

Death Of Abner; Meeting King David (2 Sam. 3)

Recap: A Long Civil War (2 Sam. 3:1)

1 Now 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.

- Recall: after the death of King Saul, no one stepped forward to claim power. The Tribe of Judah anointed David as their king.
- David began to rule as king in the City of Hebron.
- Soon, David began to show his good character as king.
- We saw the outbreak of civil war between David and the surviving family of Saul. This fighting was apparently precipitated by David’s nephew, Joab.

David’s Family Grows In Hebron (2 Sam. 3:2-5)

2 Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; 3 his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur; 4 the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; 5 and the sixth, Ithream, by David’s wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.

- This list shows us David prospering, but was it wholesome to have six sons from six different women?

- The Bible does not condemn David’s polygamy, but it isn’t seen as a positive.
- David was violating a Torah command not to multiply wives for himself.
- It was common for kings to take many wives and concubines, who had a lesser status. David was no exception to this practice.
- Laying claim to the concubines of a king was a very serious matter.

Six Wives and Six Sons

None of these princes became famous for good, as far as we know.

- Amnon became disgraced.
- We suspect Chileab died young.
- Third was Absalom, the rebel. He seems to have been the product of a political marriage. Geshur was a small kingdom which may have been to the north of the Ammonites, on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee.
- Adonijah was also trouble!
- Shephatiah and Ithream were passed over for the kingship, for unknown reasons.

Abner’s Anger (2 Sam. 3:6-12)

6 Now 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. 7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. So Ishbosheth said to Abner, “Why have you gone in to my father’s concubine?” 8 Then Abner became very angry at the words of Ishbosheth, and said, “Am I a dog’s head that belongs to Judah? Today I show loyalty to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and you charge me today

with a fault concerning this woman? 9 May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as 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 he could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him. 12 Then Abner 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.”

- For some reason, Ishbosheth accuses Abner of taking Saul’s concubine, Rizpah.
- Abner takes this suggestion as an extreme insult, and an accusation of disloyalty.
- We’re not sure whether Abner actually slept with Rizpah, but it seems very possible from Abner’s response.
- Ishbosheth seems to have been weak and paranoid like Saul, so Abner terrified him. Abner seems to recognize that YHWH has promised to do this for David.
- Notice Abner’s sly question!

An Agreement Concluded (2 Sam. 3:13-21)

13 And 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.” 14 So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, saying, “Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.” 15 And Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish. 16 Then her husband went along with her to Bahurim, weeping behind her. So Abner said to him, “Go, return!” And he returned.

17 Now Abner had communicated with the elders of Israel, saying, "In time past you were seeking for David to be king over you. 18 Now 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.'" 19 And Abner 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.

20 So 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. 21 Then 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.

- David agrees to make a covenant with Abner, but he has an important condition.
- Michal was Saul's daughter, David's first wife, and he was legally betrothed to her or perhaps actually married. But when David and Saul fell out, Saul took Michal and gave her away to another man.
- Michal's new husband is forced to let her go.
- What were David's motivations here? David was insisting on what was right, but this also would appear as though the House of Saul was repenting. It would also solidify David's political position.
- Interestingly, David sent that message to Ishbosheth, not Abner. David emphasizes to Ishbosheth the legality of the deal, that he had had a demand for dowry placed upon him, and he delivered.

Abner Follows Through

- Abner reminds the elders that it was really David they desired.
- Very interestingly, Abner references a prophetic word concerning David that we've never heard of before.
- Benjamin would probably be a harder sell but with his stature, Abner was the right man to convince them.
- Notice that David behaved very magnanimously, and treated them like honored guests and important people.

Joab's Anger... And His Response (2 Sam. 3:22-27)

22 At that moment the servants of David and 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, and he had gone in peace. 23 When Joab and all the troops that were with him had come, they told Joab, saying, "Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he sent him away, and he has gone in peace." 24 Then Joab came to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you; why is it that you sent him away, and he has already gone? 25 Surely you realize that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you, to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing." 26 And when Joab had gone from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know it. 27 Now when Abner had returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him privately, and there stabbed him in the stomach, so that he died for the blood of Asahel his brother.

- Joab was not a diplomat! He seems to have been very disrespectful to David.
- Joab must have deceived Abner by telling him that David more to talk further with him. It was a terrible deception from start to finish.

King David Disavows Joab’s Deed (2 Sam. 3:28-34)

28 Afterward, when David heard it, he said, “My kingdom and I are guiltless before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner. 29 Let it rest on the head of Joab and on all his father’s house; and let there never fail to be in the house of Joab one who has a discharge or is a leper, who leans on a staff or falls by the sword, or who lacks bread.” 30 So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

31 Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, “Tear your clothes, gird yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn for Abner.” And King David followed the coffin. 32 So they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. 33 And the king sang a lament over Abner and said:

“Should Abner die as a fool dies?

34 Your hands were not bound

Nor your feet put into fetters;

As a man falls before wicked men, so you fell.”

Then all the people wept over him again.

- David makes it clear that this is something to be ashamed of.
- Joab would have been allowed to take revenge for murder, but Abner had not murdered Asahel.
- Not only that, Hebron was what was known as a city of refuge. Abner should have been safe as long as he was there.
- David curses Joab’s family, and this is a curse that contains some of the curses we see in the Law of Moses.
- David forces everyone to mourn, and wear sackcloth, including Joab, and David himself is right behind the coffin.

King David

*It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness,
For a throne is established by righteousness. (Prov. 16:12)*

- In verse 31 for the very first time the Holy Spirit calls David “King David.”
- This shows us how a king walks!

David Sets The Tone (2 Sam. 3:35-39)

35 And when all the people came to persuade David to eat food while it was still day, David took an oath, saying, “God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!” 36 Now all the people took note of it, and it pleased them, since whatever the king did pleased all the people. 37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king’s intent to kill Abner

the son of Ner. 38 Then the king said to his servants, “Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? 39 And I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too harsh for me. The LORD shall repay the evildoer according to his wickedness.”

- David sets the tone by showing that his mourning is deeper than everyone else’s.
- This helped convince the nation of his innocence.
- David tries to teach his servants and give them understanding on how they should think and behave.
- Although he is the anointed king, David is handling this matter gently.
- David ends this passage with a chilling reminder that YHWH will repay evildoers according to their wickedness.

*All quotes NKJV except as noted.
New King James Version® Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.*