

1 Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had stayed two days in Ziklag.

2 on the third day, behold, it happened that a man came from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. So it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself.

Remember—2 battles going on / Saul against the Philistines & David fighting the Amalekites who had attacked the town of Ziklag, where David had been living / rescuing his wives and others who were taken captive

BTW—notice that David was battling Amalekites: exactly what King Saul should have been doing all along. One of Saul's big failures was his incomplete victory over Amalek / 1 Sam 15 – “unwilling to utterly destroy them” / leaving the king Agag alive, and apparently others, as we will see...

3 And David said to him, “Where have you come from?” So he said to him, “I have escaped from the camp of Israel.”

“Escaping from the camp of Israel” / he was probably a slave / from Saul's earlier victory over the Amalekites / but Saul wasn't supposed to enslave the Amalekites! He was supposed to have destroyed them!

4 Then David said to him, “How did the matter go? Please tell me.” And he answered, “The people have fled from the battle, many of the people are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.”

5 So David said to the young man who told him, “How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?”

6 Then the young man who told him said, “As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa, there was Saul, leaning on his spear; and indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.

7 Now when he looked behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I answered, ‘Here I am.’

8 And he said to me, ‘Who are you?’ So I answered him, ‘I am an Amalekite.’

9 He said to me again, ‘Please stand over me and kill me, for anguish has come upon me, but my life still remains in me.’

10 So I stood over him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord.”

There is some debate here: Either—

The narrator in 1 Samuel 31 already told us that Saul took his own life by falling on his sword. Remember—1 & 2 Samuel were originally one book, so there is no break here. The narrative continues. So, the best way to understand this is that this messenger is LYING to David about killing Saul. Some think it is possible that Saul had lingered, barely alive, until the Amalekite found him and finished him off, then took his crown and bracelet to David.

But, the text seems to imply that this guy is making up his tale in order to win points with David. So, Saul did truly die by suicide in the battle, and this Amalekite came by to loot his gear before the Philistines took Saul's body away to Beth Shan,

Either way, the BIG POINT is that this Amalekite shouldn't have been in this story at all! Since this is repeated twice (in vs 8&13), this fact is highlighted for the reader.

Way back in 1 Sam 15, Saul let the Amalekites survive because he could show off the king as his trophy, he took the best of the herds for his wealth, and he apparently put some of them to work in his camps as free labor. He had a lot to benefit from by allowing the Amalekites to survive.

But at the end of his life, Saul's body was desecrated by an Amalekite, who claimed triumph over him! If Saul had obeyed God and destroyed the Amalekites previously, this never would have happened.

Lesson: As soon as we are aware of sin in our lives, it is best to get serious about it and let Jesus vanquish it in us once and for all.

Sin that lingers is like this Amalekite that shows up again in the story to bring trouble and humiliation

What's your Amalekite? What is that sin you know is only going to bring trouble, but you have a lot of excuses for keeping it around? It is time to turn it over to Jesus once and for all!

11 Therefore David took hold of his own clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him.  
12 And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

The Amalekite tried to win favor with David by boasting about killing David's "enemy," King Saul—But David didn't see it that way! Saul wasn't his *enemy*. Saul was definitely messed up, but he was still David's *king*.

The Amalekite was probably getting a little nervous at this point, seeing this display of grief for Saul

13 Then David said to the young man who told him, "Where are you from?" And he answered, "I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite."  
14 So David said to him, "How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?"

You know the saying in the military, "You salute the rank, not the person?" / Basically—honor authority and position, not necessarily the person in that position. / I believe we see that in David's attitude—he has incredible respect for the THRONE of ISRAEL.

Why? Because, of all the nations on earth, Israel was the one nation whom claimed Yahweh as their Ultimate King. / The man who sat on the throne of Israel was supposed to represent God's reign and rule.

Even though Saul had completely abandoned God in his heart, and had even turned to witches for wisdom and guidance, his throne still represented the Rule of God over the one nation that God had called to be His unique and set apart nation in the world.

David's attitude demonstrates what Paul teaches in Rom. 13:1 • Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

15 Then David called one of the young men and said, "Go near, and execute him!" And he struck him so that he died.  
16 So David said to him, "Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the LORD's anointed.'"

The Amalekite was executed for killing the king of Israel. And even if he didn't actually do the deed, he implicated himself.

Boy, he sure made a huge mistake in assuming that Saul was David's enemy! He had no clue of David's great reverence and honor toward the king and throne of Israel—regardless of who sat upon it!

The Amalekite and David were on completely different wavelengths.

There is a picture here for us: Non-believers don't understand the things of God!

They have no clue what the Gospel means to us! / The world just things we are bunch of airheads who believe in meaningless myths. / But, from our perspective, we are simply overwhelmed by the love of God demonstrated by Jesus dying in our place on a cross.

And we've seen the proof and evidence of the truth of the divinely—inspired Bible and the historical reality of Jesus' resurrection

So—we are people who are going to sing our hearts out in worship / weeping in repentance / shouting for joy / raising our hands and kneeling down as we are overcome by the reality of God's love and grace / and believing what we read in the Bible

And until someone is convinced by the Gospel to surrender to God, they are going to be completely perplexed by what is happening here! It will make no sense!

17 *Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son,*

18 *and he told them to teach the children of Judah the Song of the Bow; indeed it is written in the Book of Jasher:*

“book of Jasher” / *What was it? Why don't we have it anymore? Is it lost scripture?*

Nope—if it was scripture, we'd have it. One of the keys to canonicity is that it was preserved as scripture by God's people!

But to the people who first received these scriptures, they knew what the Book of Jasher was and have further authenticity for God's word / This shows us that God was authenticating His word throughout history! There have always been outside witnesses and manuscripts that lend support to the Bible.

Now—one of the most poignant and powerful passages of honor in scripture, as David pours out his heart in grief over Saul and Jonathan's deaths...

19 *“The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen!*

20 *Tell it not in Gath, Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon—Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.*

David is concerned that Israel's enemies won't be emboldened by reports of Saul's death

21 *“O mountains of Gilboa, Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, Nor fields of offerings.*

*For the shield of the mighty is cast away there! The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.*

Interesting: much of Mt. Gilboa is a dry rocky slope to this day. And I've heard from a tour guide once that there are strange wildfires every year on Gilboa.

But, there are some areas of vegetation, and some people think the yearly wildflower blooms are evidence that the curse has been lifted in these last days,

But, the fact is, Gilboa seems strangely afflicted and is mostly barren compared to the mountains around it / so who knows?

22 *From the blood of the slain, From the fat of the mighty, The bow of Jonathan did not turn back, And the sword of Saul did not return empty.*

23 *“Saul and Jonathan were beloved and pleasant in their lives, And in their death they were not divided; They were swifter than eagles, They were stronger than lions.*

David eulogizes this moment with beautiful song and poetry, but at the core it speaks of a huge tragedy

Saul’s sons fought alongside him to his last battle & his defeat was their defeat / Think of Jonathan, and his incredible qualities and passion for God / he had to suffer a humiliating defeat at Saul’s side fighting a hopeless battle

This is just another evidence of the waste and failure that marked Saul’s life & legacy / he didn’t just ruin himself, he took down beloved warriors, like Jonathan, with him

I doubt Saul ever considered for one moment the vast damage he was doing to so many around him—his whole nation in fact! He was too self-absorbed to think of anyone else.

What a warning for us to lay our lives down FOR others, like Jesus demonstrated, instead of TAKING OTHERS DOWN WITH us in our sinful selfishness

24 *“O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, Who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury; Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.*

David honors Saul, regardless of his failure! / He reminds the people that at once Saul’s kingdom had thrived and they had benefited in some wealth and luxury / this was a stretch—people who knew Saul best probably weren’t shedding any tears for him

But, unlike Saul, for whom tears wouldn’t come naturally, this next passage is pure grief and sorrow for David...

25 *“How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan was slain in your high places.*

26 *I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me; Your love to me was wonderful, Surpassing the love of women.*

27 *“How the mighty have fallen, And the weapons of war perished!”*

Now, when I taught in Samuel a few weeks ago, I spent some debunking the liberal view that Jonathan and David were gay and in love romantically. That idea is complete malarkey. I don’t have as much time to go back over this tonight, so I’ll keep this short:

Just notice here—David says that Jon’s love was *BETTER* than the love of women. David certainly enjoyed the love of women! He had many wives and even an adulterous affair with Bathsheba.

What David is saying is that the kind of love he had for Jonathan was completely different. It wasn’t romantic, it was something even greater—it was completely unselfish and sacrificial—love that would lay down one’s life for another. It was like the love of Jesus, as He lay down His life for us!

2:1 *It happened after this that David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?” And the LORD said to him, “Go up.” David said, “Where shall I go up?” And He said, “To Hebron.”*

No—this isn’t “going up to battle”—David is asking God if it is time to go back home!

2 *So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.*

David’s first wife was Michal, the daughter of Saul, whom David lost when Saul drove David from the palace.

David married Ahinoam after Michal, and was the mother of David's first son, Amnon, but we aren't told the story of how they met up.

Abigail was his third wife. You remember the story: David was living on the lam, and asked Abigail's husband Nabal for some food for his men, but snubbed David instead, so God struck him dead. David married Abigail for her humble courage, wisdom, and grace.

3 And David brought up the men who were with him, every man with his household. So they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

4 Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

The tribe of Judah was the first to accept David as their king, because David was from the tribe of Judah / Judah was also the one tribe that will remain faithful to the house of David and to Yahweh in Israel's future, when the rest of the nation breaks away and abandons their faith in God.

And they told David, saying, "The men of Jabesh Gilead were the ones who buried Saul."

This story is told in 31:11–13 / they bravely rescued the bodies of Saul and his sons from Beth Shan, where they were hung on the walls in ridicule / And they gave them a proper burial at Jabesh

5 So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead, and said to them, "You are blessed of the LORD, for you have shown this kindness to your lord, to Saul, and have buried him.

6 And now may the LORD show kindness and truth to you. I also will repay you this kindness, because you have done this thing.

7 Now therefore, let your hands be strengthened, and be valiant; for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

The men of Jabesh might have thought that by honoring Saul in his death, they were making themselves enemies with David. He makes sure to reassure them they did nothing wrong.

You see, their actions were exactly in line with David's heart. Reading David's "Song of the Bow," you know he would have reclaimed Saul's body himself (with those of his sons) if he had the chance! / So, by honoring the people of Jabesh Gilead, David calmed their concerns, and won their allegiance.

Now we start a long tale that covers nearly three long chapters! We'll try to get through the whole episode tonight...

8 But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim;

Saul has a son who didn't die in battle with him. Some describe him as Saul's youngest and least effective sons.

His name is interesting: His name was originally "Ish-baal" (which is found in 1 Chronicles 8) ("baal" being a generic term for a "lord" or "master" that was of course ascribed to the Canaanite deity! So, at some point, the "baal" in his name was substituted for "bosheth" / which means "shame" / This same thing happens to a few other Bible names, such as Mephibosheth, that was originally "Meri-baal"

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.

For seven years, David was only king over Judah. / And Ishbosheth was accepted as king over the people who still saw themselves as following the house of King Saul.

Now we get to a long conflict between Joab (fighting for David) vs Abner (at first fighting for Ishbosheth, but will shrewdly switch sides when it is clear that Ishbosheth won't win)

12 Now Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Maha-naim to Gibeon.

13 And Joab the son of Zeru-iah, 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.

A battle of champions is being described / these could be "one on one"—like David vs Goliath / or small groups, like the 12 vs 12 like we see here

These competitions to the death were typical in the ancient world to "test the fates" and allow the gods to decide the outcome of a battle ahead of time

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.

Abner's 12 were soundly defeated by Joab's 12, but Abner didn't accept the defeat of his champions, and continued fighting...

17 So there was a very fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

The fierce battle that lasted the rest of the day / Abner was pretty foolish to keep fighting, since nothing was going right for him

Abner then runs away, and is pursued by Joab's men...

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.

20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, "Are you Asahel?"

He answered, "I am."

Abner knows Asahel by reputation, and Abner knows he's in trouble, so he tries to negotiate...

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.

Abner knew he was in trouble, so he tried to tempt Asahel to abandon the chase by offering him some easy plunder

What a picture of how we are to pursue the goal, without turning to the right or the left—like Proverbs 4 tells us / Don't be distracted by the tempting riches of this world

But, unlike Asahel, our eyes aren't fixed on our enemy—our eyes are to be fixed on Jesus!

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.

He tries a different tack—threat & intimidation / but Asahel wouldn't turn away.

Then another—if I kill you, I'll never make peace with your brother Joab, and this was just going to continue!

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.

Asahel was a great runner, but unfortunately, not up to the same caliber as Abner in hand-to-hand combat.

Abner was correct in his conclusion: there could be no peace with Joab if he killed his brother, which we'll see in the next chapter

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.

Remember, Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, so his tribe rallies together behind Abner to support Ishbosheth

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?"

Abner calls for peace instead of a civil war that would only get worse and worse

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."

28 So Joab blew a trumpet; and all the people stood still and did not pursue Israel anymore, nor did they fight anymore.

The wording here is a little confusing. Basically—Joab's is saying that his men were prepared to keep the fight going all night, but because Abner called for a truce, they stopped

So, Joab accepts Abner peace offer. The idea of fellow Israelites killing each other was clearly a bad idea.

Apparently, Abner was a great negotiator. He had a honey-tongue. We'll see this again in the next chapter when he actually switches allegiance from Ishbosheth to David

Joab, as fierce as a warrior he was, and as much as he was bitter over losing his brother, let his temper cool, and wisdom prevailed... Temporarily. He won't forgive the grudge against Abner. He will just wait till a better opportunity to get his revenge.

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 Maha-naim.

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.

This is an 18 to 1 landslide in the battle. This little detail shows us how deadly David's men were / And how ineffective the dwindling forces of Ishbosheth were

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.

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.

The text now takes a break from the war to get us up to speed on David's family. We'll get back to the battle in just a second...

2 Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

3 his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur;

4 the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;

5 and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.

You probably recognize a few of these names. We've talked about Ahinoam & Abigail.

David also married a gal named Maacah, the daughter of a king of the tribe of Geshur, a group of Canaanites living in the land of Manasseh. David probably thought this was a wise political marriage to win peace between them, but notice which son David fathered with her... Absalom!

There will be murderous feud between Amnon and Absalom, because of Amnon's incestuous rape of Absalom's sister Tamar / which will eventually lead to David losing his throne to Absalom's treachery and revolution

But, no more spoilers. Let's get back to the war...

6 Now it was so, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner was strengthening his hold on the house of Saul.

This shows us Abner's motive. He wasn't truly fighting for Ishbosheth = he was using this as an opportunity to build up his own power base, kick out Ishbosheth and take the throne.

7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. So Ishbosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?"

8 Then Abner became very angry at the words of Ishbosheth, and said, "Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show loyalty to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and you charge me today with a fault concerning this woman?"

Apparently, this is a false accusation, and Abner uses this as an excuse to betray Ishbosheth...

9 May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as the LORD has sworn to him—

10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba."

11 And he could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.



Abner's words are quite revealing—he knows that Yahweh has sworn to put David on the throne! It makes you wonder how many other people realized that God favored David, yet were foolishly fighting for their tribe.

12 Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to David, saying, “Whose is the land?” saying also, “Make your covenant with me, and indeed my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel to you.”

13 And David said, “Good, I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you: you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul’s daughter, when you come to see my face.”

If you remember, David had married Michal all the way back in 1 Samuel 18, and their marriage is described as truly romantic / But, when David fled from Saul, his wife was given to another man! They have been apart for many years now.

14 So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, saying, “Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.”

You can look back to 1 Sam 18 to see the details of this strange bridal price David paid for his wife.

15 And Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish.

16 Then her husband went along with her to Bahurim, weeping behind her. So Abner said to him, “Go, return!” And he returned.

What an interesting detail to include in the narrative: Apparently Michal's new husband truly loved her. There is heartbreak involved here. / But David had been the one heartbroken first, when Michal was taken from him!

The point is this: Divorce is painful. It breaks something deep in our hearts. God hates it because it hurts us! We aren't meant to become one with someone and then separate from them. It rips the soul.

17 Now Abner had communicated with the elders of Israel, saying, “In time past you were seeking for David to be king over you.

18 Now then, do it! For the LORD has spoken of David, saying, ‘By the hand of My servant David, I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and the hand of all their enemies.’ ”

19 And Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin. Then Abner also went to speak in the hearing of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel and the whole house of Benjamin.

Abner starts a marketing campaign in the tribes of Israel, including Benjamin, to switch allegiance to David / He was saying: *It's clear that God supported David, not Ishbosheth.*

Funny—Abner was the losing commander of this war, but he is trying to make the best of it. He defected at the right moment, and brought as much support with him as he could

20 So Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him.

21 Then Abner said to David, “I will arise and go, and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires.” So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

Abner is quite a salesman. He has made peace with David and won favor with him. / He even finds a way to separate from David—ostensibly to raise some more support elsewhere. / I don't know what his true motives are. Spoiler alert: he won't last long enough to show his true colors. His story is just about over...

22 At that moment the servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace.

23 When Joab and all the troops that were with him had come, they told Joab, saying, “Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he sent him away, and he has gone in peace.”

24 Then Joab came to the king and said, “What have you done? Look, Abner came to you; why is it that you sent him away, and he has already gone?”

25 Surely you realize that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you, to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing.”

Joab isn't buying it. He doesn't trust Abner for a second. He suspects that Abner was there as a spy for Ishbosheth

26 And when Joab had gone from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know it.

So, Joab sends an innocuous message to Abner to get him to come back / sort of an “official meeting between officers” thing

27 Now when Abner had returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him privately, and there stabbed him in the stomach, so that he died for the blood of Asahel his brother.

And Joab finally gets revenge for Abner killing his brother

28 Afterward, when David heard it, he said, “My kingdom and I are guiltless before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner.

29 Let it rest on the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and let there never fail to be in the house of Joab one who has a discharge or is a leper, who leans on a staff or falls by the sword, or who lacks bread.”

David made a peace treaty with Abner, but his man Joab had broken this treaty. This is serious business before God, so David had to plead his innocence.

Even more—he put all of the responsibility for breaking the oath on Joab's family, inviting God to curse them, instead of a curse falling on David's family

30 So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

31 Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, “Tear your clothes, gird yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn for Abner.” And King David followed the coffin.

32 So they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept.

What is this? Why is David honoring this turncoat? / This would be like honoring Benedict Arnold as a hero of the American Revolutionary War.

But, once again, David recognizes God-ordained authority and honors it. Abner had been a commander of God's army in Israel & For this reason, he was to be honored.

33 And the king sang a lament over Abner and said: “Should Abner die as a fool dies?

34 Your hands were not bound nor your feet put into fetters; As a man falls before wicked men, so you fell.” Then all the people wept over him again.

35 And when all the people came to persuade David to eat food while it was still day, David took an oath, saying, “God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!”

Because Abner was stabbed in the back when Joab tricked him, his death wasn't in a fair fight. He had died as a fool. / David had to return honor to him with his lament and fasting.

36 Now all the people took note of it, and it pleased them, since whatever the king did pleased all the people.  
37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's intent to kill Abner the son of Ner.

I love this. The weeping and mourning for the turncoat Abner pleased the people, because it pleased David. And whatever David did pleased the people!

Lesson: When God does something we don't understand, we can have peace with it because ultimately, we LOVE GOD and we TRUST Him. / like David & his followers

38 Then the king said to his servants, "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?"  
39 And I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too harsh for me. The LORD shall repay the evildoer according to his wickedness."

So, even though Joab and Abishai served David faithfully, he knew these brothers were dangerous and had an evil streak in them.

Let's finish the story of Ishbosheth, which is a short tale. This chapter is only 12 verses long...

4:1 When Saul's son [this is Ishbosheth] heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost heart, and all Israel was troubled.

2 Now Saul's son had two men who were captains of troops. The name of one was Baanah and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin. (For Beeroth also was part of Benjamin,

3 because the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been sojourners there until this day.)

4 Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was lame in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel; and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth.

This introduces Mephibosheth, but we'll get back to him later in 2 Samuel—so we can press on...

5 Then the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out and came at about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, who was lying on his bed at noon.

6 And they came there, all the way into the house, as though to get wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.

7 For when they came into the house, he was lying on his bed in his bedroom; then they struck him and killed him, beheaded him and took his head, and were all night escaping through the plain.

So, Ishbosheth is murdered by his own men...

8 And they brought the head of Ishbosheth to David at Hebron, and said to the king, "Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul your enemy, who sought your life; and the LORD has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul and his descendants."

Sound familiar? Once again, folks are trying to win favor with David by killing his enemies / except, they are striking down God-appointed rulers of Israel. This is a "big no-no" with David!

9 But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all adversity, when someone told me, saying, 'Look, Saul is dead,' thinking to have brought good news, I arrested him and had him executed in Ziklag—the one who thought I would give him a reward for his news.

This was the Amalekite we started with tonight

11 How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous person in his own house on his bed? Therefore, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and remove you from the earth?"

12 So David commanded his young men, and they executed them, cut off their hands and feet, and hanged them by the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner in Hebron.

And David honors his fallen rival, who reigned over Israel—truly in honor of God, who appoints rulers and brings them down again.