

Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 25, 2 Samuel 18-20

© 2024 Robert Chisholm and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Bob Chisholm in his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 25, 2 Samuel 18-20. O Absalom, my son, my son, chapter 18 through chapter 19, verse 8. The return of the king brings turmoil into the kingdom. Chapter 19, verse 9 through chapter 20.

In our next lesson, we're going to be looking at 2 Samuel chapters 18, 19, and 20.

We're going to look at chapter 18: 1 through 19: 8. I've entitled it, Oh Absalom, My Son, My Son. What is going to happen in this chapter is David is going to pay installment 3. Absalom is going to be killed in battle, ironically, by Joab, who was David's instrument in killing Uriah. This will be David's third payment.

David is going to mourn for his son. When the news comes to him, we'll see he's going to say Absalom's name five times and he's going to call Absalom his son eight times. Hence the title of this section.

Recall that even though Hushai had recommended that Absalom wait and bring together a big army from all of Israel and then go out and overwhelm David, it looks as if Absalom has decided, after all, to attack David more quickly. Bad news for Achitophel because he's already committed suicide, thinking that his plan was rejected. But it looks as if Absalom does go after David immediately.

We read in 18.1, David mustered the men who were with him and he is organizing his army now. He divides his army up into three parts. Joab has command of one-third.

Abishai has command of a third. The new arrival, Ittai, the Gittite, who expressed his loyalty to David, is given control of a third of the troops as well. Then David says in verse 2, I myself will surely march out with you.

This is not good. If we are trying to implement Achitophel's plan, after all, remember that plan was to isolate David, capture him, and bring him back. The men say here, you must not go out.

If we are forced to flee, they won't care about us. Even if half of us die, they won't care. But you are worth 10,000 of us.

It would be better now for you to give us support from the city. And so they say, no, you can't be marching out into battle. They would target you for sure.

So, we kind of see David's men providentially thwarting the plan that we saw earlier. So, the king answers, I'll do whatever seems best to you. So, he stands beside the gate and his men march out to fight.

And then David is going to give a special order to his three commanders. He says to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake. There is some debate over what the correct reading is here.

One other possibility is that he says cover, that is protect, the young man Absalom. But however we read it, it's obvious that David is concerned about Absalom. He calls him the young man.

He is, I think, diminishing the gravity of what Absalom is trying to do. Absalom is trying to take his life and his throne. But David is thinking of him as a young man and asking his generals to show leniency toward Absalom.

And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders. So, David's army marches out to battle. They are not just going to run, they are going to go against Absalom's troops.

And we are told in verse 7 that Israel's troops were routed by David's men. The casualties that day were great. There is some irony here because the expression, they went out to fight Israel, expression in Hebrew, to fight or encounter Israel, it's ironic because it is only used in one other place, in Samuel, and that was way back in 1 Samuel 4-2 where the Philistines march out to fight against Israel.

Now David is being forced to fight against the armies of Israel. The casualties that day were great. That reads literally, that there was a great defeat that day.

And that's a sad echo of 1 Samuel 4 as well. The messenger, when he came to Eli on that occasion, he said that Israel had suffered heavy losses. Literally, a great defeat.

The same expression is used here, and these are the only two passages in the former Prophets where that expression shows up. So, I think it's kind of sad because something is happening to Israel on this day that is reminiscent of the great loss Israel experienced to the Philistines way back in 1 Samuel 4 when the ark was taken, but ironically in this case it's David, their chosen king, who is having to fight against them. Not Philistines, but David is having to fight against them.

And they lose this battle. It's really a civil war that's happening here. The battle spreads out over the whole countryside.

The forest swallows up more men that day than the sword. I take that to mean that men got out into the wilderness, they got confused and lost, and they just gave up and left. Now Absalom happened to meet David's men.

He was riding his mule. So, Absalom is out there in the battle, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, the NIV translates, Absalom's hair got caught in the tree. We've read about his volume of hair.

Actually, the text says his head got caught in the tree, but it may very well be that the hair, which is of course part of his head, got all tangled up in the branches, and he was left hanging in midair while the mule he was riding kept on going. So get the picture. There is Absalom dangling in the air, caught with his head in the tree, still alive.

Well, one of the men sees this, and he tells Joab, I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree. Talk about being delivered on a silver platter. And Joab says to the man, what? Did you see him? Why didn't you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have paid you.

I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a warrior's belt. But the man said, you could give me a thousand shekels, weighed out into my hands, and I would not lay a hand on the king's son. In our hearing, the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, I heard it with my own ears, protect the young man Absalom for my sake.

And here, there is no ambiguity in the Hebrew. It's clearly a verb for protect. So, protect the young man Absalom.

The king does not want him dead. And if I had put my life in jeopardy, if I had killed him, and nothing is hidden from the king, he would find out what happened. You would have kept your distance from me.

You wouldn't have had my back in this. So, there is no way I was going to do that. So, he is talking right back to the general.

And Joab says I'm not going to wait like this for you. So, he takes three javelins in his hand. It's almost as if Joab is thinking, you got the first right for the kill here, but I'm not going to wait around for you.

You're obviously not going to do anything. So, he takes three javelins in his hand and plunges them into Absalom's heart while Absalom is still alive in the oak tree. And then ten of his armor-bearers come around Absalom and they strike him and kill him.

I'm not sure why they did it this way, but perhaps this way they can go back and say that it was a group kill. And Joab isn't isolated in this way. In other words, Joab, yes, struck him, but so did others.

But they strike him down and kill him, and there we've got that verb combination again. To strike Nachah and kill Mut. And those are the verbs that were used for Uriah being struck down and killed way back in chapter 11.

So right here in the death of Absalom, David's favorite son at this point, there is an echo of David's crime. And we're reminded that David is being punished for what he did, and this is installment three. He's lost Absalom now.

Joab sounds the trumpet. The troops stop pursuing Israel. Joab halts them.

And then they take Absalom and they throw him into a pit in the forest and they pile up a large heap of rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes. Absalom's army has dispersed and they're gone.

And you may be wondering, what kind of burial is this? Is this something positive or something negative? I think it's something negative. He's being buried like a sinner and a rebel. Because there are two incidents in the background here in the history where there's kind of an echo.

After Achan was executed, remember he stole the property from Jericho that belonged to the Lord and the Israelites had to execute him. And they heaped up a large pile of rocks over him, Joshua 7, verse 26. According to Joshua 8, 29, after the king of Ai, a foreign king, was hanged, a Canaanite king, on a tree, the soldiers threw his corpse down and raised a large pile of rocks over it.

These are the only three passages in the Old Testament that mention a pile of rocks, this precise language that's used. And in each case, the adjective large pile of rocks is used. And I have to believe that the intertextual linking through these words casts Absalom in the role of a rebellious Israelite like Achan, who disgraced and jeopardized the covenant community, and a foreign enemy, the king of Ai, who died a humiliating death.

So, Absalom is being portrayed as like them. We then read, kind of parenthetically in verse 18, that during his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the king's valley as a monument to himself. So, we see he had an ego.

And he thought I have no son to carry on the memory of my name. So, he named the pillar after himself and it's called Absalom's monument to this day. This is called an etiology.

A past event is used to explain a present-day reality. It's a little tricky here because he puts this monument up thinking he will have no son to carry on the memory of his name. But in an earlier passage, we were told that he had three sons.

So, we're not sure what's going on here. The chronology, we're not sure when he did this. Had his sons died? Or perhaps he put the monument up before he had the sons thinking he wouldn't have any.

And then, in reality, he did. But you have to ask why this is here. And I think it's contributing to the idea that Absalom is really not going to have a dynasty.

All he's got is the monument he set up for himself. Nothing lasts beyond that. So, Absalom is dead.

The coup has been stopped. And Ahimaaz, who's one of those spies, those young spies that hid in the well, he's the son of Zadok. And he says I want to run and take the news to the king that the Lord has vindicated him by delivering him from the hand of his enemies.

This is the way the army sees things. The Lord has vindicated David. This is a great victory.

He's delivered him from the hand of his enemies. I want to be the one to take the news. Joab says, no you don't.

I'm paraphrasing now. You are not the one to take the news today. You can take the news another time, but don't do that today because the king's son is dead.

And that's not going to be good news to him. So, Joab picks out a Cushite, a foreigner, and he says, you go and tell the king what you've seen. And so, the Cushite bows down and he starts off.

Ahimaaz says, come what may, please let me run behind the Cushite. I want to go. I want to be in on this.

So, Joab says, well, why do you want to go? You don't have any news that's going to bring you a reward. If you think David is going to reward you because you bring him this news, that's not what's going to happen. But Ahimaaz says I want to run.

Let me run. And so, Joab says, run. And then Ahimaaz ran and he went by the plain and he outruns the Cushite.

So, David is sitting there between the inner and the outer gates. And the watchman says I see a man running alone. And David says, if he's alone, he must have good news.

David is trying to put a positive spin on this. And the runner came closer and closer. And the watchman sees another runner.

And he says, look, another man running alone. And the king said, well, he's probably bringing good news too. And the watchman says it seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz, son of Zadok.

Apparently they know what he looks like when he's running. It looks like it's him. And David says, he's a good man.

He comes with good news. So Ahimaaz gets there first. This is what he wanted.

And he calls out to the king, that all is well. And he bowed down before the king with his face to the ground. And he said praise be to the Lord your God.

He has delivered up those who lifted their hands against my lord, the king. So once again, we see, I think, the way the army views what has happened. The Lord is to be praised.

He has delivered David. But David, I think, realizes in the midst of this, even though it's good, there's deliverance. He knows he's under the discipline of God.

And so, the king asked, is the young man Absalom safe? It's clear that David's concern is with him. And Ahimaaz, I think, at this point realizes, you know, I should have listened to Joab. And so, he just kind of deflects this.

I saw great confusion just as Joab was about to send the king's servant and me, your servant. But I don't know what it was. So, the king says, well, just stand aside.

The Kushite comes along. And he says, my lord, the king, hear the good news. The Lord has vindicated you today by delivering you from the hand of all who rose up against you.

And the king said, is the young man Absalom safe? And the Kushite replies, may the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you. This is a reminder to David of reality. You have enemies.

You know, your son was the head of the enemy force. They rose up to harm you. This is a reminder to David.

Be like that young man. So, the Cushite is saying, I hope that all of your enemies end up like him. And David's response is not a positive one.

The king was shaken. The king shook. And that word that's used in Hebrew for shaking here is a strong one.

It's used of earthquakes in other places. He just, you know, started shaking, trembling. And he went up to the room over the gateway and he wept.

And then we see him crying out. As he went, he said, oh my son Absalom. My son, my son Absalom.

And then look what he says here. If only I had died instead of you. Oh Absalom, my son, my son.

David has been delivered and he's talking this way. I wish that I would have died instead of you. I wish your coup had been successful.

Really? And he's saying this in the hearing of men who have risked their lives to preserve his throne. Joab was told, the king was weeping and mourning for Absalom. And by the way, David is weeping and crying out loud.

And remember Tamar. Remember Tamar weeping and crying after what happened to her. And what goes around comes around.

David is feeling what she feels now. Don't miss the justice in all of this. Joab was told, the king was weeping and mourning for Absalom.

And for the whole army, the victory that day was turned into mourning. Because on that day, the troops heard it said, the king was grieving for his son. So, they won a great victory.

They've saved their king. And now everybody starts mourning because the king is. The men stole into the city that day.

As men feel shame when they flee from battle. So as the men come into the city, it's as if they lost. There's something wrong here.

The king covered his face and cried aloud. O, my son, Absalom. O Absalom, My son, my son. He said Absalom's name now five times and my son eight times. Joab's had enough.

Joab went into the house to the king and he said, Today you have humiliated all your men. Who have just saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and the

lives of your wives and concubines. 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. I see that you would be pleased if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead. It's not just about you David.

It's about your whole army and your loyal followers. Now go out and encourage your men. I swear by the Lord that if you don't do that, not a man will be left with you by nightfall.

This will be worse for you than all the calamities that have come on you from your youth till now. So, if you don't do something about this, you're going to lose your army. And if you think you've had it bad thus far, it will be even worse.

This is wise counsel from Joab. Who always does what he thinks is best for David. Because what's best for David is best for Joab.

So, the king got up and took his seat in the gateway. So, David complies. And when the men were told the king was sitting in the gateway, they all came before him.

So, a very tragic story. The Lord's discipline once decreed is inescapable. Installment three has been paid.

And the Lord's discipline, even when tempered by his salvation, can be very, very painful. And David in many ways is experiencing the pain that Tamar experienced. And so we can't miss that in the midst of the story.

But it's one of the saddest, I think, stories in the entire Bible to see a father grieving over his son like this, kind of out of touch with reality, failing to see that his son really was his enemy. And it's tragic that it has come to that. That brings us to the next section, which we're going to cover.

Chapter 19, verse 9. Remember at the end of verse 8, the Israelites had fled to their homes. And in 19.9, we're going to shift over to see what's going on among the tribes of Israel. They've got to make a decision now.

They've thrown their support to Absalom. He's gone. David's back.

What are we going to do? But 19.9 through the end of chapter 20, verse 26, I've entitled, The Return of the King Brings Turmoil in the Kingdom. So, these are difficult days, and there's going to be some conflict and some tension. And it's not entirely clear yet that Israel is going to throw its support back to David.

And so, I think what we see in this section is the consequences of sin can be persistent, even when the Lord's repentant servants do their best to promote unity. And David is going to do that. And the Lord's faithful covenant promise is fulfilled.

So, again, we've got the Lord working to save David, but at the same time we've got the Lord disciplining David, and we've got to hold those in balance here. And David is going to be doing his best to promote unity. The Lord has saved him, but at the same time, he's going to be experiencing the consequences of his sin by not taking care of Joab and especially Absalom the way he should have earlier.

And so, Israel is experiencing a lack of unity at this point in time. And we read in 19.9, the tribes of Israel, are all arguing with each other. They don't know what to do.

The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies. He's the one who rescued us from the hand of the Philistines. So, they remember what David has done in the past, and they realize that he's been a great asset to Israel.

But now he has fled the country to escape from Absalom. And Absalom, whom we appointed to rule over us, has died in the battle. So, David is kind of in exile, and Absalom is dead.

So why do you say nothing about bringing the king back? They're struggling with what to do. Meanwhile, in verse 11, King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar the priest. Ask the elders of Judah, why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace, since what is being said throughout Israel has reached the king at his quarters? So, he's reaching out to the men of Judah.

When his reign began way back, he first ruled over Judah from Hebron, and so he's reaching out to them at this point. David realizes he needs to solidify his support and his power. He wants to get back to Jerusalem, and so he's reaching out to them, and he calls them, my own flesh and blood.

Why should you be the last to bring back the king? You're my fellow tribesmen. You should be the first ones to throw your support to me and bring me back. And then something else David is going to do here, we discover.

He's mad at Joab because Joab killed Absalom. And he said, and say to Amasa, are you not my own flesh and blood? And Amasa is David's nephew. He had a different mother than Joab.

They're not brothers. May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if you are not the commander of my army for life in place of Joab. So, David is demoting Joab, and he has chosen Amasa, another one of his nephews from a different sister, to now be in charge of the army.

So, you can almost realize what's going to happen here. This is not going to go over with Joab, not going to go over well. He won over the hearts of the men of Judah so that they were all of one mind.

So, Judah has unified behind David. No surprise, really, that they would do this. There was unanimous approval from Judah, and they sent word to the king, return you and all your men.

So, you come back, we're going to support you. So, the king returned and went as far as the Jordan. Now the men of Judah had come to Gilgal to go out and meet the king and bring him across the Jordan.

So, get the picture, David had to flee across Jordan. Now he's ready to come back, but he wants to make sure he has support when he does so. The men of Judah have decided, yes, we'll support him.

They go out to meet him. Well, lo and behold, who shows up? Shimei, son of Gerah, the Benjamite from Bahurim, hurried down with the men of Judah to meet King David. He's not alone.

With him were a thousand Benjaminites, along with Ziva, the steward of Saul's household, and his fourteen sons and twenty servants. So, there are a lot of Benjaminites that are showing up here as well. They rushed to the Jordan where the king was.

They crossed the ford to take the king's household over and to do whatever he wished. So, it looks as if these Benjaminites are prepared to throw their support to David. Shimei's in trouble.

The last time we saw him, he was throwing rocks and cursing David. So Shimei, son of Gerah, crossed the Jordan, and he fell prostrate before the king. And he said to him, May my lord not hold me guilty.

So, he's begging for forgiveness. Do not remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. May the king put it out of his mind.

For I, your servant, know that I have sinned. But today I have come here as the first from the tribes of Joseph, the northerners, to come down and meet my lord the king. So, I think Shimei realizes he's in trouble.

David has been vindicated. His curse did not come to pass. And so, he's begging for forgiveness.

Well, Abishai's there, and you know he doesn't like Shimei. He wanted to murder Shimei before, and he wants to do it again. He says to David, shouldn't Shimei be put to death for this? He cursed the lord's anointed.

So Abishai wants to take a second run at this. And David replies, what does this have to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? What right do you have to interfere? Should anyone be put to death in Israel today? Don't I know that today I am king over Israel? So, the king said to Shimei, you won't die. And the king promised him this on oath.

So, one question is, why is David so merciful to the Benjaminites? Well, I think he realizes this is not a day for further battle. We don't want to prolong this. The lord has given us a victory, and so let's show some mercy in that.

But some have suggested there may be a little more of a political motivation here. After all, Shimei's not alone. He's got a lot of Benjaminites with him.

And so, it makes sense for David to forgive him and let bygones be bygones. Because in doing so, he can win over that Benjaminite element. And so, I think there's some of that going on as well.

Because later on his deathbed, David is not going to be so merciful. He is going to say to Solomon, this is in 1 Kings 2, verses 8 and 9, he's going to basically say, Shimei cursed me, and he needs to die. And I want you to take care of that when I'm gone.

He also tells Solomon to take care of Joab. And Solomon does that as well. So, I'm not so sure that David is just the paragon of forgiveness here.

I think he's responding to Shimei the way he does because he realizes this is an opportunity to, to his credit, create some unity, reunify the nation, and get the Benjaminites over on his side because he has been vindicated. Well, look who else shows up. In chapter 19, verse 24, Mephibosheth shows up.

Remember earlier, Ziva showed up and said, Mephibosheth has betrayed you. And David had given all of Mephibosheth's property to Ziva. But Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, also comes down to meet the king.

He had not taken care of his feet, trimmed his mustache, or washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he returned safely. It looks as if he has been mourning for David rather than betraying him. And he came from Jerusalem to meet the king.

And David asks him, why didn't you go with me, Mephibosheth? Where have you been? And he said, my lord, the king, since I, your servant, am lame, I said I wanted

to have my donkey saddled so I could come with you, but Ziva betrayed me. He didn't do it. And so, I was stuck.

And he slandered your servant to my lord, the king. But my lord, the king, is like an angel of God, so do whatever you wish. And all my grandfather's descendants deserve nothing but death from my lord, the king.

But you gave your servant a place among those who eat at your table. So what right do I have to make any more appeals to the king? You showed me so much mercy before. Who am I to dictate to you what you are to do now? Mephibosheth comes across as very sincere to me.

And when the narrator describes him as one who has been in mourning, that tells me that there's truth here. And so, David says, well, why say more? Now he's going to change his earlier verdict. I order you and Ziva to divide the land.

He told me one thing, you told me another. I just will split it. But Mephibosheth, and this also gives some authenticity, I think, to him, he says to the king, let him take everything, now that my lord, the king, has returned home safely.

All I care about is you. If he wants to have everything, let him have it. So next we run into a fellow named Barzillai, the Gileadite.

He also came down from Rogalim to cross the Jordan with the king and to send him on his way from there. And Barzillai is old. He's 80 years old.

He has taken care of David during his stay in Mahanaim. He's a very wealthy man. And David says to Barzillai, why don't you cross over with me? Stay with me in Jerusalem.

I'll provide it for you. I want you to live with me. You've been loyal, and I want to show loyalty to you.

But Barzillai answers, I don't have, I'm paraphrasing now, I don't have a whole lot longer to live, and I really don't want to spend my final days in Jerusalem. I'm 80 years old. I can't tell the difference between what's enjoyable and what isn't.

I have no taste left. I can't discern taste. I can't hear the voices of male and female singers.

I don't want to be a burden on you. You don't need to have me around. But I'll cross the Jordan with you, go a short distance to show my loyalty to you, but you don't need to reward me.

Let your servant return that I may die in my own town near the tomb of my father and mother, verse 37. But I'll tell you what. I have a servant here, Kim Ham, and I would like to launch him into a successful career.

I'm paraphrasing now. Let him cross over with my lord, the king, and do for him whatever you wish. And so, the king said, Kim Ham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him whatever you wish.

And anything you desire from me, I will do for you. So, all the people cross over the Jordan. David crosses over.

The king kisses Barzillai, bids him farewell, and he goes home. And Kim Ham crosses over with him. And all the troops of Judah and half the troops of Israel have taken the king over.

So, David has support from Judah. He has some support from Israel. And then the men of Israel come to the king, and they're jealous.

Remember, earlier they were trying to make a decision. David reached out to the men of Judah in the meantime, and they threw in their support. The men of Israel were debating what should be done.

Well, they're upset now because they think the men of Judah have tried to get an edge on them. Why did our brothers, the men of Judah, steal the king away and bring him and his household across the Jordan together with all his men? Well, the men of Judah are upset by this. We did this because the king is closely related to us.

Why are you angry about it? Have we eaten any of the king's provisions? Have we taken anything for ourselves? And the men of Israel answer back, We have ten shares in the king. We have more tribes. You're just one tribe.

So, we have a greater claim on the king than you have. Why then do you treat us with contempt? Weren't we the first to speak of bringing back the king? Well, they might have spoken about it, but they didn't do it. But the men of Judah press their claims even more forcefully than the men of Israel.

And even though David is coming back, his sin, his failure to bring justice to Joab and especially Absalom, has had some negative consequences. And you sense that there is a lack of unity among the tribes, the northern tribes and Judah. And I think there's some foreshadowing here because the United Kingdom is going to continue for the rest of David's reign and on through Solomon's reign.

But as soon as Solomon dies, the northern kingdom comes with complaints to Solomon's successor Rehoboam. At that point, they don't get a satisfactory response

and the kingdom divides for good. And so, we see that tension that's developing here.

David is coming back, but there is turmoil. Actions have consequences and David is experiencing some of that. Well, there's a troublemaker.

In 2 Samuel 20, verse 1, we read about this troublemaker named Sheba. He's called a man of Belial. He's a worthless man.

The same expression that was used of Nabal, or back in 1 Samuel 25, 25. A similar expression, worthless sons, used of Eli's sons. So, this fellow is not a good guy.

He's a Benjamite, no surprise there. And he sounded the trumpet and shouted, We have no share in David, no part in Jesse's son. Every man to his tent, Israel.

So, he wants to exploit this lack of unity between Judah and the northern tribes. And so, all the men of Israel, according to verse 2, deserted David to follow Sheba, son of Bichri. But the men of Judah stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

So, it looks as if initially Sheba is successful as he exhorts the men of Israel to follow him. David goes back to his palace in Jerusalem. He finds out what has happened to the concubines, and he has no relations with them from this point on.

They're kept in confinement until the day of their death, living as widows. Another reminder, there are negative consequences for a lot of people when you make unwise decisions. The king then says to Amasa, now remember, Amasa is the new general.

He says I want you to summon the men of Judah and come to me in three days. And so, Amasa goes out to do that, but he takes longer than the time that David had designated. And so, David says to Abishai, Sheba is going to do us more harm than Absalom did.

Take your master's men, pursue him, or he will find fortified cities and escape from us. So, David is concerned about Sheba, who has kind of fomented this rebellion, and he thinks he could be a worse enemy than Absalom, so we need to go after him. Amasa hasn't come back yet, and so Abishai, I'm going to give you this task.

So, notice it's not Joab, it's Abishai. And so, Joab's men and others, warriors, went out under the command of Abishai, and they marched out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba. And they're at the Great Rock in Gibeon, and Amasa finally comes to meet them.

Joab has his military tunic on, he's strapped it over his waist with a belt, and there's a dagger in its sheath, as he steps forward, the dagger, I think conveniently, drops out of its sheath. And Joab says to Amasa, How are you, my brother? Remember, they're cousins. And then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.

And you would think he's reaching out with his right hand in a gesture of love and friendship, so he's not going to try to kill him. He's reaching out with his right hand, his dominant hand, but Amasa is not on his guard against the dagger in Joab's hand. Joab has apparently picked up the dagger in his left hand, and he plunges it into his belly, and Amasa's intestines spill out on the ground.

And without being stabbed again, Amasa died. And Joab and his brother Abishai move on, and they just pursue Sheba. So, Joab, the murderer, is still on his game.

And I think it's pretty clear why he did this. He resents the fact that Amasa was given his position, and so he decides to murder the one that David has designated as the new general, even though this is a relative of his. So, one of Joab's men stood beside Amasa and said, whoever favors Joab and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab.

So, it's pretty clear that Joab wants his position back, and he is speaking as if he were the general of the army. Amasa lays there wallowing in his blood, and people are coming by and pausing, and so they realize, we've got to get his body off the road, so they drag him off the road, and it's all very humiliating, all of the detail. And I think it's just designed to remind us what a bloodthirsty assassin and murderer Joab is.

Well, Sheba passes through all the tribes of Israel and goes way, way up north, and Joab follows him, keeps right on his trail, and they end up way up north, and Joab besieges the city that Sheba has gone to, and they build a siege ramp, and it stood against the outer fortifications of the city, and they're battering the wall in order to bring it down. Well, a wise woman of this city calls out, listen, listen, tell Joab to come here so I can speak to him. And he went toward her, and she said, are you Joab? He goes, I am.

She says, well, listen to me. He says I'm listening. She says, long ago, they used to say, get your answer at Avail, this town, and that settled it.

We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. We are people who have always promoted peace in our nation. People would come here to have conflicts resolved.

This is our reputation. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel, the metaphor of mother, one who nurtures the nation. And cares for it.

Why do you want to swallow up the Lord's inheritance? Why are you doing this to us? And Joab's reply is, far be it from me. Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy. That's not the case.

A man named Sheba, son of Bichri, from the hill country of Ephraim, has lifted up his hand against the king, against David. Hand over this one man, and I'll withdraw from the city. I don't care about your city.

I want him. I want Sheba. The woman said to Joab, his head will be thrown to you from the wall.

So, the woman went to all the people with her wise advice, and they cut off the head of Sheba and threw it to Joab. He sounds the trumpet, his men disperse, and they go home, and Joab goes back to Jerusalem. And so, Joab has taken care of Sheba.

Apparently, along the way, Sheba lost a lot of the support that he seemed to have initially. And as he was running away, the very fact that he would run away suggests something about his confidence level. He wasn't ready to tackle David's army, despite that initial show of support from the Israelites.

And by the end, no one's ready to support him, and they throw his head over the wall. And then, at the end of chapter 20, we kind of have a coalition of officials in David's cabinet, as it were. Joab was over Israel's entire army.

Well, guess who was back? Amasa was dead. David apparently doesn't do anything to Joab, and so he's back in charge of the army. And then, we won't read through all of these, but if you go back down to verse 24, Adoniram was in charge of forced labor.

That's a little disturbing. David is apparently forcing some Israelites to work, maybe on public projects or something like that, a labor force that the government is running. Okay, and this is not good.

It sets a dangerous precedent for Solomon and Rehoboam, who eventually expand this workforce in a very oppressive way. We read about this in Kings, violating, really, a principle that the king is not supposed to elevate himself above his countrymen. That's Deuteronomy 17, verse 20.

These oppressive policies of Solomon and Rehoboam lead to the division of the kingdom after Solomon's death. And in fact, this fellow who's called Adoniram here, elsewhere he's called Adoram, David's supervisor, he continues in that position under Solomon and Rehoboam. And when Rehoboam sends him out to retrieve the rebellious northern workforce, the Israelites stone him to death.

So, it's a little disturbing to see that David now has someone in charge of forced labor in his cabin. So, David still is operating in some respects like a typical king. Well, that brings us to the end of this section.

All that we have left in our study of the books of Samuel is the epilogue, 2 Samuel 21-24, and we'll be talking about that in coming lessons. The material in 21-24 is not in chronological sequence with this. We're going to go back into the reign of David with some of these incidents.

But we will pick it up with 2 Samuel 21 in our next lesson.

This is Dr. Bob Chisholm in his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 25, 2 Samuel 18-20. O Absalom, my son, my son, chapter 18 through chapter 19, verse 8. The return of the king brings turmoil into the kingdom. Chapter 19, verse 9 through chapter 20.