

2 Samuel 2:8-32 - Thursday, November 13th, 2014

- Last week we left David who, after inquiring of the Lord, went to Hebron, where only the men of Judah came to anoint him as their king.
- The reason we only got to verse seven was because of the many rich life lessons about how vital it is to inquire of and wait upon the Lord.
- As we pick it up on verse eight, we're going to see that David will still need to wait, as God works behind the scenes to make him the king.

8 But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim; 9 and he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, and over all Israel. 10 Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David. 11 And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

- We have a problem here right out of the chute. It seems this Abner, who somehow survived as commander of Saul's army, has other plans.
- Namely, to take Ishbosheth, the last surviving son of Saul, and make him king over all of Israel, except for Judah, in order to stay in power.
- Actually, there are a number of problems with this, chief of which is, Abner knows that what he's doing is in direct opposition to God's will.

- The question becomes, why would Abner knowingly do this? I believe there are several reasons, one of which is that David is his enemy.
- This because of the confrontation Abner had with David, recorded back in 1 Samuel 17, when David shamed him for not protecting Saul.
- Abner was so humiliated in front of the men under his command for his failure to protect king Saul from David who could have killed him.

- The reason I point this out is because of how prone all of us are to knowingly go against God's will and God's Word as Abner does here.
- Here's how I get there, getting even with a perceived enemy propels us into the flesh, and as such we'll opt for an Ishbosheth over a David.
- I find it interesting that all the Israelite tribes, except for Judah, would go along with and be accepting of Abner's puppet king for 2-years.

- I would suggest that these Israelite tribes are also knowingly going against God's will. The question is, why, and, why for two long years?
- The answer is fearfulness! The Israelites are afraid of the Philistines and don't want to arouse their anger by accepting David as their king.
- So too is this true for us. We will go against the Son of David, if you will, because of our fear of making our Philistine friends angry with us.

- Be that as it may, there's another reason for Abner going against God; Abner was Saul's cousin, but Ishbosheth was Saul's biological son.
- It's thought he was an illegitimate son, presumably from a concubine, but nonetheless, this was Abner's way to stay in a position of power.
- Here's where I'm going with all this, David, who is the anointed heir to the throne, doesn't force his reign by removing this illegitimate king.

Of this one commentator wrote, "David refused to force his reign on his subjects—and neither will the Son of David. Like David, Jesus will battle against pretenders to the throne, but He will not force His reign on mankind—yet."

12 Now Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. 13 And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon. So they sat down, one on one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool. 14 Then Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men now arise and compete before us." And Joab said, "Let them arise." 15 So they arose and went over by number, twelve from Benjamin, followers of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve from the servants of David. 16 And each one grasped his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called the Field of Sharp Swords, which is in Gibeon. 17 So there was a very fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

- In that day, this was known as representative combat where men representing each side would battle instead of the whole army battling.
- However, it seems once, both sides are in what appears to be a draw, the armies on both sides get involved anyway, and David's men win.
- Sadly, many will die because of Joab, who is David's nephew, and Abner, who is Saul's cousin, wanting to settle the score between them.

- Both of these men are savage fighters, warriors to the core and what made them so dangerous was they didn't care who died for their side.
- These two men were cut from the same cloth so to speak, such that they were heartless and merciless when it came to battling the enemy.
- The reason I mention this is because innocent people close in proximity to someone who is this diabolical, are the ones who pay the price.

Adam Clarke speaking of this confrontation between these two men writes, "This was diabolical play, where each man thrust his sword into the body of the other, so that the twenty-four (twelve on each side) fell down dead together!"

18 Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab and Abishai and Asahel. And Asahel was as fleet of foot as a wild gazelle. 19 So Asahel pursued Abner, and in going he did not turn to the right hand or to the left from following Abner.

- So now we have three brothers, all of who are David's nephews, thinking this would be an opportune time to kill Abner once and for all.
- We're told that this Asahel was a very fast runner so much so that like a wild gazelle, he starts chasing Abner not turning to the right or left.
- One has to wonder why he's doing this. Is he doing it so his uncle David can be king, or is he doing this for himself and his own glory?

- While we don't know what the motive of his heart is, we do know what the heart of David is, and it's certainly not killing Abner and the army.
- I believe that not only would David never approve this, given that there's no mention of it in the narrative, David doesn't know about this.
- The point being is that often times, like Asahel, we'll run ahead of our greater than David, Jesus Christ, and do what He doesn't approve of.

20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, "Are you Asahel?" He answered, "I am." 21 And Abner said to him, "Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and lay hold on one of the young men and take his armor for yourself." But Asahel would not turn aside from following him. 22 So Abner said again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I face your brother Joab?" 23 However, he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the blunt end of the spear, so that the spear came out of his back; and he fell down there and died on the spot. So it was that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that Asahel doesn't heed what he thinks a trick on the part of Abner.
- This would prove to be a deadly mistake, as he keeps running ahead and at great speed is impaled on Abner's spear, leading to his death.
- I think sometimes, there's a little bit of an Asahel in all of us in the sense that we keep running ahead without any thought, to our own peril.

24 Joab and Abishai also pursued Abner. And the sun was going down when they came to the hill of Ammah, which is before Giah by the road to the Wilderness of Gibeon. 25 Now the children of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became a unit, and took their stand on top of a hill. 26 Then Abner called to Joab and said, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the latter end? How long will it be then until you tell the people to return from pursuing their brethren?" 27 And Joab said, "As God lives, unless you had spoken, surely then by morning all the people would have given up pursuing their brethren."

- What Joab and Abner do here is nothing shy of shrewd, but for different reasons. First, Abner knows Joab doesn't know about his brother.
- The reason I believe that is had Joab known that Abner had killed his brother, he would've never agreed to a ceasefire with Abner's army.
- Conversely, Joab is being very shrewd, such that he thinks were he to not agree to this ceasefire, it would lead to a decimating civil war.

- Some have suggested that what Joab does here was a very costly mistake because as we'll see shortly, they were at a clear advantage.
- While that could be argued, I still hold to the belief that Joab is doing wrong in the first place by virtue of David not giving him these orders.
- In either case this leads to an ongoing war between the kingdom of David and the kingdom of Saul, which is a type of the flesh and Spirit.

Alan Redpath - "In the lives of many Christian people today there is raging, literally, a civil war. The flesh—the kingdom of Saul, struggles with the spirit—the kingdom of David, and the conflict is bitter. We do everything we possibly can to hold up the tottering kingdom of self, so that it might exist just a bit longer. If only we could preserve some rights; if only we could have at least part of our own way; if only we could keep this or that at any cost! We feel we must bolster up this kingdom of self, that we cannot let ourselves be crucified with Christ."

28 So Joab blew a trumpet; and all the people stood still and did not pursue Israel anymore, nor did they fight anymore. 29 Then Abner and his men went on all that night through the plain, crossed over the Jordan, and went through all Bithron; and they came to Mahanaim. 30 So Joab returned from pursuing Abner. And when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel. 31 But the servants of David had struck down, of Benjamin and Abner's men, three hundred and sixty men who died. 32 Then they took up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb, which was in Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at daybreak.

- Here we see that Abner's army lost 360 men, whereas Joab's only lost 20. We also see that Joab will realize his brother Asahel is dead.
- Suffice it to say, this will be just the beginning of a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David, as we'll see next week.

2 Samuel 3:1 Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

- I'll bring tonight's study to a close by way of the aforementioned typology of Saul being a type of the flesh, and David a type of the Spirit.

Saul	David
Was the first king, a type of the first birth	Was the second king, a type of the second birth
Was man's choice	Was God's choice
Was warring against David	Was persecuted by Saul
Was after man's praise	Was after God's heart
Was cruel and merciless	Was kind and benevolent
Was bitter and resentful	Was longsuffering and forgiving
Was full of fear	Was full of courage
Was unrepentant	Was repentant
Was weak	Was strong
Was separated from God	Was at peace with God
Was disobedient	Was obedient
Was rejected as king and ended	Was accepted as king eternal through Christ