

2 Samuel 3-4 • David Becomes King

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2 Samuel, chapter 3. David is now on a throne, but not on the throne. You'll remember when David was a teenager, God spoke through the prophet Samuel over him and said, I've anointed you as king over Israel. But then he ran for the next 10 plus years for his life while Saul hunted him down out of jealousy and bitterness and so forth.

And then after Saul died, David became, he was crowned king of the Southern area of Judah, but the Northern tribes of Israel were still loyal to king Saul. And this went on for 7 and a half years, additional years. And this is that timeframe that we're talking about here in 2 Samuel. David is not yet king over all of Israel yet but there are some important things to see in this chapter.

Verse 1, it says, *“There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. (in fact, it was about 7 and a half years) And David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker.*

² And sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam of Jezreel; ³ and his second, Chileab, of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; ⁴ and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; ⁵ and the sixth, Ithream, of Eglah, David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.” (ESV)

Now, stop there for just a moment, please. What we notice by looking at those first 5 verses, is that 6 sons were born to David during roughly the 7 and a half year period while he was living in Hebron, ruling over the Southern tribe of Judah.

But there's something else that we notice. I mean, we knew, it's like 6 sons. Okay, well, 6 sons in 7 and a half years. Yeah. Okay. But we noticed something else about these sons. They're born to 6 different women and we know that was wrong.

We know that it was never God's intent for man to have more than one wife. And this, when God was giving the law through Moses and talking about a future time in Israel's history of when they would have a king, God laid down

some guidelines for the king. Let me put one of them up on the screen for you. It's from Deuteronomy chapter 17, and it says,

Deuteronomy 17:17 (ESV)

And [the King] shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away...

And [the King] shall not acquire many wives for himself, (and then God even gives the reason why) lest his heart turn away...

And obviously that means turn away from the Lord. This was one of several things that God basically said, don't let the king do. Don't let him take many wives. Don't let him amass a lot of gold. Don't let him have a lot of horses. Horses was power back in those days, to own a lot of them.

Well, it was very common also in those days for men, and particularly kings, to have a lot of wives. Of course, David's son Solomon is going to outdo him by an ungodly number. You know that. Solomon is going to have 300 wives and 700 concubines. I mean, is that ridiculous or what? Goodness gracious. What's a guy thinking? Don't answer that. But it was common in the sense that a king would show his magnificence by having a lot of wives.

And yet we think of David and we think, but now, you know what, here's a man whom God said was a man after My own heart. And so we're a little disappointed. We understand that it happened, we understand that it was a cultural phenomenon, it was a common thing back in the day, but we also know David was a godly man. So why is it that David had all these wives as such a godly man?

And what's interesting about it is that when we see verses like this where it basically tells us that David was doing something wrong, or somebody else. We wish that the very next verse was a little preachy on the subject. We don't... If you wrote the Bible, wouldn't you have kind of added a little comment after that going, and that was really stupid, or something like that. And God looked upon David's polygamous relationships with an unfriendly eye or something like that. At least we'd feel a little bit better.

But sometimes the Bible isn't even all that preachy. It'll just simply say things happen and it won't even speak of it. It won't even speak in a judgmental sort of you know form. It'll just say this is the deal and this is one of those examples. It just says, and David had 6 sons while he was living in Hebron in 7 and a half years by 6 different women and then it just goes on with the text.

And we're left wondering, well, is that okay? In other words, why didn't God make mention of this at this particular point? Why does He just then go on with the story?

One of the things the Bible does that we have to remember is that the Bible was never meant to be read and understood with little snippets or proof texts. And that's the way many people try to apply the Bible to their lives. They'll take a verse and then they'll hoist that verse out of the context of the passage. And they'll carry it around like a stick and either throw it at people or hit people with it. And try to make their point over and over again with this single verse of the Bible without taking the context into consideration.

And one of the things the context does for you is it gives you insights about things that you that might not be there in a specific explicit sense. For example, it says here that David was amassing wives, even though the Lord said he shouldn't. And it says here that several of, he was having lots of children by these wives. But it doesn't give us any comment about whether that's right or wrong, at least not in this particular location.

But what it is going to do is we go on and read through the Book of 2 Samuel, we're going to find out what kind of lives most of these kids led. And let me tell you right now. Spoiler alert, they're not stellar.

You look at some of these guys the firstborn son of David, Amnon. Yeah, he goes down in history as raping his half-sister. Wasn't that fun? And then Absalom, his third born son, is going to murder Amnon. And then Absalom is going to later try to overthrow his father's kingdom. There's going to be a short civil war that's going to ensue and he's going to try to kill his dad. And he himself is going to lose his life in the effort.

And then you got Adonijah, who was the fifth born son here. He's going to attempt to seize the throne toward the end of David's life, even though Solomon was the one whom David had declared would follow him on the throne. And then when Adonijah, when that doesn't work for Adonijah, he's going to try to take one of David's concubines, and he'll end up getting executed due to his ignorance and arrogance. And that's just 3 of the lot, so it's interesting, isn't it?

Instead of commenting on David's polygamy in the passage by just outright saying, and there it is, we have to read the context of the rest of the book to find out that this was not a good situation, and it did not produce good fruit. And there was not the blessing of the Lord there. In fact, what we see is a very troubled household.

Now, David was a man after God's own heart, that doesn't change. David was a good guy but he was also very human. His passion several times got the best of him, and he didn't always make the right decisions. And frankly, he wasn't a stellar dad. And things didn't go well. There was a lot of infighting in his family.

It's interesting how the Bible does give a commentary if you just read it. It may not come out in this specific sort of, this proof text stick that we carry around that we can beat people over the head with. But it comes out in the context of the passage where we realize we read it and we go, you know what? This was a household out of order. Out of order.

Do you guys understand order versus out of order? Disorder always creates chaos. Chaos is very dangerous and it often harms people wherever you see it. Where there's order, there's peace. Where there is disorder, there's chaos and danger.

I've made this point many times. We even see it in weather patterns. When things get out of order, what happens? We have very dangerous weather things that'll go on when weather gets out of order.

I grew up in the Midwest where tornadoes were a regular highlight of most of our summer evenings. And if not tornadoes, at least very severe thunderstorms, which is a weather pattern getting out of order. You got air masses that are colliding and the cold air is getting pushed up above. And the warm air is staying down and that's contrary to order.

And the same thing is true in our lives when we get out of God's order. When we don't apply God's order, the order of His Word to our lives, there's chaos. And so many times we want prayer to be delivered from the chaos, but we don't want to put our lives back in order. We don't want to live our lives according to the order of God's Word. We just want the pain to go away. And so we'll make decisions to get rid of the pain, but we don't take any effort to clean up the disorder.

I was talking earlier about how our lives are like different pictures of houses in different levels or stages of disorder and disarray. God is working in our lives to put things back in order, but you know what? It's a painful work sometimes. It's a really painful sort of a thing. And there are some rooms in our houses, we got the doors shut and boarded. We don't want God to go in there, it's a mess. So there you go.

Verse 6, let's go on here. It says, *“While there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, (this is civil war, you guys, these are Jews fighting against Jews) Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul.”*

Remember, Abner was the commander of Saul's army. Saul's dead now and you'll remember that Abner propped up one of David's weak willed sons, and made him king. But it was, Abner was really ruling. It was a military rule with a puppet king. And that's why it says Abner was making himself strong in the house of the Lord.

Now look at verse 7. It says, *“Now Saul had a concubine (of course Saul's dead now so, this was a former concubine) whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. And Ish-bosheth (who is the son of Saul who Abner made king, comes to Abner and) said to Abner, “Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?””*

Stop there for just a moment. Remember what I said with that having a lot of wives was a picture of a king's strength and even potentially his virility and that sort of thing. Well, to take a king's concubines was to conquer the king, even in death. To assume the concubines of a fallen king was to assume his authority, his power. It was a picture of taking over. This is a complete takeover of this former king.

And here now, this is the accusation that's being leveled at Abner by Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul. Why did you, why'd you mess around with my dad's concubine? That's what he says.

And then it says in verse 8, *“Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, “Am I a dog's head of Judah? To this day I keep showing steadfast love to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not given you into the hand of David. And yet you charge me today with a fault concerning a woman.”*

We don't know. And we're never, I don't know if we ever will know exactly if Abner really, truly was doing what Ish-bosheth was accusing him of or whether he was just angry and he knew that he could intimidate this guy with his anger. But he denies having anything to do with this woman and yet we do know from verse 6 that he was strengthening himself in the house of Saul.

And look what Abner goes on to say because this is really something. Verse 9, *“God do so to Abner and more also, if I do not accomplish for David what 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 Ish-bosheth could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.”

Now, this is really, this is an incredible statement by Abner because look what he's saying. He gets mad because Ish-bosheth accused him of taking his father's concubine. He says, listen, what am I, a dog's head that you're accusing me of something like this? He said, you know what? I've been faithful to your father's house. I've kept you safe from David's army during this entire period of time. Listen, I'm done. I'm finished.

And he said, well, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to go and I'm going to bring the rest of the tribes that have been faithful to your father and I'm going to give them to David.

Basically he's saying this is over. This little game we've been playing this puppet king thing that you've been doing I'm done propping you up and being the power behind this thing. I'm tired of the drama. I'm tired of the politics I'm done. It's over. We're turning it all over to David and Ishbosheth is just cowering in fear.

Now, that's bad enough But I want you to notice again, what Abner says in verse 9. *“God do so to Abner (in other words, to me, this is Abner speaking) and more also, if I do not accomplish (look at this) for David what the LORD has sworn to him,”*

Abner is showing by that statement that he was fully aware that some, getting close to 20 years earlier, that God had promised the kingdom to David. The cat's out of the bag.

Can you imagine questioning a guy like Abner about this? Abner, I understand from your statement that you just made to Ish-bosheth that you believe that God has in fact promised the kingdom to David. Is that right? Yeah, that's right. So what have you been doing these last 7 and a half years?

You knew this all along, and yet you determined to go on in disobedience. It would have been great if Abner would have just at the very beginning decided to obey God. And say, listen, when Saul died, he could have said, you know what? It's over. David is the, really the crowned, king of Israel, anyway. God is the one who anointed him. You know what? Let's give the kingdom to David. Let's live under his rule. There could have been a lot of lives spared during that 7 and a half years of civil war. A lot of drama they could have gotten rid of and not had to deal with.

But Abner kept the thing going, knowing that it was in fact the will of the Lord for David to rule and reign over all of Israel. Why do we do that? Why do we live our lives doing what we're doing when we know that we shouldn't do it?

You ever asked yourself that question? You ever beat your head against the wall asking that question? Why am I doing this? I know this is wrong. I know this isn't God's will for me. I know this isn't the way I'm supposed to be living. I know this area of sin is something I'm not to be giving into. I know that this is not something I should be doing. Why am I doing it then?

How about because I want to? How about because I choose to? Abner chose simple as that. He knew and yet he chose. This is the way it's going to be is what we're going to do.

Well, listen, it was as impossible then for Abner to fight against God's will as it is for you and I to do that even today. It's crazy, isn't it? I mean, you look at a situation like this and you just, you're wow. It would have been great if Abner would have decided to be obedient for God. I mean, he had to be humiliated. He had to be insulted in order to be obedient to God. To start him on this road of doing what he's supposed to be doing. He had to be insulted. What does it take for you and I to get back on the right path?

Verse 12 says that, *"...Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, 'To whom does the land belong? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring over all Israel to you.'"* Abner's making good on his threat that he said.

"¹³ And he said, 'Good; (this is David talking now) I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you; that is, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face.'"

The one is, you think, boy, David, don't you have enough? But this is frankly the one woman that, this was his first wife. This is really the woman who has the right to be his wife apart from all the other gals, truly. And yet you'll remember that she was the daughter of Saul. And when David ran for his life, she stayed behind and Saul out of spite gave her to another man. Just handed her over to another man to be his wife. And now David says, I want her back. I want my wife back. So if you're going to do this, then bring her back.

Verse 14 says, *"Then David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, 'Give me my wife Michal, for whom I paid the bridal price of a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.'"*

Actually he paid 200. You'll remember, but he was only asked for 100. You'll remember Saul asked for that as a bride price thinking that David would lose his life in the process. It didn't happen that way,

*“¹⁵ And Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish.
¹⁶ But her husband went with her, weeping after her all the way to Bahurim.
Then Abner said to him, “Go, return.” And he returned.”*

Well, you can kind of tell the kind of guy Abner is. He's a strong, powerful, military man. And when his husband is following along this procession, weeping after his wife, all Abner has to say is just go home, dude. And he just does. And that's all there is to it. There's no arguing with this guy or you'll lose your life.

Verse 17 says, *“And Abner conferred with the elders of Israel, saying, “For some time past you have been seeking David as king over you. ¹⁸ Now then bring it about, for the LORD (and here he’s going to say it again, for the LORD) has promised David, saying, ‘By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and from the hand of all their enemies.’””* Again, Abner shows he knew the word of the Lord.

“¹⁹ Abner also spoke to Benjamin.” Now, it was important for him. You might say, well, isn't Benjamin included in all Israel? Well, yeah, but he had to go talk to them personally because, remember, Saul was from Benjamin. And this is going to be a tougher crowd, if you will, to win over because this is Saul's family. These are very close relatives.

So he goes also to Benjamin. *“And then Abner went to tell David at Hebron all that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin thought good to do.”*

²⁰ When Abner came with twenty men to David at Hebron, David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. ²¹ And Abner said to David, “I will arise and go and will 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.

²² Just then the servants of David arrived with Joab (remember, Joab is the commander of David's army. They came back) from a raid, bringing much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David at Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. ²³ When Joab and all the army that was with him came, it was told Joab, “Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has let him go, and he has gone in peace.” ²⁴ Then Joab went to the king and said,

“What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you. Why is it that you have sent him away, so that he is gone?”²⁵ You know that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you and to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing.”” Stop there.

Abner is or Joab rather, is lying through his teeth. He has absolutely no information to prove that Abner is doing anything wrong or that he's just pretending to be David's friend. He has one concern, and one concern only, and that is killing Abner. Because in one of the battles, Abner killed one of his brothers, named Asahel. And that's all. That's the only reason

And so it goes on in verse 26. *“When Joab came out from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern of Sirah. But David did not know about it.”²⁷ And when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the midst of the gate to speak with him privately, and there he struck him in the stomach, (obviously with a sword knife or something) so that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.²⁸ Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, “I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the LORD for the blood of Abner the son of Ner.²⁹ May it fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house, and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge or who is leprous or who holds a spindle or who falls by the sword or who lacks bread!”³⁰ So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon.”*

This is one of those tough situations. Asahel died. That's true, but he died in battle. And Joab is completely taking the position of vengeance here, even though his brother died in battle. He is killing this man in peace. His brother died in battle. And one of the things that we're forgetting is maybe, sort of, is not just that Abner killed Asahel. Asahel was running after Abner to kill him. It was war, and Asahel was running after him for one purpose, and that was to take him out.

And you'll remember too, the story? Like three times, Abner said to Asahel, Is that you? Is that you Asahel? Yes, that's me. Turn away. Go, you don't even have a sword in your hand. Go, take one of the other guys, go attack somebody else. How can I look your brother in the face if I have to kill you? And Asahel wouldn't listen. And so eventually, as an act of self-defense, Abner killed him. But again, it was battle. And again, Asahel was trying to kill Abner. But that is completely when vengeance takes over in the heart, all of all reason goes out the window. And all Joab wanted to do was commit murder. But David immediately responds to this situation and he pronounces this curse over Joab and his family. And it's a lengthy curse and I could get into all the specifics of it

but I won't. Just suffice it to say David is pronouncing something over them that is not good.

And then in verse 31 it says, *“Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, ‘Tear your clothes (a sign of mourning) and put on sackcloth and mourn before Abner.’ And King David followed the bier.”* Which is the casket, which is being carried down the road with Abner's body.

And ³² *“They buried Abner at Hebron. And the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept.”* You see what David is doing. He's making a very public demonstration of the fact that he had nothing to do with this.

Abner came to him in peace, he died, and he basically tells Joab you are going to mourn for this man. And he's pronouncing this thing. You will tear your clothes, you will mourn, you will put on sackcloth, and so forth.

And then all the people, *“And all the people (verse 35) wept again over him. ³⁵ Then all the people came to persuade David to eat bread while it was yet day. But David swore, saying, ‘God do so to me and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!’ ³⁶ And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them, as everything that the king did pleased all the people. ³⁷ So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's will to put to death Abner the son of Ner.”*

Boy, I tell you, had David not acted properly in this situation, this could have easily stirred up just a bee's nest. I mean, this could have taken the ovations of peace that Abner had initiated with Israel and just absolutely thrown it to the wind. This could have started a civil war that would have never ended. And all because Abner had to have his vengeance.

³⁸ *“And the king said to his servants, (verse 38) ‘Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? ³⁹ And I was gentle (that word can also mean, weak) today, though anointed king. These men, the sons of Zeruiah, (and he's talking about Joab and his brother) are more severe than I. The LORD repay the evildoer according to his wickedness!’”*

Now that's an interesting last verse, that verse 39. It's hard to know what to make of it. David almost seems to be admitting defeat. He's kind of saying here, in essence, these guys are too strong for me, and I don't really know what to do. And we're left to wonder why he didn't punish Joab and his brother for such a heinous act against Abner. We don't know, we don't know why he didn't punish

them for what they did. He felt like for some reason he couldn't. And I don't really understand why.

Now Joab would pay eventually. You'll remember that when Solomon, his son takes over the throne, Joab will be put to death for his crimes. But by that time, he's going to be an old man.

Let's quickly run through chapter 4. It's a short chapter. *"When Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, heard that Abner had died at Hebron, his courage failed, and all Israel was dismayed. ² Now Saul's son had two men who were captains of raiding bands; the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, sons of Rimmon a man of Benjamin from Beeroth (for Beeroth also is counted part of Benjamin; ³ the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been sojourners there to this day).*

⁴ *Jonathan,...*" Now there's an interesting. Verse 4 as we read this, just keep in mind, verse 4 is a parenthetical note. *"Jonathan, the son of Saul, (and you'll remember that he and David were very close) had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, (meaning that they had died in battle) and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth."*

We're going to find out more about Mephibosheth later. But what the author, what the writer is doing here is making you aware of just the sons of Saul, in this case.

"⁵ Now the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out, and about the heat of the day they came to the house of Ish-bosheth as he was taking his noonday rest. ⁶ And they came into the midst of the house as if to get wheat, (or on the pretext of coming for some wheat. Remember, they're captains. They're captains of raiding parties so nobody would have thought much of it) and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped." Alright?

Now, the author is going to go back and tell us, give us some details of the murder. *"⁷ When they came into the house, as he lay on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him and put him to death and beheaded him. They took his head and went by the way of the Arabah all night, ⁸ and brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron. And they said to the king, "Here is the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life. The LORD has avenged my lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring.""*

They're coming to David literally with the head of the son of Saul saying, here, this guy who was a weakling king anyway, we killed him. And we're bringing you his head to prove it, and now your enemy is dead. Ah ha! What do you have for a reward for us? But you know David, don't you?

“⁹ But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, ‘As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life out of every adversity, ¹⁰when one told me, ‘Behold, Saul is dead,’ and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him at Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news. ¹¹How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous man in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and destroy you from the earth?’” ¹²And David commanded his young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet and hanged them beside the pool at Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner at Hebron.”

Again, this is a mistake we find people making. And that is they believe that David is like any other person, king, ruler, who is vengeful and wants to take vengeance on his enemies and so forth. And so they assume that by killing Ish-bosheth, they're doing him a favor. But David sees through it as a thinly veiled excuse for committing murder. And he knows what he's dealing with. He's dealing with murderers here. He's not dealing with people who want to establish his kingdom.

And by the way, David doesn't need evil people establishing his kingdom. God will establish his kingdom. He doesn't need to worry about having people do it for him. You don't need to have worry about people advancing your kingdom either. God will do it. Don't worry about doing it yourself. Don't worry about fixing the thing yourself.

What's hard to understand is why these men were punished for their actions and Joab and Abishai in the previous chapter were not. Anyway, that's where we're going to end here for tonight. 2 Samuel chapter 5 next time.

One of the things I love about David. David is an example to us in many ways. Some of them are good and some of them are not so good. He is an example nonetheless. But one of the things I love about David is self-advancement was not something that he felt necessary. Boy, that's just really an important reminder, isn't it? Just don't advance your kingdom. Let God do it in His own good time.