

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

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## **Study # 20 – 2 Samuel 4:1-12 – The Murder of Ishbosheth**

### **I. ISRAEL’S FEARFUL CONDITION 4:1-4**

#### **A. THE FEAR OF ISHBOSHETH v1**

##### **1. Natural Realm** - *“his hands dropped”*

- When David heard that Abner had died, he declared his own innocence and condemned the murderer. cf. 3:28-29
- When Ishbosheth heard that Abner had died, he lost the strength and courage to fight any longer. cf. 1 Sam 28:21  
*Lit.* - *“his hands dropped”*

##### **2. Civil Realm** - *“all Israel was troubled.”*

- Abner’s death weakened a weak kingdom even more! cf. 3:1

#### **B. THE FAME OF BAANAH & RECHAB v2-3**

- Two of Ishbosheth’s captains, who were associated with the tribe of Benjamin, are introduced in the story.
- Saul’s own people are disenchanted with his son’s rule.

#### **C. THE INFIRMITY OF MEPHIBOSHETH v4**

- The son of Jonathan was now only twelve. He had been crippled from childhood and was unwilling or unable to press any claims to the throne.
- Mephibosheth will appear again. cf. 9:6-13; 16:1-4; 19:24-30; 21:7

### **II. ISHBOSHETH’S SHAMEFUL ASSASSINATION 4:5-8**

#### **A. THE ASSASSINATION**

- Under the guise of performing their daily service, Rechab and Baanah enter the royal chamber and assassinate their king during his midday rest.
- Those who were responsible to protect his life, took his life.
- Note the three verbs in v7: they strike, they kill, they decapitate.
  - Ishbosheth is three-times dead!

#### **B. THE PRESUMPTION**

- As they come to David, the killers claim to have acted out of piety and in harmony with God’s will, serving as agents of the LORD’S judgment against Saul. They made themselves instruments of God’s justice although they had no commission from God.
- It is possible to be attacked by someone who believes they are doing a service to God! cf. John 16:2; Rom. 10:2
- There are many who use the cover of religion to further their own purposes. 1 Sam. 2:12-17; Php. 3:18-19; Rom. 16:17-18

### **C. THE MOTIVATION**

- The real motive for their act was crass opportunism and the hope of reward. Surely the Benjamite brothers recognized the weakened condition of their king and perhaps felt that their only hope for survival was to change sides.
- To bring themselves into favor with David, they pretended to bring concern for his life, conviction of his title, and a zealous desire to see him fully possess the throne. In truth, they didn't really regard God or respect David's honor.

## **III. DAVID'S FAITHFUL CONDEMNATION 4:9-12**

### **A. DAVID'S DECLARATION v9**

- The statement, "*As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all adversity,*" frames the reign of King David. It is pronounced here as he inherits the throne from Ishbosheth, and it is proclaimed at the end of his reign as he hands the throne to Solomon, his son. cf. 1 Kings 1:29

### **B. DAVID'S EVALUATION v10-11**

- David recounts the story of the Amalekite who thought he was bringing good news about Saul's death, but instead brought about his own demise. cf. 2 Sam 1:1-16
- They couldn't have done David a greater dishonor than to consider him of like spirit as themselves, who didn't care whose blood had to be spilt in order to obtain the throne.

### **C. DAVID'S ADJUDICATION v12**

- Since the crime was self-confessed there was no need for witnesses - their own tongues witnessed against them.
- David simply pronounced the fitting sentence and signed their death warrants. cf. Gen 9:6
- David dissociated himself from the cold-blooded crime by punishing the murderers in the severest possible manner.
- They had raised their hands against royalty, resulting in a very rough form of justice. Their bodies are mutilated for having slain their master with *their hands*, and fled from the scene with *their feet*. cf. Ex. 21:24

### **D. DAVID'S PROMOTION**

- This event marks the end of Saul's brief dynasty, as the assassins remove the final obstacle from David's path to kingship. Note: 2 Sam. 5:1-5
- David benefited from the crime without being involved with it. The stories are included in the Divine record to exonerate David from any compliance in the deaths of any of his rivals.