

2 Samuel 04 - Ish-bosheth is Murdered; The Way is Cleared for David's Kingship

I. David's faith (2 Sam 1:1—10:19)

(1) Political victory (1:1—5:25)

(G) David executes Ishbosheth's murders (4:1-12)

2 Samuel 4

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1 Now when Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, heard that Abner had died in Hebron, his courage failed, and all Israel was horrified.

1 Now when Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel was disturbed.

1 When Saul's son heard that Abner had died in Hebron, his courage failed and all of Israel was disturbed.

1 And when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled.

2 And Saul's son had two men *who were* commanders of troops: the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the sons of Benjamin (for **Beeroth** is also considered *part* of Benjamin,

2 Saul's son *had* two men who were commanders of bands: the name of the one was Baanah and the name of the other Rechab, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the sons of Benjamin (for Beeroth is also considered *part* of Benjamin,

2 Now Saul's son had two officers in charge of some raiding parties. One was named Baanah and the other was named Rechab. They were sons of Rimmon, a descendant of Benjamin from Beeroth, which was considered to belong to the tribe of Benjamin.

2 And Saul's son had two men that were captains of bands: the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin:

- "...Beeroth" - a town near the border with Benjamin, two miles south of Gibeon

3 and the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have lived there as strangers until this day).

3 and the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been aliens there until this day).

3 (The residents of Beeroth had evacuated to Gittaim and live there as resident aliens to this day.)

3 And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.)

- The Beerothites (Gibeonites, Joshua 9:17,27) were expelled by Saul (21:1-2) and fled to Gittaim

— Their town, Beeroth, passed into the possession of Benjamin. Beeroth is generally identified with el Bireh, a village nine miles from Jerusalem, on the road leading to the north

— Even though the Beerothites had fled from their town to Gittaim, and were still out of Benjamite territory when this was written, the writer wanted to make clear that Baanah and Rechab were Benjamites

4 Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was disabled in both feet. He was five years old when the news of Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse picked him up and fled. But it happened that in her hurry to flee, he fell and could no longer walk. And his name was **Mephibosheth**.

4 Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the report of Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened that in her hurry to flee, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

4 Meanwhile, Saul's son Jonathan had a son whose feet were crippled. When he was five years old, news had arrived about Saul and Jonathan from Jezreel, and his nurse picked him up to flee, but in her hurry to leave, he happened to fall and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth.

4 And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

- "...Mephibosheth" - "He Scatters Shame"

- As Saul's son Mephibosheth, when he was five years old, fled with his nurse upon hearing the news of the death of his father (Saul) and brother (Jonathan), he somehow broke or dislocated one or both of his legs and became lame

— His nurse, hearing of the Philistines' victory, was fearful that the Philistine army would immediately send a party to Saul's house to cut off all that pertained to it, and would especially aim at her young master, who was now next heir to the crown

— His young age and his leg injury meant he was unfit to rule; his physical condition made it impossible for him to provide military leadership

— His condition may have also emboldened the assassins to attempt their cowardly plot to kill Ish-bosheth (v5-7)

5 So the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, departed and came to the house of Ish-bosheth in the heat of the day, while he was taking his midday rest.

5 So the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, departed and came to the house of Ish-bosheth in the heat of the day while he was taking his midday rest.

5 Rechab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, left and arrived during the hottest part of the day at the home of Ish-bosheth while he was taking a noon day nap.

5 And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon.

6 And they came to the interior of the house *as if* to get wheat, and they struck him in the belly; and Rechab and his brother Baanah escaped.

6 They came to the middle of the house as if to get wheat, and they struck him in the belly; and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.

6 They entered the house as though they intended to obtain some grain and stabbed him in the abdomen. Then Rechab and his brother Baanah escaped.

6 And they came thither into the midst of the house, as though they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth rib: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.

- Their ruse to gain entrance to the house is an old one—the delivery man approach

— The LXX has an altogether different rendering: And, behold, the woman who kept the door of the house was winnowing wheat, and she slumbered and slept; and the brothers Rechab and Baanah escaped notice.

— This also explains how it was that they were able to enter unnoticed

7 Now when they had come into the house, as he was lying on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him and killed him, and they beheaded him. And they took his head and traveled **by way of the Arabah** all night.

7 Now when they came into the house, as he was lying on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him and killed him and beheaded him. And they took his head and traveled by way of the Arabah all night.

7 While they were in the house, they struck him, killed him, and cut off his head while he was lying on his bed in his bedroom. They took his head, and traveled all night along the Arabah road.

7 For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bedchamber, and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night.

- "...by way of the Arabah" - that is, the valley of the Jordan, through which their way lay from Mahanaim to Hebron

8 Then they brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron, and said to the king, "Behold, **the head of Ish-bosheth** the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life; so the LORD has given my lord the king vengeance this day on Saul and his descendants."

8 Then they brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron and said to the king, "Behold, the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life; thus the LORD has given my lord the king vengeance this day on Saul and his descendants."

8 They brought Ish-bosheth's head to David at Hebron and told the king, "Look! Here's the head of your enemy Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, who sought your life. Today the LORD has given your majesty the king vengeance on Saul and his descendants."

8 And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

- "...the head of Ish-bosheth" - the gift of Ish-Bosheth's head to David is at the same time the gift of the kingdom

— Such bloody trophies of rebels and conspirators have always been acceptable to princes in the East, and the carriers have been liberally rewarded

— Ish-bosheth being a usurper, the two assassins thought they were doing a service to David by removing the only existing obstacle to the union of the two kingdoms

9 But David replied to Rechab and his brother Baanah, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress,

9 David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress,

9 David responded to Rechab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite: "As the LORD lives, who has saved my life in every adversity,

9 And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,

10 when the one who informed me, saying, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' also viewed himself as the bearer of good news, I seized him and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for *his* news.

10 when one told me, saying, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for *his* news.

10 when the man who told me 'Look! Saul is dead!' thought he was bringing me good news, I arrested him and had him killed at Ziklag as the reward I gave him for his news.

10 When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings:

11 How much more, when wicked men have killed **a righteous man** in his *own* house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood from your hands and eliminate you *both* from the earth?"

11 How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous man in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood from your hand and destroy you from the earth?"

11 How much worse will it be, then, when evil men kill an innocent man on his own bed in his own house! Shouldn't I avenge his blood—which you are responsible for shedding—by removing you from the earth?"

11 How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?

- David had sworn to protect Saul's descendants, and nothing could cause him to break his vow (1 Sam 24:16-22). Though Ish-bosheth had no right to the throne, David denounced the assassins' treason in killing their king.

- "...a righteous man" - David designates Ish-bosheth a "righteous man," but denied him the title of king

— Even though he was Saul's son and had a claim to the throne, he was never anointed as king

12 Then David commanded the young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet, and hung them up beside the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in the grave of Abner in Hebron.

12 Then David commanded the young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet and hung them up beside the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in the grave of Abner in Hebron.

12 So David commanded his personal guards, and they killed Rechab and Baanah, cut off their hands and feet, and hung up their bodies beside the pool at Hebron. They took Ish-bosheth's head and buried it in Abner's tomb at Hebron.

12 And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried it in the sepulcher of Abner in Hebron.

- David's treatment of the corpses showed the people that Ish-bosheth's murder was not an act he ordered or approved (Cf. 1:16; 3:28; Matt 26:52)

— The exposure of the mutilated remains was intended as not only a punishment of their crime, but also the attestation of David's abhorrence

Note David's inconsistency in his dealings with Ish-bosheth's murderers and Abner's murderer (David's nephew Joab). David succeeded at work, but he failed at home. He did not deal with the members of his own family as he should have, but he was more careful to manage the affairs of his government properly. The home, not one's work, is the proving ground for church leadership. This is because the church is, or should be, more like a family than a business (Cf. 1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:1-2).

Saul the king is dead, Jonathan the heir-apparent is dead, Abinadab and Malki-Shua (two of Jonathan's brothers) are dead (1 Sam 31:2), Abner the commander of the army is dead—and no other viable claimants or pretenders continue to block David's accession to the throne except Saul's son Ish-Bosheth and Jonathan's son Mephibosheth. This chapter removed them from the scene, one explicitly (Ish-boseth, through murder) and the other implicitly (Mephibosheth, due to his physical ailment).

With the death of Ish-Bosheth, no other viable candidate for king remains for the elders of the northern tribes. Meanwhile David sits in regal isolation, above the fray as always, innocent of the deaths of Saul, Jonathan, Abner, and now Ish-Bosheth. The way is open for his march to the throne of Israel. One cannot help but note the similar career of Jesus Christ, who now sits in regal isolation above the fray below, awaiting His universal acknowledgement as King.

Application

- (1) God expects His people to show their love for Him by showing love for one another.
- (2) Ambition for ourselves has no place in Christ's kingdom.