

## ***“Lessons from the Life of David” – Pastor Jim Ruddy***

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### **Study # 44 – The Death of Absalom – 2 Samuel 17:24 – 18:18**

#### **I. ABSALOM’S TROOPS PURSUE 17:24-26**

##### **A. DAVID’S RETREAT 24a**

- David set up a temporary base at Mahanaim (*“two camps”*).
- The forces of heaven were joining the earthly battle!
  - cf. 2 Sam. 17:14; Gen. 32:1-2; 2 Ki. 6:1-17
- As God before has fought for David (2 Sam. 8:14; 17:14), Heaven is on the side of the anointed King. cf. 2 Sam. 16:16, 18

##### **B. ABSALOM’S ADVANCE 24b-26**

- We cannot be certain as to how much time elapsed between David’s departure from Jerusalem and Absalom’s pursuit.
- Absalom enlisted his troops and placed them under the charge of his general, Amasa, a relative of both King David and Joab.
  - cf. 1 Chr. 2:13-17

#### **II. DAVID’S FORCES PREPARE 17:27-18:4**

##### **A. THEIR PROVISION 17:27-29**

- Three groups of allies arrive at Mahanaim carrying food and supplies to revive and refresh David’s men.
- Shobi, an Ammonite of royalty and wealth. cf. 2 Sam. 10:1
- Machir, patron of Mephibosheth. cf. 2 Sam. 9:3-6
- Barzillai, of Gilead. cf. 2 Sam. 19:31-39

##### **B. THEIR DIVISION 18:1-2a**

- David positions his formidable army under three generals.
- Joab, David’s nephew. cf. 2 Sam. 2:12
- Abishai, Joab’s brother. cf. 2 Sam. 2:12
- Ittai, the Gittite, who pledged his loyalty. cf. 2 Sam. 15:18-22

##### **C. THEIR PREVISION 18:2b-3**

- Insisting that the King not expose himself to danger, David’s generals encourage him to remain at the city while they go forth to battle. *“You’re 10,000 times more important than us!”*
- The King was the center of their morale and was considered the symbol of strength and well-being. cf. 2 Sam 21:17

#### **III. DAVID’S WORDS PREEMPT 18:5**

- Consenting to their request, David remains at Mahanaim, and reviews the troops as they march forth from the city.
- Out of paternal affection, David expresses his great concern for Absalom, commanding his generals to deal gently with his son.
- Is it possible that the generals regarded David as a risk to the campaign because of his distorted feelings for Absalom?

#### **IV. DAVID'S MEN PREVAIL 18:6-8**

##### **A. THE LOCATION OF THE BATTLE v6**

- The delay on Absalom's part (because of Hushai's counsel), afforded David the opportunity to rest his weary men, add to his forces, and then position them to his best advantage.
- Absalom's men encounter David's troops in the Forest of Ephraim, a site chosen by David and his generals because it greatly favored his professional soldiers and placed Absalom's new-recruits at an extreme disadvantage.

##### **B. THE DEVASTATION OF THE BATTLE v7-8**

- "*great slaughter*" is used more often in reference to "disease or plague" than it is to "battle," and it emphasizes the extreme ruin of Absalom's troops. cf. Ex 9:14; Num. 14:37; 2 Sam 24:21, 25
- "*the woods*" – God's creation – is said to fight on the side of The LORD'S anointed! cf. Josh. 10:11; Judges 5:20-21

#### **V. DAVID'S SON PERISHES 18:9-16**

##### **A. THE TRADITIONAL DESCRIPTION**

- This event is memorialized by the Jewish historian Josephus and in the Talmud with Absalom being caught "*by his hair.*"
- That which was his pride and glory brought about his humiliation and death. cf. 2 Sam. 14:25-26

##### **B. THE SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION**

- The Hebrew indicates that Absalom's head or neck became wedged in a forked-branch, and his royal mount walked on leaving Absalom hanging in the tree.
- After learning of Absalom's peril, Joab totally disregards the King's command and ruthlessly slays David's son.
  - Joab had earlier helped Absalom reconcile with David.
    - cf. 2 Sam. 14:1-33
- With Absalom dead and the troops in disarray, Joab calls off the pursuit of the men of Israel who were fleeing.

#### **VI. ABSALOM'S ACTS PREMONISH 18:17-18**

- Absalom is not buried in the family grave, but piled-upon like an accursed man or a defeated king. cf. Josh 7:25-26; 8:29; 10:27
- In a self-serving, desperate attempt to perpetuate his own name, Absalom had raised up a pillar. cf. 1 Sam. 15:12; Ps. 49:11
- Absalom had no devoted son who considered his father's name worthy of memorializing. cf. Ecc. 6:4; 8:10; Ps. 34:6; Prov. 10:7
- There were now two monuments commemorating Absalom, the pillar and the heap of rocks, each as pitiable as the other!