



## 24: Changing Teams (2 Sam 2:12-3:21)

*From Abner to Paul to us, the story is the same: the rightful King demands allegiance.  
Today we'll see why following Jesus means leaving one kingdom for another  
- and inviting others to do the same.*

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### teachingnotes

\* All Scripture is from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB).

#### Catch the Context

Two weeks ago we ended with David being given the thumbs up to finally return to his tribal land of Judah after the death of Saul. It was there that the people of Judah anointed him KING over them. BUT...Abner made Ish-bosheth (son of Saul) king **over all Israel** including many other towns and tribal allotments. Abner moved the new king to the protected city of **Mahanaim...** while the house of **Judah...followed David**. That decision of choosing who they serve is going to cost them something.

#### 2 Samuel 2:12-13a

**Abner** son of Ner and **soldiers of Ish-bosheth** son of Saul marched out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. So **Joab** son of Zeruiah and **David's soldiers** marched out and met them by the pool of Gibeon.

**Joab** is David's nephew (son of David's sister 1 Chr 2:16). He is also the commander of David's army, the southern version of Abner. These leaders and their men march to **Gibeon**, wasn't a quick trip.

- Joab & David's men, coming from Hebron - would have been over 20 miles (1-2 days).
- Abner & Ishbosheth's men, coming from Mahanaim - would have been over 55 miles (3-5 days). Gibeon was NOT in the tribal land of Judah belonging to David, but it *was* in the tribal land of Benjamin (where Saul was from), and was on the boarder. *Abner was either going to Gibeon to flex his military muscles OR was moving in to try to conquer David and his men in Judah.*

#### 2 Samuel 2:13b-22

The two groups took up positions on opposite sides of the pool. Then **Abner** said to **Joab**, "Let's have the young men get up and compete in front of us." "Let them get up," Joab replied.

So they got up and were counted off—twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth son of Saul, and twelve from David's soldiers.

Then each man grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust his sword into his opponent's side so that **they all died together**.

So this place, which is in Gibeon, is named Field of Blades.

The battle that day was extremely fierce, and Abner and **the men of Israel were defeated by David's soldiers**.

The three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. **Asahel** was a fast runner, like one of the wild gazelles.

He chased Abner and did not turn to the right or the left in his pursuit of him. Abner glanced back and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" "Yes it is," Asahel replied.

Abner said to him, "Turn to your right or left, seize one of the young soldiers, and take whatever you can get from him."

But **Asahel would not stop chasing him**. Once again, Abner warned Asahel, "Stop chasing me.

Why should I strike you to the ground? How could I ever look your brother Joab in the face?"

These men still respected one another as they were still ALL Israelites and distant cousins. Further, Abner and other Israelites likely hoped that all of Israel would be reunited under THEIR king one day, and these 2 respected leaders would once again be on the same team, fighting side by side. Killing Joab's brother would turn this into a blood feud that would never be repaired.

#### 2 Samuel 2:23-24

But **Asahel refused to turn away**, so Abner hit him in the stomach with the butt of his spear. **The spear went through his body, and he fell and died right there**. As they all came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, they stopped, but **Joab and Abishai pursued Abner**. By sunset, they had gone as far as the hill of Ammah, which is opposite Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon.

Abner was not intending to kill him, but to STOP him from chasing him. But the speed of young men with the strength of Abner meant the **butt** of the **spear** impaled his body, resulting in death. When **Joab & Abishai** see their dead brother, they don't stop, but **pursue Abner**.

## 2 Samuel 2:25-32

The Benjaminites rallied to Abner; they formed a unit and took their stand on top of a hill. Then Abner called out to Joab, "Must the sword devour forever? Don't you realize this will only end in bitterness? **How long before you tell the troops to stop pursuing their brothers?**" "As God lives," Joab replied, "if you had not spoken up, the troops wouldn't have stopped pursuing their brothers until morning."

Then Joab blew the trumpet, and all the troops stopped; they no longer pursued Israel or continued to fight.

So **Abner and his men marched** through the Arabah **all that night**. They crossed the Jordan, **marched all morning**, and arrived at **Mahanaim**.

When Joab had turned back from pursuing Abner, he gathered all the troops. In addition to Asahel, nineteen of David's soldiers were missing, but **they had killed 360 of the Benjaminites and Abner's men**. Afterward, they carried Asahel to his father's tomb in Bethlehem and buried him. Then **Joab** and his men **marched all night** and reached **Hebron** at dawn.

This was obviously NOT the last battle between David's men and Ish-bosheth's men over the course of the next 2 years.

## 2 Samuel 3:1-5

During the long war between the house of Saul and the house of David, **David was growing stronger** and the house of Saul was becoming weaker. **Sons were born to David in Hebron:**

**His firstborn** was **Amnon**, by Ahinoam the Jezreelite; his second was Chileab, by Abigail, the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; the third was **Absalom**, son of Maacah the daughter of King Talmi of Geshur; the fourth was Adonijah, son of Haggith; the fifth was Shephatiah, son of Abital; the sixth was Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.

It's here that 6 of David's sons are named along with the 6 different mothers.

✓ This is a *DESCRIPTION* of what David did do, not a *PRESCRIPTION* of what we should do.

During the time of Moses a command is given to future kings during the time of Moses that "he **should not acquire many wives for himself so that his heart won't go astray**" (Deut 17:17). David's marriages likely are *NOT* seen to break this command.

These marriages often solidified political alliances between David and other leaders (like **Maacah the daughter of King Talmi of Geshur** - 2 Sam 3:3). These 6 **sons** would have stood in birth order to be the next in line for the throne of David.

## 2 Samuel 3:6-8

During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, **Abner kept acquiring more power in the house of Saul**. Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah daughter of Aiah, and Ish-bosheth questioned Abner, "Why did you sleep with my father's concubine?"

Abner was very angry about Ish-bosheth's accusation. "Am I a dog's head who belongs to Judah?" he asked "**All this time I've been loyal to the family of your father Saul**, to his brothers, and to his friends and haven't betrayed you to David, but now you accuse me of wrongdoing with this woman!"

A **concubine** was like a second-class wife, a woman committed to one man for life, and one whom he had emotional and sexual connection with. While she held a lower status than the man & his wife/wives, she was protected and provided for. The children birthed to her were considered legitimate children of the man. Powerful men like kings and tribal chiefs were usually the only men with concubines.

- Ultimately, Jesus points people back to the standard that has been the plan of God from the beginning when he said,

## Matthew 19:4-6

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that He who created them in the beginning *made them male and female*, and he also said, '**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh**? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."

God is serious business about marriage - it's His invention and His intention is ONE MAN with ONE WOMAN for life.

🔍 To bed a king's concubine would be like doing the same with his wife, and was viewed *beyond adultery*, **an attempt to take the king's throne**.

As you can hear in Abner's response, this kind of act is **wrongdoing** and a slanderous claim against Abner's character and he will have none of it. He has been faithful to Saul his whole life, as well as faithful to Ish-bosheth, but this confrontation of Abner was the ultimate sign of distrust, so Abner makes sure that never happens again!

## 2 Samuel 3:9-11

May God punish Abner and do so severely if I don't do for David what the Lord swore to him: to **transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish the throne of David over Israel and Judah** from Dan to Beer-sheba." Ish-bosheth did not dare respond to Abner because he was afraid of him.

Abner was done with Ish-bosheth and **he was about to change jerseys and join the other team** - an Old Testament parallel to Saul/Paul - once at war with those who pledged allegiance to Jesus, but now and changing jerseys and pledging allegiance to Jesus as king.

## 2 Samuel 3:12-13

**Abner sent messengers** as his representatives to say **to David**, "Whose land is it? Make your covenant with me, and you can be certain I am on your side to turn all Israel over to you." **David replied**, "Good, **I will make a covenant with you.** However, there's one thing I require of you: You will not see my face unless you **first bring Saul's daughter Michal** when you come to see me."

Remember back when Saul gave **Michal** as David's first wife - after he had killed Goliath (1 Sam 18:27-29)? David had to run from Saul and Michal, and she protected him. Afterwards, Saul gave her to another man to be his wife (1 Sam 25:44).

## 2 Samuel 3:14-16

Then David sent messengers to say to Ish-bosheth son of Saul, "Give me back my wife Michal. I was engaged to her for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins." So **Ish-bosheth sent someone to take her away from her husband**, Paltiel son of Laish. Her husband followed her, weeping all the way to Bahurim. Abner said to him, "Go back." So he went back.

**How could a king rip a wife from her husband and give him to another man?** Of course, this is exactly what Saul had done to David. Since David never divorced her, and Saul gave her to another - that could certainly be considered as adultery.

## 2 Samuel 3:17-21

Abner conferred with the elders of Israel: "In the past you wanted David to be king over you. Now take action, because **the Lord has spoken concerning David**: 'Through my servant David I will save my people Israel from the power of the Philistines and the power of all Israel's enemies.' " Abner also informed the Benjaminites and went to Hebron to inform David about all that was agreed on by Israel and the whole house of Benjamin. When Abner and twenty men came to David at Hebron, David held a banquet for him and his men.

Abner said to David, "Let me now go and **I will gather all Israel to my lord the king.**

They will make a covenant with you, and you will reign over all you desire." So David dismissed Abner, and he went in peace.

This was no small thing that **Abner** had accomplished. He was telling others to do what he had done - to turn from the one they once followed and turn to the king whom Yahweh had anointed. Abner made an about face. Abner shallowed his pride and stop fighting against the one he once saw as a false king. Convinced that Yahweh had proclaimed David as king over all of Israel, Abner submitted.

✓ **Abner** took off his jersey of the rival, changed teams, AND...began to go tell others why they should change teams too.

† Just over 1,000 years later, **Jesus** of Nazareth begins to demonstrate that He really is the King of Israel AND...the KING over all kings!

✗ Not everyone accepted that. **Saul** of Tarsus (*named after King Saul*) certainly didn't recognize Jesus as King of Israel. Paul thought that Jesus was a counterfeit king, a false messiah, and blasphemous man - even claiming to be God. Saul was given permission to hunt down followers of Jesus and have them thrown in prison and even killed!

† UNTIL...Jesus confronted him while on the way to hunt more followers of Jesus. After being blinded for 3 days, and hearing the voice of Jesus...Saul (aka Paul) was baptized as a follower of Jesus - the Messiah and King of Israel - the one who died, was buried, and rose again! **Paul CHANGED TEAMS!** The one who once thought Jesus was a counterfeit king pledged his allegiance to Jesus as HIS king!

Paul recognized Jesus as not just the King of Israel, but the **KING of all kings** (1 Tim 6:15, Rev 19:16) - the **Savior**, not just of Israel, but **of the whole world** (John 3:17, 1 Tim 4:10). And he went to tell everybody!

## WHERE ARE YOU IN THIS PROCESS?

Like Paul, we were once enemies of Jesus as well.

## Colossians 1:21

Once you were **alienated and hostile** in your minds as expressed in your **evil actions**.

We might not have tried to hunt down followers of Jesus, but we HAVE committed treason against the King of creation through our evil actions - lust, lies, pride, theft, slander, drunkenness, living for material stuff, and refusing to submit to the will of the KING of the universe.

- **Abner** was confronted he had been serving the wrong king and that David was the rightful anointed king of Yahweh.
- **Paul** was confronted that JESUS was the anointed King - God in skin!
- AND..at some point, **we are confronted with that same reality**. And we must choose - *will we CHANGE TEAMS, or continue to be enemies of the King of creation?*

☢ **You don't DRIFT into God's kingdom — you DEFECT into it.**

## Colossians 1:22-23

But now **he has reconciled you** by his physical body **through his death**, to present you **holy, faultless**, and **blameless** before him— if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the **hope of the gospel** that you heard.

**This gospel** has been **proclaimed in all creation** under heaven, and I, Paul, have become a servant of it.

② **Have you trusted the good news and followed Jesus AND...will YOU take the GOOD NEWS to Others?**

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- \* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- \* Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Derek & Emily Beaty** (813-763-4421), or **Chris & Caitlin Day** (850-673-7920), **Glen & Margie Peacock** (850-464-1484).

## Discussion questions

These questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your family, friends, or small group.

### 1. Allegiance & Authority

Read 2 Sam 3:9–10. Abner knew that Yahweh had promised the kingdom to David long before he finally changed sides.

- Why do you think people sometimes resist submitting to what they already know God has clearly revealed?
- Where do you see the difference between knowing the truth and surrendering to it in your own life?

### 2. The Cost of Choosing the Wrong King

The civil war in Israel shows that divided allegiance always comes at a cost.

- In what ways do you see the consequences of divided loyalty — spiritually, relationally, or emotionally — in our world today?
- How have you personally experienced the cost of following the “wrong king” at some point in your life?

### 3. Pride, Power, and Turning Points

Abner’s breaking point came when his authority was questioned and his loyalty was doubted.

- What kinds of situations does God often use to confront us and expose misplaced pride or control?
- How can wounded pride keep us from humbly submitting to God’s will?

### 4. Changing Teams Is More Than a Decision

Read 2 Sam 3:17–19. When Abner changed teams, he didn’t just stop fighting David — he actively worked to bring others under David’s rule.

- What’s the difference between privately believing something and publicly aligning your life with it?
- How does Abner’s response challenge the way we think about following Jesus today?

### 5. From Enemy to Advocate

Like Abner — and later Paul — every believer moves from opposing God’s King to serving Him.

- Before following Jesus, how would you describe your relationship with God?
- What changed when you submitted to Jesus as King, not just Savior?

### 6. Loyalty That Shapes Daily Life

Changing teams isn’t just about a moment — it reshapes identity, priorities, and direction.

- What does allegiance to Jesus practically affect in your daily decisions, relationships, and habits?
- Where might God be calling you to realign an area of your life that still resists His rule?

### 7. No Neutral Ground

Read Col 1:21–23. Scripture makes it clear that neutrality toward Jesus is not an option.

- Why do you think our culture prefers a “neutral” or private faith?
- How does this passage challenge the idea that we can admire Jesus without submitting to Him?

### 8. Changing Jerseys

Abner didn’t just change teams — he helped others change teams too.

- Who has God placed in your life that needs to hear why you follow Jesus?
- What fears or obstacles keep you from sharing the good news of the King with others?

### 9. Personal Reflection

Take a moment of quiet reflection.

- Is there any area where you are still functionally living under a different king?
- What would full allegiance to Jesus look like in that area this week?

**10. Pray together**, asking God for the humility to submit fully to King Jesus and the courage to help others change teams as well.