

Second Verse, Same as the First

Text: 2 Samuel 20

Introduction: Have you ever had one of those times where something happens and you immediately think, “Here we go again”?

Maybe it’s the same issue at work that keeps coming up. Maybe it’s a recurring conflict in your family. Or the same struggle you thought you had finally overcome.

You deal with it. You get through it. And then not long after, it shows up again. Only slightly different this time.

Well, that’s exactly what we find in 2 Samuel 20. Threats to David and his kingdom seem to pop up time and time again throughout the narrative of Samuel.

There was Saul and his efforts to kill David. There was Ish-bosheth and his attempt to reign in his father Saul’s place. Then there was David’s son Absalom and his efforts to usurp the throne. We might have thought after Absalom’s death at the end of chapter 18 that the threat was gone and the kingdom could now experience peace.

But when we turn the page to chapter 20, it doesn’t take long before we start to think, “Here we go again.”

A new rebel rises up. A new division forms. A new threat emerges. And yet, as we look closer, we realize that it’s not really new at all.

That brings us to 2 Samuel 20. Go ahead and turn there in your Bible if you haven’t already. It’s on page 254 in the black pew Bible in front of you. 2 Samuel 20. If you don’t own a Bible, we invite you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave this morning.

(Read 2 Samuel 20...Pray)

We’re going to see in 2 Samuel 20 that **in a world broken by sin, there will always be threats to God, His kingdom, and His eternal purposes, but Jesus will make all things right and end all threats.**

As I was studying 2 Samuel 20 this week, I wrote in my notes...

I. There’s always a “new” threat (2 Samuel 20:1-3).

A. Here we go again. David’s entire public life seems to have been one of dealing with opposition.

- 1. It was all the way back in 1 Samuel 16 that Samuel anointed David as Israel’s next king.**
- 2. Once King Saul became aware of David, things were fine for a short time. Until Saul grew jealous of David and began seeking to kill him.**
- 3. Eventually, Saul died, and it was time for David to ascend to the throne. But not so fast. Saul’s son Ish-bosheth became king of the northern tribes.**
- 4. When Ish-bosheth was murdered, David became king of all Israel. And lived happily ever after, right? Again, not so fast.**
- 5. As we’ve seen, David’s son Absalom eventually sought to undermine his father and set himself up as Israel’s king.**
- 6. But then Absalom was killed, and the threats to David’s throne seemed to be over.**
- 7. But now we come to chapter 20, and we see very clearly that is not the case. Here we go again.**

B. We saw at the end of chapter 19 that there was a dispute between the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribe of Judah.

- 1. David was from Judah.**
- 2. But the men of Israel wanted to know why David seemed to be closer to the tribe of Judah than to them. Why had Judah been the ones to bring David over the Jordan to Jerusalem? Why not Israel?**
- 3. The men of Judah were more than happy to answer them. They said, “Because the king is OUR close relative.**
- 4. And the men of Israel said, “Oh yeah, well we have TEN tribes. AND we were the first to talk about bringing David back as king.”**

5. The point is the division. The point is that things were not as they had been. David returns to Jerusalem as king. But there's trouble in paradise.
- C. And the trouble of the end of chapter 19 continues into the beginning of chapter 20.
1. There was a man of the tribe of Benjamin named Sheba (vs. 1).
 - a. The text says that he was a "worthless man"
 - b. That's a phrase we've seen before. Perhaps most noticeably with old Eli's sons in the opening chapters of 1 Samuel. They were worthless men.
 - c. It wasn't a compliment. Sheba was a rebellious and wicked man. He did not know the Lord or honor Him with his life.
 2. And Sheba saw an opportunity to take advantage of the conflict that was brewing over between the tribes of Israel and Judah.
 - a. It's interesting. The text says that Sheba was a Benjaminite.
 - b. The fact that he's a Benjaminite should remind us of other Benjaminites who opposed David, starting with Saul himself who was a Benjaminite.
 - c. The fact that Sheba was a Benjaminite also means that his tribe would eventually become part of the southern kingdom of Judah. But here he sides with the northern tribes of Israel. Because it seems advantageous to him.
 3. And look at what Sheba says to the tribes of Israel at the end of verse 1: "We have no portion in David, and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel."
 - a. This is exactly the opposite of what the men of Israel claimed in verse 43 of chapter 19. There they claimed to have 10 shares. Here Sheba says that they have "no inheritance."
 - b. Sheba sought to convince the tribes of Israel that following David would get them nowhere. Instead, they should follow him.
4. And it worked! Look at verse 2. (Read vs. 2)
- a. The men of Israel withdrew from David and followed Sheba.
 - b. The men of Judah followed David.
5. Here we go again...
- D. There's a little bit of an excurses in the text that I want to draw your attention to before I apply what we just saw with the beginning of Sheba's rebellion.
1. Look at verse 3. (Read vs. 3)
 2. You remember what happened to David's concubines, don't you? Back in chapter 16. Absalom violated them.
 3. We really can't get into the moral difficulty of David having concubines in the first place. I've argued earlier in our study through 2 Samuel that David was operating outside of God's design by taking concubines.
 4. But the point here is David's care for them. David is a very morally complicated man at this point in 2 Samuel, but it's worth noting his provision for these concubines. He did not just forget them. He made sure their needs were met.
 5. We should also note the brokenness of their lives that had been caused by David taking them as concubines in the first place and then all the consequences that resulted from His sin against Bathsheba and Uriah.
 6. We like to think that our sin only affects us. But do not be deceived. Sin often results in collateral damage. And it certainly did in the lives of these women. These precious image bearers of God.
- E. You remember the main idea of the sermon, don't you? In a world broken by sin, there will always be threats to God, His kingdom, and His eternal purposes.

1. That's what we see here in these opening verses of 2 Samuel 20.
2. For all his significant flaws, David was God's anointed king. This opposition to David on the part of Sheba and the people of Israel was ultimately opposition to God.
3. And the truth is that opposition to God and His purposes continues today.
4. We have an enemy. The devil. He comes to steal, kill, and destroy. He's been at it since Genesis chapter 3 when he tempted Adam and Eve to sin against God. To rebel against God's purposes.
5. And he seeks to do the same thing in our lives as well. To get us to question God.
6. Sheba said to the people of Israel, "You have no inheritance in David." Satan says something similar to us, "You have no inheritance in God." Go your own way. Do your own thing. Gratify your own desires. Satisfy yourself. That's what really matters.
7. Sheba was wrong. The people of Israel did have an inheritance in David. They had said it themselves just one verse earlier. If they would follow David as king and submit to his rule and reign.
8. Satan is wrong too. We do have an inheritance in God. Through Christ. Paul writes in Ephesians 1, "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory."
9. Trust Christ. Follow Him. Submit to His rule and reign in your life. And you will receive an inheritance far greater than anything this world has to offer.

We've seen that there's always a "new" threat. Next we see that...

II. The "new" threat looks a lot like the old threat (2 Samuel 20:4-13).

A. Look with me at this "new" threat.

1. We see in verse 4 that David instructs Amasa to call the men of Judah together (vs. 4). Remember that Amasa was the commander of Absalom's army whom David elevated to commander of his army in place of Joab after Absalom's death.
2. Unfortunately, Amasa took too long, and David knew he needed to hurry (vs. 5).
3. So, David called for Abishai and said... (Read vs. 6)
4. From there, the men of Judah, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites went out from Jerusalem to hunt down Sheba (vs. 7).

B. But, at one point along their journey, the text says that Amasa came to meet them.

1. That may seem innocent enough at first.
2. But then we notice that something seems off. The text says that "Joab was wearing a soldier's garment" (vs. 8b). That's fine. It makes sense. But why is the text telling us that? Not for no reason.
3. Remember that Amasa took Joab's spot as commander of David's army. Amasa had been the commander of Absalom's army. Joab was the one who killed Absalom. Something is going on here.
4. Keep reading: "And over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath fastened on his thigh" (vs. 8c). Now, it's not abnormal that a man going into battle would have a sword. But again, why is the text telling us this? Something's up.
5. "And as he went forward it fell out" (vs. 8d). Uh oh.
6. "And Joab said to Amasa, 'Is it well with you, MY BROTHER?'" (vs. 9a). I'm sure Joab was real concerned with how Amasa was doing. And I'm sure he felt very brotherly toward him.
7. So much so that "Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him" (vs. 9b).
8. But in Joab's other hand was his sword. Look at verse 10. (Read vs. 10)

9. Joab had killed Abner. Joab killed David's son Absalom. And now he has killed the commander of David's army. Presumably out of jealousy and vengeance.
10. No moral judgment is made here in the text concerning Joab's actions, but we do know from 1 Kings 2 how David felt about it. Joab would eventually experience justice for his sin.
11. We've said that David was not bloodthirsty. He was not a man of vengeance. Joab, however, was. And he stands as a warning to us. We do not live in an anything-goes world. Certainly, that's the perspective of many in the world. But it is not the view of the Creator. He has created mankind in His image. Human life has inherent dignity and worth. We have to be careful to guard our hearts against justifying evil because it achieves some desired end. I'm sure Joab could come up with plenty of ways to justify his murder of Abner, and Absalom, and Amasa. But his actions were not right. And that matters. As God's people, we should always seek to do what is right in all circumstances. The end does not justify the means.

C. After Amasa was murdered, the text says that Joab and Abishai continued their pursuit of Sheba.

1. They were committed to eliminating the threat to David's kingdom.
2. One of Joab's young men stood by Amasa's dead body and sought to rally the troops behind Joab. "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab," he said.
3. The problem was that Amasa's dead body was still there lying in a pool of blood. So, they took Amasa's body out into the field to dispose of it. You might say that Amasa's blood was crying out from the ground.
4. One commentator writes, "The idea that following Joab was the same thing as following David was easier to believe when Amasa's slaughtered body was out of sight" (Woodhouse, 476).

D. All of this seems so familiar, doesn't it?

1. Sure, the details are different. But the basic story feels very much the same as what we've been seeing throughout 1 and 2 Samuel with various threats to David's kingdom.
2. The more things change, the more they stay the same.
3. Or as the writer of Ecclesiastes (David's son Solomon) says, "There's nothing new under the sun."
4. This "new" threat looks a lot like the old threats.
5. Isn't that true today as well? Satan doesn't really have any new tricks. He just keeps running back the same old tricks with maybe a slightly different twist.
6. Like with Adam and Eve, he seeks to get us to question God. Did God really say? God is our Creator. He knows what is best for us. He knows how life on this earth as human beings created in His image was designed to be lived. But Satan wants us to think we know better than God.
7. We don't. We don't know better than God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Cling to the Lord. Follow His Word through the power of His Spirit. That's the path that leads to life. The narrow path. The wide gate leads only to destruction.

There's always a "new" threat. The "new" threat looks a lot like the old threat. And...

III. No "threat" is truly a threat to the Lord (2 Sam 20:14-26).

- A. I'm going to quickly summarize what happens next because the point is that the threat to David's kingdom was neutralized.
 1. Sheba found refuge from the pursuit of Joab and Abishai and their men in a place called Abel of Bethmaacah (vs. 14).
 2. But that refuge didn't last long because the text says that Joab and his men "cast up a mound against the rampart, and they were battering the wall to throw it down" (vs. 15).

3. But then in verse 16, we're introduced to someone that the text calls a "wise woman." You can contrast this with the way the text describes Sheba. He was a worthless man. She is a wise woman. And she wants to speak to Joab (vs. 16).
 4. She wants to know what Joab is doing. Why is he trying to destroy her city (vs. 17-19)?
 5. To which Joab responds that what they are really after is Sheba. If they will give up Sheba, he will withdraw from the city (vs. 20-21a).
 6. And what does the woman say in response? "Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall" (vs. 21b).
 7. And that's exactly what happened. They cut off Sheba's head, threw it over the wall, and Joab and his men returned to Jerusalem (vs. 22).
 8. Once again, a threat to David's kingdom was neutralized. David is God's anointed. And God's purposes endure. He always keeps His promises. He always does exactly what He says He is going to do.
- B. King David is on his throne in Jerusalem, and the chapter ends with a list of office-bearers in David's kingdom (vs 23-26).**
1. Woodhouse notes that this paragraph is very similar to 2 Samuel 8:15-18 at the beginning of David's reign as king over all Israel (Woodhouse, 478-479).
 2. But the first thing we note by way of comparison is one very important difference.
 - a. Perhaps you remember what the author said about David and his reign as king back in 2 Samuel 8:15, "So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people."
 - b. Notice that there's nothing like that here in chapter 20.
 - c. David was now struggling to reign over "all Israel," and it was far from clear that "justice and equity" prevailed in David's kingdom.
- d. The words of 2 Samuel 8:15 no longer describe David's kingdom. His leadership as king is a shell of its former self. That's the consequence of sin.
3. Notice that Joab is still listed as commander of David's army. That may have seemed right in chapter 8. But now in chapter 20, it's a sign of compromise. David had taken steps to replace Joab. But when Joab asserted himself by killing his replacement, David backed down.
 4. Finally, notice the mention of "forced labor" in verse 24. This was some kind of slavery and was a new development in David's kingdom. And certainly not a positive development. Eventually, forced labor would include Israelites and contribute to the division of the kingdom.
 5. Woodhouse writes, "The list of officials that in 2 Samuel 8 had been testimony to the order, justice, and righteousness of David's kingdom is in 2 Samuel 20 merely a description of the externals that had been recovered. It was no longer the remarkable kingdom it had been. The consequences of David's sin had undermined the goodness of the kingdom, and Joab's brutal force could not retrieve it. David's kingdom had become too like the kingdoms of this world, held together by the likes of Joab. This is a somber moment in Biblical history. David's kingdom will, in fact, never recover."

Conclusion: That's the tension of 2 Samuel, isn't it?

On the one hand, God preserves David's kingdom. Again and again, threats rise up against him. Saul. Ish-bosheth. Absalom. And now Sheba. But each one ultimately fails. God is faithful. He preserves His anointed. He always keeps His promises. He always does exactly what He says He is going to do.

But on the other hand, there was one threat to David's kingdom that did have disastrous consequences for David, his family, and the nation. It wasn't an external threat. It was the threat that arose within his own heart. His lustful murderous heart toward Bathsheba and Uriah. External enemies couldn't destroy David's kingdom, but internal sin nearly unraveled it.

And this is where we see that King Jesus is so very unlike any other king to ever rule or reign. Including David. King Jesus is the holy and righteous one. He always does what is right. His kingdom is one of justice and equity forever. We never have to fear that maybe things will change for the worse. He is unchanging. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We may live in a world where it feels like, “Here we go again.” Another problem. Another conflict. Another threat.

But when King Jesus returns, there will be no more “Here we go again.” Jesus will make all things right. He will end all threats. Revelation 11:15 says, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” God is faithful. He always keeps His promises. He always does exactly what He says He is going to do.

The question for us this morning is simple:

Are you living in rebellion against King Jesus?

Or are you gladly submitting to Him?

Turn from your sin. Put your trust in Jesus. And submit to His rule and reign. Because His kingdom is the only kingdom that will stand forever.