

Lecture #10 – Exposition of II Samuel 1-5

Chapter 1 – David Laments for Saul

vs. 1-16 – The Tale of the Amalekite

David is back at Ziklag after his victory against the Amalekite raiders. An Amalekite arrives bringing news of Saul and Israel's defeat at the hands of the Philistines. The man tells a story about coming on the wounded Saul and kills the king at his request. He carries with him Saul's crown and bracelet.

I do not believe that he is telling the truth about killing Saul. Edersheim describes it as “utterly untrue”¹ and Reese that “he wasn't telling the truth”.² There are many holes in his story that fail under careful examination. I believe he was an opportunist hoping to capitalize on Saul's defeat by getting in good with David. He sorely miscalculated what David would do. Whether it he killed Saul or simply claimed it, David pronounces him guilty by his own testimony and has him killed.

vs. 17-27 – David's Lament

Carroll gives his opinion that this song is “one of the most beautiful elegiac poems in the literature of the world.”³

Verse 18 is a stumbling block to many critics. The claim is that “the bow” is the name of this song by inserting with zero authority words like “the song of” here. The giving of such a title to a singular song is not found in the Old Testament that I can see.⁴ To me, it appears more likely that in Jonathan's memory and as a tactical observation from the recent battle, that David made the use of archery more emphasized than it had been. Matthew Poole comments: “The use of the bow, i.e. the use of their arms, which are all synecdochically expressed under the name of the bow, which then was one of the chief weapons; and for the dexterous use whereof Jonathan is commended in the following song: which may be one reason why he now gives forth this order, that so they might strive to imitate Jonathan in the military skill, and to excel in it, as he did.”⁵

Here is the song displayed in verse:

*The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places:
how are the mighty fallen!
Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon;
lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.*

¹ Bible History: Old Testament by Alfred Edersheim. Book 4, p. 150

² The Reese Chronological Study Bible, p. 426.

³ An Interpretation of the English Bible: The Hebrew Monarchy, by B.H. Carroll. p. 149

⁴ Granted, there are some musical terms in the titles of some Psalms. However, these appear to be the tune or style that the words or sung to and not the actual title of the song.

⁵ https://biblehub.com/commentaries/poole/2_samuel/1.htm - accessed 9-19-22

*Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings:
for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away,
the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.
From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan turned not back,
and the sword of Saul returned not empty.
Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
and in their death they were not divided:
they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights,
who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
O Jonathan,
thou wast slain in thine high places.
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen,
and the weapons of war perished!*

Chapter 2 – David, King over Judah – 1055 B.C.

vs. 1-7 – David Anointed at Hebron

At God's instruction. David travels from Ziklag to Hebron ("alliance")⁶, a town about 20 miles south of Jerusalem in the Judean hills. He brings his family and his men with him.

It is there that David is anointed king over the tribe of Judah alone. According to II Samuel 5:4-5 is thirty years old when anointed and will rule in Hebron for the first seven and a half years of his reign.

His first act as king is to thank the men of Jabesh-Gilead for their care of Saul's remains.

vs. 8-11 – Abner Anoints Ishbosheth

Saul's cousin⁷ Abner proclaims Saul's surviving son Ishbosheth ("man of shame")⁸ to be king over the other tribes with a capital at Mahanaim on the east side of Jordan.⁹ He is called Eshbaal ("man of

⁶ Smith's Bible Dictionary

⁷ Sometimes referred to (even by me) as his uncle, but he is the *son* of Saul's uncle Ner – see I Samuel 14:50.

⁸ Smith's Bible Dictionary

⁹ This does not appear to have happened immediately after Saul's defeat. It likely took a couple of years to regroup the people and get a new king established after the devastating defeat to the Philistines.

Baal”)¹⁰ in I Chronicles 8:33. His name suggests he was an idolator. It is suggested that Eshbaal is his real name but that the pious Jews did not want to use the name of the false god Baal.

vs. 12-32 – Battle of Gibeon

Gibeon is a town about eight miles northwest of Jerusalem. Davis writes of the archaeological discoveries there, including the pool mentioned in Scripture:

“Most spectacular of all the discoveries, however, was a large shaft leading to a pool, now identified with the pool mentioned in this chapter (ct. v. 13). This pool was cut down into a solid rock and was cylindrical in shape, measuring 37 feet in diameter and 35 feet deep. At the base of this cut the excavators discovered a circular stairway which continued by means of a tunnel down another 45 feet. This ultimately led to the water room which could be used by the people at all times, but especially during those periods when the enemy was outside the walls.”¹¹

Here Abner and his army meet David’s nephew Joab (“whose father is Jehovah”)¹² and his army. What follows is strange by modern standards. It does not appear to be a “contest of champions” like we saw in David vs. Goliath. Instead, an opening skirmish is proposed between a dozen men from each side. These engage each other in the exact same way (same training?), by grabbing their opponent’s head with the left hand and then plunging a sword into their side with their right. This strange prelude to the battle resulted in the place being called “the field of rocks, i.e. of men who stood like rocks, unmovable, each one dying upon the spot where he fought.”¹³

The victory by David’s men is overshadowed by the death of Joab’s brother Asahel (“made by God”)¹⁴. In his relentless pursuit of Abner, he is struck down by his target with a blow from the butt-end of the spear¹⁵. The loss of Asahel slowed the pursuit until Abner’s men regathered and took a defensive position on a hill. He called Joab to halt the fight, and Joab responded that it was Abner’s idea to fight in the first place. Joab blows a signal on the *shofar* and the battle ends.

But Joab would not forget what happened to his brother Asahel...

Chapter 3 – Abner’s Machinations

vs. 1 – Civil War

The rise of David and decline of Saul continues.

¹⁰ Easton’s Bible Dictionary

¹¹ Israel: From Conquest to Exile by John J. Davis and John C. Whitcomb. p. 278

¹² Smith’s Bible Dictionary

¹³ https://biblehub.com/commentaries/poole/2_samuel/2.htm - accessed 9-19-22

¹⁴ Smith’s Bible Dictionary

¹⁵ Which likely had some type of point or spike on it as well so that it could be driven into the ground.

vs. 2-5 – David’s Growing Family

The first of David’s children are born during the early days of his reign. It is worth noting that the number of wives has expanded since the last count.

David’s firstborn was Amnon. Second, Chileab. Third, Absalom. Fourth, Adonijah. Except for Chileab who disappears from the records¹⁶, the rest of these will cause heartache for David.

vs. 6-21 – Abner Revolts to David

Even though Ishbosheth is the king in title, Abner is the real power. He is strengthening himself more than his king. Gill comments on Abner and Rizpah:

“though perhaps it was not so much the act of uncleanness that so much offended him, or the dishonour reflected on him and his family thereby, as it discovered an ambitious view in Abner to get the kingdom into his own hands, to which this was the leading step; see I Kings 2:22. Whether Abner was really guilty of this sin or no is not easy to determine; though, by his not absolutely denying it, it looks as if it was not merely a jealousy of Ishbosheth, or a false report made unto him; though, especially if he was not fully satisfied of it, it would have been his wisdom to have said nothing of it to him, since his continuance on the throne so much depended on him.”¹⁷

Abner turns against Ishbosheth and seeks a treaty with David, promising to deliver the rest of the tribes into his kingdom. The one request made by David is that his first wife Michal be returned to him. On this request, Barnes writes:

“David’s motive in requiring the restitution of Michal was partly his affection for her, and his memory of her love for him; partly the wish to wipe out the affront put upon him in taking away his wife, by obtaining her return; and partly, also, a politic consideration of the effect on Saul’s partisans of a daughter of Saul being David’s queen.”¹⁸

Gaebelien writes:

“Then we see Abner entering negotiations with David. Had David again relapsed that he fell in with Abner? We do not hear a word that he inquired of the Lord. He makes a condition under which Abner is to see his face. Michal, Saul’s daughter, the first wife he had, who was now the wife of Phaltiell is to be brought to him. He then received her after his request to Ish-bosheth, while her husband accompanied her as far as the border of Judah. The subsequent history, Michal’s mockery, shows that it was a mistake for David to take her back. How different all would have been if David had inquired of the Lord.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Perhaps he died young.

¹⁷ John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible on II Samuel 3:7. E-Sword module.

¹⁸ Barnes’ Notes, E-Sword module.

¹⁹ Annotated Bible by A.C. Gaebelien. E-Sword module.

vs. 22-39 – Joab Kills Abner

Joab is furious when he arrives back at Hebron and finds out what David has been up to. He secretly sends messengers to Abner and arranges a meeting. Joab takes Abner aside and kills him in a similar manner to the way Asahel had been slain.

David makes it clear by his actions that he had nothing to do with the murder of Abner. He condemns the actions of Joab²⁰ and mourns Abner. David did not desire to build his kingdom by killing his brethren but trusted in the Lord to establish him.

Chapter 4 – Death of Ishbosheth

vs. 1-8 – Death of Ishbosheth

Ishbosheth is left greatly weakened by the loss of Abner. His two lieutenants, Baanah (“son of affliction”)²¹ and Rechab (“horseman”)²², assassinate Ishbosheth hoping to ingratiate themselves to David.

Note in vs. 4 that we meet for the first time Mephibosheth (“exterminator of shame”)²³ for the first time.

vs. 9-12 – David’s Response

David responds by having the killed just as he did the Amalekite at Hebron. He had sworn to Jonathan and Saul not to hunt down their families and he would keep his word. Barnes writes: “Their hands and feet were hung up in a place of public resort, both to deter others and also to let all Israel know that David was not privy to the murder of Ish-bosheth.”²⁴

²⁰ Hebron was a city of refuge (Joshua 21:13) where a trial should have been required (Numbers 35:22-25)

²¹ Easton’s Bible Dictionary

²² Easton’s Bible Dictionary

²³ Easton’s Bible Dictionary

²⁴ Barnes’ Notes, E-Sword module.

Chapter 5 – David, King Over Israel – 1048 BC

vs. 1-5 – David Anointed by Israel

☪ I Chronicles 10:1-3

With Abner and Ishbosheth gone, the northern tribes were left leaderless. They now submit to David and he is anointed king over the combined tribes of Israel. Note that they acknowledge (1) that God had chosen David to be their king, (2) that he would care for them like a shepherd would his sheep, and (3) that he would be their military leader.

The overview of his reign is that he reigned for 7½ years over Judah alone then for 33 over all Israel, for a grand total of 40 years.

🎵 Psalms 61, 101, 133.

vs. 6-10 – David Captures Jerusalem

☪ I Chronicles 11:4-9

Now in command of all Israel, David needed a more centrally located capital. He finds this by capturing the Jebusite city of Jerusalem (“the habitation of peace”)²⁵ with its stronghold at Zion²⁶.

Vs. 8 is a little hard to unpack. The Jebusites mocked David saying the “blind and lame” could defend their fortress and keep him out. Those words are turned against them as a proverb when David and his men succeed in taking their position by attacking through the water chute. The parallel passage in I Chronicles 11 says that Joab was first in the attack and solidified his place as general.

vs. 11-16 – David at Jerusalem

☪ I Chronicles 14:1-7

David builds a palace using cedar and craftsmen from Tyre. This was a sign of a growing economy and trade. It also showed that stability David was bringing to the kingdom that a capital and palace were now established.

We have in vs. 13-16 a list of children born to David that looks ahead in time a bit (see Solomon in 5:14). David has 20+ children. 6 sons were born in Hebron, 13 more sons recorded here, and one named daughter Tamar.

²⁵ Smith’s Bible Dictionary

²⁶ The meaning of Zion is not very clear. Perhaps it means something like a high place, fortification, or monument.

♪ Psalm 30

vs. 17-21 – Battle of Baal-perazim

☪ I Chronicles 14:8-17

The Philistines appear to make their first major offensive here since the death of Saul. They gathered for battle in the Valley of Rephaim (“giants”²⁷), about three miles from Jerusalem. David prepares for battle and seeks God’s direction. God divinely intervened and cause the enemy to be routed. The location was then named Baalperazim (“master or possessor of breaches”)²⁸ because they had broken through and destroyed their enemy.

It is of note that their enemy is so thoroughly routed that they discard their idols and leave them. David wisely does not keep these as trophies of war, but instead burns them.

vs. 22-25 – Battle of Geba/Gibeah

The Philistines invaded again. David inquires of the Lord again, and God directs him to attack from the rear after God caused a stir in the trees. This must have caused a surprise attack or perhaps frightened the enemy before the attack came. Regardless, God aided them in the victory that day when the obeyed and patiently waited for His timing.

Geba is a shortened form of Gibeon (compare to I Chronicles 14:16).

²⁷ Easton’s Bible Dictionary

²⁸ Barnes’ Notes, e-Sword module.