Hebron over Judah was seven years and six months. We're not sure exactly where Ish-bosheth's two years fit into those seven years.

But we are being told here that David was the only king in the South for seven years. To become king over all of Israel, he's going to have to wait a little while for that. In the meantime, Abner is trying to keep the Saul kingship going.

He's trying to create a dynasty, as it were, by putting in Ish-bosheth. There's going to be some conflict between the pro-Saul group and the pro-David group. It's the reality, historically, of that conflict that I think explains the books of Samuel as being a pro-David defense in many ways.

Because you can see there's opposition to David. Not everybody's buying into this. Some of the information that we're getting in the books of Samuel is designed to help people see David really is the chosen one.

You need to get in line with the program. Abner, son of Ner, together with the men of Ish-bosheth, son of Saul, left Mahanaim and went to Gibeon. Joab, son of Zeruiah and David's men went out and met them at the pool of Gibeon.

This is interesting. One group sits down on one side of the pool, and the other group sits down on the other side. And then Abner says to Joab, let's have some of the young men get up and fight hand-to-hand in front of us.

Actually, the Hebrew verb could be translated into play. I don't think this is just sporting here. It's, all right, let them do it.

I think it is a form, it's similar to when Goliath challenged the Israelites to send a champion out. Single combat. This is sort of a team version of this.

It's as if we're going to have your twelve against our twelve, and whoever prevails in this will be the winner. They may be thinking that way. But at any rate, it doesn't prove anything.

Because what happens, the twelve on the Benjaminite side, the twelve pro-Saul followers, and then the twelve, or Ish-bosheth at this point, and the twelve who are for David, they come together, they pair up, and according to verse 16, each man grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust his dagger into his opponent's side. So what's happening? I'm grabbing this fellow by the head and drilling him in the side, but in the meantime, he's doing the same thing to me, and we're stabbing each other to death. And they fell down together.

And so, nothing comes of this. I mean, normally you'd have a shield here, and you'd work this side, but apparently they're just going at each other with swords, and they die, and the place in Gibeon was called Helkath-hazzurim. And I don't think that that's probably the original reading there.

That means the portion or the field of the flints, or something like that. I tend to think that we probably should amend the text at this point, and I realize this is getting a little technical. We could amend the text to Siddim, because Dalet and Resh, the letters Dalet and Resh, D and R, are involved here, and they're easily confused in Hebrew, and I can show you examples of that.

That would mean the portion of the sides, or the field of the sides, and they stabbed each other in their sides. Another option is to change Tsurim to Tsarim. That would just be a change in vowels.

It wouldn't involve changing letters. And Tsarim can be understood as adversaries. So, it would be the portion or the field of the fighters.

And it just seems like sides or fighters works better than flints here, in terms of the naming of the place. But that's kind of a technical issue. We'll move on.

So, nothing really comes of this team combat situation, and so a battle breaks out between the armies. The battle that day was very fierce, and Abner and the Israelites were defeated by David's men. So, a battle breaks out, and then we're told in verse 18, there are three sons of Zeruiah.

Now remember who she is. She is David's sister, and so these fellows are David's nephews, Joab, Abishai, and Azahel. We've met Joab before.

Abishai, remember, went into Saul's camp with David, and wanted to drive a spear through Saul. David wouldn't let him do that. And then there's Azahel.

Azahel was as fleet-footed as a wild gazelle, so he has got speed. That's his great advantage. He's also young.

He's not as experienced a warrior as Joab, we discover. Well, he decides to chase Abner. Azahel, I think, wants to make a name for himself.

And so, he chases Abner, and he's fast. And so, he turned neither to the right nor to the left as he pursued him. Well, Abner looks behind him, and he sees Azahel.

He says, Is that you, Azahel? And he says, It is. And Abner says to him, Turn aside to the right or the left. Take on one of the young men, and strip him of his weapons.

You know, fight somebody your own age. Take his weapons. There'll be plenty of glory for you.

But Azahel would not stop chasing him. Azahel has decided, I'm taking the general out. I'm going after Abner.

Abner warned Azahel, Stop chasing me. Why should I strike you down? It's as if Abner knows he can kill this young man. How could I look your brother Joab in the face? If I kill you, Joab's going to say, Fight somebody your own size.

What honor was there in that? He says I don't want to have to deal with Joab. There'll be no honor in this for me. There might be for you if you try to kill me, but I'm not going to let you kill me.

And so, you need to fight somebody else. But Azahel refused to give up the pursuit. And so, he insists upon coming after Abner.

And then we're told that as he approaches, he's coming so fast, it's inevitable, he's as fast as a gazelle, that he's going to catch Abner. Abner's a great warrior, but he can't keep up with this young gazelle, as it were. And so, he just keeps coming and coming and coming.

And so, Abner's got to do something. And we're told in verse 23, that Asahel refused to give up the pursuit. So, Abner thrust the butt of his spear, the back of his spear, into Asahel's stomach.

And the spear came out through his back. And he fell there and died on the spot. And every man stopped when he came to the place where Azahel had fallen and died.

What exactly is going on here? So, Abner took the butt of his spear and put it out there, and Azahel ran through it? The blunt side of the spear? It may be that the text is trying to emphasize just how fast Azahel was coming. But, boy, you'd have to really be moving fast for that to happen. That's why some will say that he didn't run into the butt of the spear, but that Abner used a back motion of the spear.

In other words, he took his spear and did a back thrust, and that would explain how the spear, with its point, would go through him. But another explanation that I tend to lean toward is that spears, and we know this from archaeology, we've actually found these casings. They would sometimes, on the butt end of the spear, not the striking side where you have the blade of the spear, the point of the spear, but they would sometimes put a metal casing on the blunt end, and it had a point so you could stick it in the ground.

So, you could stick it in the ground. You wouldn't want to stick the point of your spear, which you're going to use in battle, to the ground. But some have suggested that he's got that metal casing on the butt end of the spear, as it were, and it's that, that he just makes a movement like that, and that's sharp enough to impale Azahel, as it were.

So, in some way, this happened, and Asahel is now dead. Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. The sun is setting, we are told in verse 24.

The men of Benjamin are rallying behind Abner, and they form themselves into a group and take their stand on the top of a hill. But then Abner calls out to Joab. He's had enough.

Must the sword devour forever? Don't you realize that this will end in bitterness? How long before you order your men to stop pursuing their fellow Israelites? And so, Abner calls for a truce. He's had enough. He's lost the battle, and he's just calling for a truce.

Joab answers in verse 27, As surely as God lives, if you'd not spoken, the men would have continued pursuing them until morning. So, Joab blows the trumpet. The troops come to a halt.

They stop their pursuit. The fight ends, and everyone just kind of goes their separate ways. We are told in verse 30 that besides Azahel, 19 of David's men were found missing.

But David's men had killed 360 Benjaminites who were with Abner. And then they go and they bury Azahel. And you may think, well, it sounds as if Joab is satisfied with winning the battle and that's it.

It's not it. Joab is not finished with Abner, as we will see in chapter 3. We're told at the beginning of chapter 3, verse 1, that the war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time. So, there is this, within this seven-year period where David is ruling down south in Hebron over Judah, this conflict between the house of Saul and the house of David is going on.

So, as I said before, it's not a simple matter of David walking into the throne room, sitting on the throne, and he becomes the king of Israel. It's not happening that way. The Road to the Throne is Paved in Blood.

And it's going to be a while before David realizes his destiny. Then we have an interesting passage. I mentioned this before in another context when David took Abigail as his second wife.

We have what I call a harem report. Prior to this, we've been reading about David as having two wives consistently, Achinoam and Abigail, the widow of Nabal. But now we read that sons were born to David in Hebron [2 Sam. 3:2ff].

The firstborn was Amnon, who's going to play a role in the story later, especially in 2 Samuel chapter 13, the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel.

His second, Chileab, the son of Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. So those two wives, we expect to see their names there, and they each have a child.

The third, Absalom, the son of Maacah, daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur. This is the Geshur that's in Transjordan. And so David has married a daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur. Sometimes in this culture, you will marry wives to form alliances, to solidify yourself politically, and that seems to be what David has done here.

The fourth, Adonijah, the son of Haggit. All these individuals, except Chileab, are going to play an important role in the story to come. The son of Haggit.

The fifth, Shephatiah, the son of Abital.  
And the sixth, Ithream, the son of David's wife, Eglah.

And these were born to David in Hebron. All of a sudden, David's got six wives. Where did these other four come from? He's got six wives now.

And so that does raise the question, is this something positive? How should we take this? Some people would view it positively. David is taking wives. He's solidifying his place.

He's strengthening his royal court. The fact that he's having so many children is a sign of divine blessing. He's fertile.

He's able to father children. But I tend to think this is not something that's positive. In Deuteronomy 17, remember, the ideal of kingship is that the king is not to multiply wives.

Well, I think the rabbis asked the question, how many wives is it before you're multiplying wives? Kind of a typical question you might expect from those quarters. But David is multiplying wives. He had two.

Maybe we could justify a second. But he's multiplying wives. He's up to six now.

And there's going to be more later. And I think what's happening here is David's royal court is starting to look like the typical ancient Near Eastern royal court with a harem and lots of children. And I don't think this is a good thing.

Now, in the Deuteronomic passage, the concern is if you multiply wives, those wives will take your heart away from the Lord. Because you're going to be marrying foreign women. They're going to come in with their own gods.

Kind of like we read about later in the Northern Kingdom when the horrible Israelite king Ahab marries Jezebel. And she brings prophets of Baal and everything else. We see it with Solomon.

He marries a lot of women, including foreign wives. And they turn his heart away from the Lord, from wholehearted devotion to the Lord at least, to other gods. And Solomon becomes a polygamist and a polytheist.

These are all local girls, as far as we can tell. They are not turning David's heart away from the Lord. So maybe you could justify it in light of that.

But I don't think so. The point is not that David is becoming an idolater. But David is establishing a precedent here that Solomon will take to the nth degree.

And David is establishing a precedent. And he is beginning to look like the typical king like all the nations. I don't think there's anything in here that would imply David became an idolater.

But I don't think this is a good step. And so, this is one of those, I call them, cracks in the foundation. It's one of those ambiguities that surrounds David.

Yeah, he's being very successful here. But right in the middle of all this, I find this disturbing. I find this disturbing.

David is starting to look like the typical king. This could lead to problems. And it does with Solomon later.

So, during the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner had been strengthening his own position in the house of Saul. Saul had a concubine who had survived him named Rizpah, daughter of Aiah. And Ish-bosheth accuses Abner of sleeping with her.

Why did you sleep with my father's concubine? This would be serious because it would be a statement by Abner, I intend to become king. I'm going to take the former king's concubine to myself. And so it's natural that Ish-bosheth would be disturbed by this.

But I get the impression that Abner did not do this. This was a false accusation. Abner was very angry because of what Ish-bosheth said.

And he answered, am I a dog's head on Judah's side this very day? I'm loyal to the house of your father and to his family and friends. I haven't handed you over to David. You're accusing me of disloyalty by having relations with your father's concubine.

I have been a faithful pro-Saul guy all along. And I'm supporting you even now. Yet now you accuse me of an offense involving this woman.

May God deal with Abner, be it ever so severely, if I do not do for David what the Lord promised him on oath. Abner knows what the Lord has promised David. And he is now telling Ish-bosheth, I'm going to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and help establish David's throne over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beersheba, from north to south.

And Ish-bosheth is intimidated by Abner. He doesn't say anything to him. He's afraid of him.

So, Abner has decided. His honor has been assaulted here. And he decides, I'm going over to David.

I'm going over to David. And so, he approaches David. We'll streamline the story here.

And basically says, I'm willing to make an agreement with you. And I have enough pull with the Israelites. I can give you all of Israel.

And this is where it gets kind of political. And David says, I'll make that agreement with you. But I demand one thing from you.

Don't come into my presence unless you bring Michael, daughter of Saul, when you come to see me. Now remember, David had married Michael. And then when David had to run away, Saul gave her away to another man.

That was wrong. And it seems as if David has a legal right to her here. David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, son of Saul, demanding, give me my wife, Michael, whom I betrothed to myself for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins.

I paid a heavy price. I put my life on the line. I paid for her.

She's mine. And so, Ish-bosheth doesn't object to this. I think he realizes David is in the right.

So, Ish-bosheth gave orders and had her taken away from her husband, Paltiel, son of Laish. And this is kind of a sad story here. Michael has been happily married to this Paltiel.

She loved David. She helped David escape, but her father gave her away. I mean, she has no power in this culture.



Her father gave her away to this Paltiel. And her husband went with her, weeping behind her all the way to Bachurim. So here Ish-bosheth's men come along, and they take her away from Paltiel.

And you can imagine how he would feel. He loves her, and he follows after her. Abner finally says to him, go back home.

So, he went back. And so, the question arises, how are we to take all of this? Are we to view this in a positive way or a negative way? I think in light of the response that we get from Ish-bosheth, it looks to me as if David is in the right. He has a legal right to do this.

But nevertheless, did he need to do it? And I think this is a political move. After all, Michael is the daughter of Saul. David is in conflict with the Benjaminites at this point, the pro-Saul faction.

Abner has offered the Israelite tribes to David. Things are taking a turn for the good. But David can solidify his position by bringing Michael back to himself, because after all, he's married to Saul's daughter.

And so, it's a shrewd political move, but it's very unfeeling. And some scholars who have examined this carefully, focus on some of the language that's used here. The narrator calls Paltiel her husband.

David calls Michael my wife, but the narrator calls Paltiel her husband as if to challenge David's perspective. In fact, one writer has said, the narrator appears to be creating a deliberate contrast between two perspectives, betraying sympathy for one of them. In contrast to Naval, who's vilified, Paltiel is humiliated.

He's deeply bonded to his wife. His humiliation is the consequence of his falling victim to forces beyond his control. He's a victim of David's power.

Some have pointed out that even though David is in the right here, there's a foreshadowing that is going on because later David is going to exercise his power as king in 2 Samuel 11 to steal Uriah's wife Bathsheba. And in that case, David is clearly in the wrong. Not only does he commit adultery, but he then commits murder.

And so there may be a foreshadowing here of David who takes Michael back from poor Paltiel and what he's going to do down the line with Bathsheba. So, I don't think this is presented in a positive light here. I think David is playing the political game in conjunction with Abner in an effort to solidify his position.

Well, Abner confers with the elders of Israel, and he says, for some time you've wanted to make David your king. So, we discover that they've been tilting toward David. So now, do it.

For the Lord promised David, by my servant David, I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies. We don't have an exact quote along those lines, but I think it accurately represents what the Lord intends to do through David. And so, Abner is ready to turn the kingdom over to David.

He speaks to the Benjaminites, and then he goes to Hebron to tell David everything that Israel and the whole tribe of Benjamin wanted to do. And so, he arrives, and David prepares a feast for him, and Abner says, I'm going to go and I'm going to assemble all Israel for my lord the king so that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires. So, Abner is turned.

He has become loyal to David. He is now calling David his lord, his king. He wants Israel to make a covenant with David.

Everything seems to be moving in a positive direction here. But then something happens. Just then David's men and Joab returned from a raid.

They've got a great deal of plunder with them. Abner was no longer with David. He's been sent away by David.

He's gone away in peace, and that's important. War is over. This is a time of peace.

And Joab and all the soldiers with him arrive, and he's told that Abner has been there and that the king sent him away, and he's gone away in peace. And Joab and he's going to become a more prominent figure in the story, he goes to David, and he's always got David's best interest in mind because his position is tied into David. If David is strong, then Joab's position will be strong as well.

And he says, what have you done? Look, Abner came to you. Why did you let him go? Now he's gone. You know Abner.

He came to deceive you, observe your movements, and find out everything you are doing, and I think there's no basis for this. If we've been reading the story up to this, Abner seems to be sincerely on David's side. In fact, we even have a motive.

He's mad at Ish-bosheth. So, I don't believe Joab is correct in this evaluation, although I can see why, given the history, he would say something like this. He's wrong.

And so, Joab leaves David, and he sends messengers for Abner. And they bring Abner back. But notice the end of verse 26.

David did not know it. The narrator is making it clear. David has reached out, and he wants peace with the Benjaminites and with Abner.

And David does not know what Joab is doing here. So fake news might say, David sent Joab out to do this. No, no, no.

The truth is David didn't even know what Joab was doing. So, Abner comes back. And Joab takes him aside into an inner chamber as if to speak to him privately.

And then we are told that Joab, in order to avenge the blood of his brother Azahel, Joab has not put it aside. Even though he stopped pursuing Abner on that earlier occasion, he has not put it aside. He stabs him in the stomach, and he dies.

So, Joab murdered Abner at a very inopportune time, just as Abner is ready to deliver the kingdom over to David. Joab does this. Later, when David hears about this, how will he respond? David has to make it clear to everyone that he is not behind all of this.

If it seems as if David is being overly political through here, he almost has to do this. He has to distance himself from what Joab has done. He says I and my kingdom are forever innocent before the Lord, concerning the blood of Abner, son of Nair.

May his blood fall on the head of Joab and on his whole family. He calls a curse down upon Joab. And a curse is basically asking God to bring justice upon the perpetrator.

May Joab's family never be without someone who has a running sore, or leprosy, leans on a crutch, falls by the sword, or lacks food. And then verse 30, Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Azahel. Earlier, it was Joab who actually did it, but Abishai is a collaborator in this in some way.

And then David said to Joab, tear your clothes, put on sackcloth, walk in mourning in front of Abner. We're going to have a state funeral, and you're going to be right out there in mourning for what you've done. And David walks behind the bier, the casket, and they bury Abner in Hebron.

And the king weeps loudly at Abner's tomb, and all the people are weeping. And then David, who's very good with music and songwriting, sings a lament for Abner. Should Abner have died as the lawless die? Your hands were not bound, your feet were not fettered, you fell as one falls before the wicked.

And so, he again is casting Joab in the role of the wicked. And so, David is going out of his way to make it clear that he did not have a part in this. And all the people weep.

And they all came and urged David to eat something while it was still day. And David took an oath. May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets.

And all the people are watching this, and they're pleased by everything that David is doing. And I think they realize, the people and all Israel knew the king had no part in the murder of Abner, son of Ner. And so just to kind of review here, this portion of the story is very important to the defense of David because what Abner did can jeopardize all of this.

But David is protesting his innocence. First of all, the narrator is telling us he didn't know anything about it. David protests his innocence.

He calls a curse down on Joab and Abishai. He orders everyone, including Joab, to mourn for Abner. He leads a state-sponsored funeral procession.

He chants a lament. He fasts. And then he calls another curse down on Joab for good measure.

If you go into verses 38 and 39, the king said to his men, Do you not realize that a commander and a great man has fallen in Israel this day? So, he has a very high opinion of Abner. Abner has won victories for Israel. And today, though I am the anointed king, I am weak.

And these sons of Zeruiah, my nephews, they're just too strong for me. May the Lord repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds. And that sounds good on the surface.

David is distancing himself from these guys. And he's looking to the Lord to accomplish vengeance. And that can be a good thing.

But I don't think it's viewed positively. I think David is failing here. He's failing to bring justice.

And that's his job as king. Joab is a murderer. And when there's a murderer, the king has the authority under God to do something about that.

He's not bringing justice to the realm. He's very quick to kill the Amalekite. When the Amalekite says, I raised my hand against the Lord's anointed, and David said, you shouldn't have done that.

He's very quick to do that. And in fact, in chapter 4, we're going to see him. He's very quick to bring judgment upon those who are going to assassinate Ish-bosheth.

But when Joab's involved, when it's family, he has a more difficult time. And this is going to get him in trouble later when Amnon rapes his half-sister, Tamar. And David does nothing about it other than being upset with Amnon.

Absalom will be watching Tamar's full brother. And he looks at the situation, and I think he says to himself, if my father is not going to do anything about this, I'm going to have to. I'm going to have to do something about it.

And he does. He murders Amnon. And then Absalom later will go out and present himself to Israel as one who is concerned about justice, as if to say, my father isn't, so I really should be your king.

So, David's failure in this regard is going to lead to trouble. It's actually going to be a catalyst for Absalom to revolt against his own father. That's not to justify what Absalom will do.

We'll cover that in due time. So, I think there's a problem here. It's a crack in the foundation.

David is not promoting justice as he should. I don't know. Maybe deep down he's thinking, you know, it's kind of nice to have a Joab around to cover your back, an Abishai.

But he doesn't do anything about this. And some have tried to defend Joab. They say, well, it's a time of war.

No, it's a time of peace. The text said so. And later David is going to speak about this, and he's going to say that Joab killed Abner in a time of peace.

Some will say, well, maybe it's the blood vengeance rules. But Azahel was killed in battle. He was killed in battle.

And so that would put Abner, Abner's not guilty. He killed a man in a battle. It's not a manslaughter or murder situation.

And even David, David wouldn't be calling curses down on Joab if he didn't think he'd done something wrong. So, you can't get around it. Joab is a murderer, and David does nothing about it.

And that's problematic, I think. Well, we'll continue with the road to the throne as we go into chapter 4 and then chapter 5. And then we'll see David in chapter 6 set up

Jerusalem as sort of the center for worship in Israel. But we'll look at those chapters in our next lesson.

This is Dr. Bob Chisholm in his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 17 on 2 Samuel 1-3. Tell it not in Gath, chapter 1, the Road to the Throne is Paved with Blood, chapters 2 and 3.