

David is Anointed King over Judah

2 Samuel 2

"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."

² So 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. And they told David, saying, "The men of Jabesh Gilead were the ones who buried Saul." 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."

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

¹² Now Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. ¹³ And Joab the son of Zeruiah, 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. 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. ¹⁷ So there was a very fierce

battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

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."

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. 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. 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.

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. 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?"

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. 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 Mahanaim.

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. 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."

Background Notes

2 Samuel 1 records the death of King Saul and his sons at Mount Gilboa. After David's time of mourning over Saul and Jonathan, he inquired of the Lord about what to do and where to go. This is a good practice when making decisions! Always ask the Lord what to do and what direction you should take.

The Lord told David to go up to Hebron (v1). Most likely these directions were communicated to David through the high priest Abiathar, who had the ephod and the Urim and Thummin.

Hebron is the place where the Patriarchs were buried; Hebron is the area that Caleb had conquered for Judah (Joshua 14). Hebron had become one of the leading cities of Judah. It was the ideal place for David to begin his reign, since Jerusalem was still occupied by the Jebusites. So David and his men moved with their families from Ziklag to Hebron, and there David was anointed King over Judah (v3-4).

One of David's first official acts as king over Judah was to send correspondence to the people of Jabesh Gilead, commending them for their kindness shown to King Saul by giving Saul's remains an honorable burial. Obviously this was also a diplomatic move to pave the way for David to be received as king over all Israel. But seven more years would go by before David would be recognized and anointed as king over all Israel.

Doctrinal Points

1. David's patience is a spiritual picture of Christ.

Ishbosheth, one of Saul's sons, had somehow escaped and was not killed by the Philistines along with his father and brothers. Abner, the general of Saul's army, set Ishbosheth up as king in Mahanaim, a city on the east side of the Jordan River, away from the Philistines. So while David was king over Judah, Ishbosheth was king over what was left of Saul's kingdom of Israel.

David's patience in waiting for **God** to bring the whole kingdom to him is certainly a spiritual picture of the "greater David," our Lord Jesus Christ. The prophet Samuel had anointed David as king at the Lord's command, and David was the rightful king over all Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ is waiting on God the Father's timing to bring in the earthly kingdom where He will reign as King. (Notice - we're not talking about the Church, but about the literal earthly kingdom where Christ will reign over all nations of this earth.)

Right now our Lord is the rightful King, and He is recognized as King by all true believers. However, the majority of people on this earth refuse to recognize Him as the rightful King. But when He returns to this earth to set up His kingdom, every

knee will bow and submit to Him as King! Right now He waits patiently at the right hand of the Father. As the messianic Psalm 110 says: *"The LORD says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."*

Continuing the spiritual picture: before the Lord's kingdom is established over all this earth, there will be an "Ishbosheth" of the End Times. Ishbosheth was not the rightful king. He was from the house of Saul, who tried to get rid of David. Just like Ishbosheth in David's day, there will be a false "Messiah king" of the End Times, known as Antichrist. But just as Ishbosheth was defeated by David's forces (as we'll see), so the end time Antichrist will be defeated by the Lord's forces, and the kingdom of the true King will be set up over this whole world. In the meantime, our Lord, with His faithful people, is waiting patiently for God's perfect timing. David's patience is a spiritual picture of Christ.

2. Abner's challenge is a spiritual lesson concerning conflict.

Verses 12-32 is quite a dramatic passage of Scripture, isn't it? You can go to the pool of Gibeon today and picture how this contest took place between Ishbosheth's men, under Abner, and David's men, under Joab. In that day, military strength and even military conquest was sometimes determined by a smaller scale military contest (such as the contest between David and Goliath). In this case, all 24 contestants killed each other, and so the battle began. Joab's forces were clearly victorious over Abner's forces, even though Asahel, Joab's brother, died a horrible death (v23).

Verse 26-27: *"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?" And Joab said, "As God lives, unless you had spoken, surely then by morning all the people would have given up pursuing their brethren."* What did Joab mean by this statement? If Abner had not called for a truce, would the conflict have continued? Or did he mean that if Abner had not challenged Joab in the first place, there would have been no conflict? It's hard to say for sure. In any case, the conflict was a direct result of Abner's challenge, and the civil war could certainly have been avoided if there had been no challenge. There could have been dialog; they could have talked things out.

How often this situation arises in churches and fellowships today! Many conflicts could be avoided if folks would simply talk things out in love rather than constantly challenging one another. Galatians 5:26 says *"Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."* And Galatians 5:15 says *"But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!"* Abner's challenge is a spiritual lesson concerning conflict.

Practical Application

Let's ask the Lord first about our next move!

After the death of King Saul, David didn't just take matters into his own hands and grab the kingdom. Even though he knew he was the rightful king, and even though he could have easily made his move without consulting the Lord, David did the right thing. David asked the Lord what and when and where, and he did it before he made his move, not after. And he waited. And so should we!

Too often we don't consult the Lord until after we've made our selfish moves, and after things don't work out as we had hoped. Whenever we have to make a move, whether it be a change in location, or job, or some other decision, let's follow David's example in 2 Samuel 2. Let's ask the Lord first about our next move!