

**David**  
Part 22  
“Absalom’s Death”

**Where we are in the Story:**

- Absalom the son of David has won the hearts of the people and now is leading a rebellion to take the throne from David.
- Absalom arranged his own coronation at Hebron and now Israel is greatly divided in their loyalties to two kings.
- When David received the message: “The hearts of the people of Israel are with Absalom.” David humbles himself and marches out of Jerusalem with his men.
- Absalom moves into the king’s palace, where he assumes the place of the king and seeks advice on what he should do next, from two of the king’s advisors Ahithophel and Hushai.

**2 Samuel 16 NIV**

**23** Now in those days the advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God. That was how both David and Absalom regarded all of Ahithophel’s advice.

**2 Samuel 17 NIV**

Ahithophel said to Absalom, “I would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. **2** I would attack him while he is weary and weak. I would strike him with terror, and then all the people with him will flee. I would strike down only the king **3** and bring all the people back to you. The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all the people will be unharmed.” **4** This plan seemed good to Absalom and to all the elders of Israel.

**5** But Absalom said, “Summon also Hushai the Arkite, so we can hear what he has to say as well.” **6** When Hushai came to him, Absalom said, “Ahithophel has given this advice. Should we do what he says? If not, give us your opinion.”

**7** Hushai replied to Absalom, “The advice Ahithophel has given is not good this time. **8** You know your father and his men; they are fighters,

and as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Besides, your father is an experienced fighter; he will not spend the night with the troops.

**9** Even now, he is hidden in a cave or some other place. If he should attack your troops first, whoever hears about it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.’ **10** Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave.

**11** “So I advise you: Let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba—as numerous as the sand on the seashore—be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle. **12** Then we will attack him wherever he may be found, and we will fall on him as dew settles on the ground. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive. **13** If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not so much as a pebble is left.”

**14** Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel.” For the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.

**It’s important to look at these two councils:**

- 1. Ahithophel in his heart; is with Absalom**  
**Hushai in his heart; is with David**

## **2 Samuel 15:31**

Now David had been told, “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” So David prayed, “Lord, turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.”

## **2 Samuel 15:34**

(Hushai attempts to follow David out of the city, but David says to him)

**34** But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, ‘Your Majesty, I will be your servant; I was your father’s servant in the past, but now I will

be your servant,' then you can help me by frustrating Ahithophel's advice.

- Ahithophel is loyal to the institution...
- Hushai is loyal to the man...

## **2. David, God's chosen vessel and anointed King, in humility trusts God.**

### **2 Samuel 15:31b**

So David prayed, "Lord, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness."

- In Biblical context the position of the King of Israel was not one that was elected or appointed by man. The nation of Israel belongs to the Lord. The Lord appointed David and give him the position as king.
- Absalom disregard of this shows his irreverent heart to God and this greatly displeased the Lord. Therefore God answers the prayer of David to turn the advice of Ahithophel into foolishness in the eyes of Absalom, causing him to follow the advice of Hushai.

### **Vs. 14**

Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel." For the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.

David will find the words of God to Isaiah and Moses to be true for him.

### **Isaiah 54:17**

No weapon formed against you shall prosper,  
And every tongue *which* rises against you in judgment  
You shall condemn.  
This *is* the heritage of the servants of the Lord,

And their righteousness *is* from Me,”  
Says the Lord.

### **Exodus 14:13,14**

**13** “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today... **14** The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

### **3. David trusts God while Absalom operates out of pride and selfish ambition.**

- Notice the emphasis on Absalom in Hushai’s council

### **Vs. 11,12**

**11** “So I advise you: Let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba—as numerous as the sand on the seashore—be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle. **12** Then we will attack him wherever he may be found, and we will fall on him as dew settles on the ground. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive.

- The pride in Absalom bates him into Hushai’s plan. The plan centers around Absalom, bringing emphasis to him with him leading.
- This plan ultimately brings disaster to Absalom.

### **2 Samuel 18 NIV**

**1** David mustered the men who were with him and appointed over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds.

**2** David sent out his troops, a third under the command of Joab, a third under Joab’s brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. The king told the troops, “I myself will surely march out with you.”

**3** But the men said, “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 ten thousand of us. It would be better now for you to give us support from the city.”

**4** The king answered, “I will do whatever seems best to you.”

- David knew just what to do in organizing his army. He set them into three divisions under the leadership of Joab, Abishai and Ittai.
- Throughout the story of David his presence in battle has always been needed. Both for Israel and for his own sake. This time it is better for David not to engage.
- David’s men surrounded him and would not allow him to go out to battle with the rest of his army. There were three reasons for this:
  1. His life was more valuable **(you are worth ten thousand of us)**.
  2. He could bring reserves if needed **(much like 2 Samuel 10 against the Arameans)**.
  3. They understood that it would be hard for David to fight against his own son, Absalom.
- Even though Absalom willed for his father to die, David’s heart towards Absalom was very different. David still loved Absalom and wills no harm to him.

**4b** So the king stood beside the gate while all his men marched out in units of hundreds and of thousands. **5** The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, “Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.” And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.

**6** David’s army marched out of the city to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. **7** There Israel’s troops were routed

by David's men, and the casualties that day were great—twenty thousand men. **8** The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest swallowed up more men that day than the sword.

**9** Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's hair got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.

**10** When one of the men saw what had happened, he told Joab, "I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree."

**11** Joab said to the man who had told him this, "What! You saw him? Why didn't you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have had to give you ten shekels of silver and a warrior's belt."

**12** But the man replied, "Even if a thousand shekels were weighed out into my hands, I would not lay a hand on the king's son. In our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, 'Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.'"

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**14** Joab said, "I'm not going to wait like this for you." So he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom's heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree. **15** And ten of Joab's armor-bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him and killed him.

**16** Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped pursuing Israel, for Joab halted them. **17** They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap of rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes.

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**21** Then Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed down before Joab and ran off.

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**32** The king asked the Cushite, “Is the young man Absalom safe?”

The Cushite replied, “May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man.”

**33** The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!”

The Hebrew idea of **shaken** implies a violent trembling of the body. David felt completely undone at hearing the news of Absalom’s death.

In part, David was **shaken** because he felt responsible. He knew that his own doing played a part in all this.

1. David’s own doing with Bathsheba that ultimately lead to the murder of Uriah. Ultimately leading to what Nathan the Prophet said in 2 Samuel 12:10 “Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house”
2. David’s own doing by neglecting the situation between Amnon and Tamar, ultimately leading Absalom to a place of bitterness and resentment towards David.

The text says in Vs. 33 that David wept and said, “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!”

- The reality is Absalom was David’s son...
- David loved Absalom and nothing could change that...

- If David could have had his way, perhaps he would have given Absalom the kingdom. Perhaps it was in David's heart to one day do just that and hand over the kingdom to him.

Closing:

- It could be said that David as a forshadowing of Christ, felt that day what God feels for his own wayward people.

### **Isaiah 53:6**

(Like Absalom)

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him (Christ)  
the iniquity of us all.

- In this way God did exchange places with us, by allowing his son Jesus to die on the cross for us.

This is why it says in:

### **1 Peter 2:24**

"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness;

### **Romans 5:8**

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

David still loved Absalom in the same way God still loves us when sin against him...

- David said, "Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake."
- God also in his tender mercy has good intentions for us in

## **Jeremiah 29:11**

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Water Baptism