

Session 16 David Anointed King in Hebron: Civil War (2 Sam. 2-4)

I. DAVID INQUIRED OF THE LORD

- A. After Saul died in battle, there were no obstacles to stop David from taking the throne of Israel. The only rival to the throne was Saul's youngest son, Ishbosheth, who was a fearful and weak leader. Saul's death brought chaos to the leadership of Israel; thus it was an opportune time for David to take advantage of the situation and take the throne. But instead David inquired of the Lord as to what to do. He refused to grasp the throne while in En Gedi and Ziph and now once again.

¹It 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..." ⁴There they anointed David king over the house of Judah. (2 Sam. 2:1-4)

- B. ***Inquired of the Lord:*** After mourning for Saul, the first thing David did was to inquire of the Lord. David inquired of the Lord (1 Sam. 23:2, 4, 11-12; 30:8-9; 2 Sam. 2:1-2; 5:19, 23; 21:1; Ps. 27:4).
- C. During David's seven years in Hebron he was tested by receiving only a *partial fulfillment* of what God promised him. Here he was king over only one tribe—Judah—instead of all 12 tribes that God spoke to him about ruling. He was age 30 to 37 during his seven years in Hebron (2 Sam. 2-4).
- D. David was preoccupied with doing God's will, not with being king. He saw himself first as who he was *before God* and second as who he was *before men*. David's greatest desire was to love and obey the Lord, regardless of the changing circumstances and seasons of his life. His primary life goal was not to be king but to be obedient to God, to know His heart, and to behold His beauty. Being king was secondary to David; that is what made David so different from Saul.
- E. ***Leadership lesson:*** The *promise of God* and the *timing of God* are separate issues. We will never lose anything in God by responding with patience and humility. David was patient, but not passive.

II. DIVINE DIPLOMACY: BEING WISE AS A SERPENT (MT. 10:16)

- A. Jesus called His people to be wise as a serpent, but innocent as a dove (Mt. 10:16). He wants us to be wise related to human dynamics. "Wise as a serpent" speaks of employing "*divine diplomacy*" in our approach to decisions related to situations with complex human dynamics, without being naïve. This includes having insight into the nature of fallen people or the ability to grasp how weak human tendencies can affect a situation. David was both wise and innocent (good motives).

¹⁶"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. (Mt. 10:16, ESV)

- B. Diplomacy is based on sincere motives—genuinely valuing others enough to invest the time and effort to express that value to them. Merely being "political" is to give a public show of valuing others, yet lacking sincerity about it. The *virtue* of *diplomacy* is in making the effort to express value for others. The *peril* of being *political* is in doing it only for show.
- C. In 2 Samuel 2-4 David made decisions that showed his insight into the tendencies of fallen people.

III. DAVID ANOINTED KING AT HEBRON (2 SAM. 2:1-4)

- A. David sought the Lord for clear direction for his life (2:1-3).

¹It 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.”²So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.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. (2 Sam. 2:1-4)

- B. **Go up:** the Lord told David to go up from Ziklag to Judah. Judah is a territory; Hebron is a city. The Lord did not initially specify a city until David asked. The Lord often gives us a general direction and then gives more details as we continue to ask for them. He does not make known His entire plan for us at one time, but keeps us in conversation with Him as He gives us more direction.
- C. **Two wives:** David married two women from two cities in Judah (Carmel and Jezreel). His marriage to Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail gave him connection with two powerful families in that region.
- D. When David became king, he did not forget the men who shared his trials in his wilderness years. David remembered the men who fought the battles with him. This was a foreshadowing of Jesus calling His disciples to reign forever with Him. Those who suffer with Him will reign (2 Tim. 2:12).

IV. DAVID HONORED THE HOUSE OF SAUL (2 SAM. 2:4-7)

- A. David's first act as king was to honor Saul by blessing the men of Jabesh Gilead, who buried Saul (2:4) and his three sons (1 Sam 31:11-13). This is an example of David employing diplomacy in his attitude and actions to help unify Israel.

⁴...And they told David, saying, “The men of Jabesh Gilead were the ones who buried Saul.”⁵So 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...⁶I also will repay you this kindness...⁷Therefore, let your hands be strengthened, and be valiant; for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king...” (2 Sam. 2:4-7)

- B. **Jabesh Gilead:** The men of Jabesh Gilead heard that the Philistines desecrated Saul's body. They honored Saul as God's anointed by burying him. This humiliated the Philistines publicly.

⁸...the Philistines came to strip the slain...they found Saul and his three sons...⁹They cut off his head...¹⁰and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.¹¹Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul,¹²all the valiant men arose...took the body of Saul and...his sons...and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. (1 Sam. 31:8-12)

- C. **Kindness:** David sent a message of kindness to these men expressing his value for them. This was an expression of his diplomatic wisdom. The nation waited to see how David would treat the people associated with Saul's house. His message of kindness relieved anxiety in some of them since Saul had pursued David as his enemy. By honoring Saul, David signaled to them that he was not seeking to seize the throne from Saul's family and, as king, he would help them if the Philistines attacked.

V. ABNER ESTABLISHED ISHBOSHETH AS KING OVER ISRAEL (2 SAM. 2:8-11)

- A. Abner took Ishbosheth to Mahanaim to anoint him as king over Israel.
⁸But Abner...commander of Saul's army, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim; ⁹and he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, and over all Israel. ¹⁰Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years...¹¹The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months. (2 Sam. 2:8-11)
- B. *Ishbosheth*: He was an incompetent leader, being a weak man who was easily intimidated.
- C. *Abner*: Saul's cousin (14:50), Abner was the top commander of Israel's army under Saul and Ishbosheth. He was the most influential man in Israel. Instead of establishing himself as king, he wanted a descendant of Saul to be king. Thus he used Ishbosheth to legitimize his own power base.
- D. *Mahanaim*: Abner relocated the capital to Mahanaim because Gibeah, the former capital city had been taken over by the Philistines after Israel lost the battle to them (1 Sam. 31). The city was east, across the Jordan River, about 35 miles from Gibeah, far enough from the Philistines to be safe.
- E. *Seven years*: It seems that Ishbosheth became king during the two years that correspond to the sixth and seventh years of David's reign in Hebron. The Philistines controlled the region around Gibeah during that time and prevented an Israelite from coming to the throne. Thus Abner was the primary leader in Israel for the first five years of David's seven-year reign before anointing Ishbosheth.

VI. THE CIVIL WAR BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JUDAH (2 SAM. 2:12-4:12)

- A. These three chapters describe important events that occurred during a civil war between Israel and Judah that happened during the last two years of David's seven-year reign in Hebron.
¹Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. (2 Sam. 3:1)
- B. David longed for Israel to be unified with Judah, but various battles and murders (of Abner and Ishbosheth) set that process back. However, David's wise actions kept the process going forward.

VII. ABNER'S AND JOAB'S DEADLY CONFLICT AT GIBEON (2 SAM. 2:12-32)

- A. Abner and his men fought Joab and his men at Gibeon (2:12-13). Gibeon was a midpoint between Ishbosheth's headquarters in the north at Mahanaim and David's in the south at Hebron.
¹²Now Abner...and the servants of Ishbosheth ...went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. ¹³And Joab...and the servants of David, went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon. (2 Sam. 2:12-13)
- B. Abner challenged Joab to let their men compete in a deadly contest of hand-to-hand combat (2:14).
¹⁴Then Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men now arise and compete before us."...¹⁵So they arose and went over by number, twelve... followers of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve from the servants of David. ¹⁶And each one grasped his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. (2 Sam. 2:14-16)

- C. Afterwards, the two armies attacked each other in a fierce battle (2:17-23).
¹⁷So there was a very fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David. ¹⁸Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab and Abishai and Asahel... ¹⁹So Asahel pursued Abner... ²²Abner said to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground?... ²³However, he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the blunt end of the spear...Asahel...died. (2 Sam. 2:17-23)
- D. **Sons of Zeruiah:** David's sister Zeruiah had three sons: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel (1 Chr. 2:16). They each held positions of authority in David's army. They were loyal to David and skillful in battle, but they were also impulsive and violent, and they caused David real problems.

VIII. DAVID'S HOUSE GREW STRONGER AND STRONGER (2 SAM. 3:1)

- A. David's house and influence grew stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker (3:1). The tensions between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted seven and a half years (2:11).
¹Now 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. (2 Sam. 3:1)
- B. Many processes and transitions in the kingdom happen slowly, taking few years to unfold. The Lord often allows increase to come little by little to protect His people from being harmed (Deut. 7:22).
²²And the LORD....will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. (Deut. 7:22)

IX. ABNER SUPPORTED DAVID AS KING (2 SAM. 3:6-21)

- A. The hostilities between the house of David and Saul heightened the last two years (3:6-11).
⁶Now 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. ⁷And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah...⁸So Ishbosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?" ⁸Then Abner became very angry at the words of Ishbosheth, and said, "...I show loyalty to the house of Saul your father...and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and you charge me today with a fault concerning this woman? ⁹May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as the LORD has sworn to him—¹⁰to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba." (2 Sam. 3:6-10)
- B. **Rizpah:** Ishbosheth accused Abner of treason by being involved sexually with Rizpah (3:7), a concubine in Saul's harem. To touch a king's concubine sexually was an act of treason.
- C. **Do for David as the LORD has sworn to him:** Abner had a sudden change of heart as a result of this accusation and decided on the spot to support David until all of Israel came under David's kingship. It was well known that the Lord promised to make David over all Israel (3:9).
- D. **Leadership lesson:** When leaders feel betrayed they often use their position of power to cause negative repercussions to their accusers. David was so unusual in that he did not yield to this.

- E. Abner sent messengers to David to begin the process of turning the kingdom to him (3:12-14).
¹²Abner 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.” ¹³And 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.” (2 Sam. 3:12-14)
- F. Abner had led military conflicts against David’s army and even had killed one of David’s close relatives—Asahel (2:23). He sent messengers to tell David that he was willing to use his position to bring all the tribes of Israel to David. Abner had confidence in David’s integrity, having watched him over the years respond to Saul. David came to agreement with Abner. He knew that the nation could be unified and its welfare established much faster through diplomacy than by war.
- G. **Michal:** David wanted to reestablish his family link with Saul. By doing this, he could legitimize his claim to be king over Israel. This was another expression of wise diplomacy in sincerely esteeming the house of Saul. The message was clear that David had a legitimate claim to the throne and that David would honor the Benjaminites and not penalize them. Therefore, they did not need to fear that David take vengeance on them because David was honoring Saul’s family so much.
- H. Abner’s plan escalated after he spoke with elders of Israel (3:17-18).
¹⁷Now Abner had communicated with the elders of Israel, saying, “In time past you were seeking for David to be king over you. ¹⁸Now 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.’” (2 Sam. 3:17-18)
- I. **Elders of Israel:** The elders were among the most influential men in their cities. Soon after this, the elders affirmed David’s divine right to rule over them and took part in his anointing (5:2-3).
- J. **In times past:** Apparently some of the elders considered making David king during the five years following Saul’s death, before Abner made Ishbosheth king two years earlier. The elders had heard reports of what Saul said to David in En Gedi and in Ziph about being king (1 Sam. 24:20; 26:25).
- K. Abner as the most influential Benjamite set a plan in motion to make David king over all Israel (3:19-21). This involved transferring the power of the national government and military to David.
¹⁹Abner 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. ²⁰So 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. ²¹Then 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. (2 Sam. 3:19-21)
- L. **Benjamin:** Abner held a special meeting with the leaders of the tribe of Benjamin. Their acceptance of David was essential because it necessitated them rejecting Ishbosheth, a fellow Benjaminite.
- M. **Feast:** David treated Abner and his company as honored guests at the royal residence.

X. JOAB MURDERED ABNER (2 SAM. 3:22-27)

- A. After David finished his meeting, Joab returned from a raid resulting in much plunder (3:22-25). He was furious with David when he heard that David was planning on a partnership with Abner. Joab hated Abner for killing his brother (2:23) and was probably threatened by the likely chance that Abner as an experienced military leader would take his role as David's top leader of the army.

²²*At that moment...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...²⁴Joab came to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you; why is it that you sent him away...?"²⁵Surely you realize that Abner...came to deceive you, to know...all that you are doing." (2 Sam. 3:22-25)*

- B. Joab murdered Abner (3:26-27). Joab could not see the big picture of God's purpose and the blessing on the whole nation that would result from unity with David and Abner.

²⁶*...Joab...sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back...But David did not know it.*
²⁷*Now when Abner had returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside...to speak with him privately, and there stabbed him...so that he died for the blood of Asahel his brother. (2 Sam. 3:26-27)*

XI. DAVID SHOWED HIS INNOCENCE RELATED TO ABNER'S DEATH (2 SAM. 3:28-39)

- A. David was grieved by the murder of Abner (3:28-39). He distanced himself from Joab's great sin. David publicly stood against what Joab did, boldly making known that he had no part in it. David required all who participated in Abner's murder to publicly show their sorrow over Abner's death.

²⁸*Afterward, when David heard it, he said, "My kingdom and I are guiltless before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner..."²⁹Let it rest on the head of Joab and on all his father's house..."
³¹*David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes, gird yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn for Abner..."³²So they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. (2 Sam. 3:28-32)**

- B. *All the people wept.* David's response set the context for all the people to respond in a similar way to the death of a man who was an enemy of their homeland—Judah (3:32, 34). David's response becomes the people's response. Great violence could have broken out in Hebron because of this murder, but because of David's response the nation was unified. David expressed honor to Abner and helped to establish the values and narrative that would form the future for Hebron and Israel.

XII. DAVID EXECUTED THE MEN WHO MURDERED ISHBOSHETH (2 SAM. 4:1-12)

- A. Recab and Baanah, two leaders of a lower rank in Israel's army killed Ishbosheth (2 Sam. 4:1-7).

⁵*...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. ⁶And they came there...and stabbed him in the stomach...⁸And 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..." (2 Sam. 4:5-8)*

- B. David executed them and had them hung publicly as a public statement of his support for Israel.

¹²*David...executed them...and hanged them by the pool in Hebron. (2 Sam. 4:12)*