

STUDIES IN SAMUEL
A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 19

- Vv. 1- 8 *The king's grief assuaged.* Many of the people received the impression that David was sorry that Absalom's revolt had been stopped. They even felt that if all of them had been killed and Absalom had been spared, David would have been happy. Joab rebuked David for this attitude and the king arose and sat in the gate and greeted his people.
- Vv. 9-15 *The return to the Jordan.* Since the campaign was successfully concluded, David and his men returned to the Jordan river in preparation for crossing back over into the main part of Israel. He had sent messages ahead to find out if the people wanted him to be king. He was a monarch, but he also wanted the people to approve his kingship.
- Vv. 16-43 *The people greeted the king.* Different ones came out to meet David as he returned. Some had favors to ask of him. Others had apologies to make. Most of the people were happy to see David returning as king.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *We must forgive others their trespasses against us.* Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). David had sinned grievously. He wanted very much to receive God's forgiveness of his sins, and he was willing to forgive others their trespasses against him. Although some of his men wanted him to wreak vengeance on his enemies, David forgave those who had spoken evilly against him and opposed him as he fled out of Jerusalem. His example is a good model.

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2. "*The king is an angel of God*" (v. 27). The people had great respect for their rulers. They considered the king as a messenger of God. The apostle Paul wrote "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (Romans 13:1). Christians should honor their rulers.

4. David Restored to Power, 19:1-43.

The King's Grief Assuaged. 19:1-8

And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.

2 And the victory that day was *turned* into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son.

3 And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.

4 But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!

5 And Joab came into the house to the king, and said Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines;

6 In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.

7 Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now.

8 Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they old unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

1. *How long did David continue mourning? 19:1*

The fondness which David had showed to Absalom in his early indulgences finally broke out into uncontrolled grief when he learned of Absalom's death on the battlefield. David appeared to be in a state of shock, hoping against hope to the last that the news which he had received would prove to be false. The original word translated to express David's weeping and mourning gave the idea of one trembling under strong emotion. David continued in such a state long enough for the word to get back to Joab and for it to become general knowledge among the people. The soldiers might have expected a triumphal entry back into the city where David was staying, but instead they were obliged to creep into the city like thieves and fugitives. Joab came immediately and told him that if he did not cease this kind of conduct the whole army would abandon him by nightfall (verse 7).

2. *What is the meaning of David's repeated reference to his son? 19:4*

To understand this repeated cry of grief, the reader must remember not only the excessive indulgence and weakness of David's fatherly affection for his son but also his anger at Joab and his captains. They had paid little regard to his command to protect the life of Absalom. David had a quick temper, and these mixed emotions prevented him from correctly judging the crime of his rebellious son who merited death. David was also forgetting the justice of God which had been made known in the death of Absalom. David declared that he would rather have died for Absalom than for Absalom to die while fighting against him. The Christian reader can almost hear

the cry of God as He calls out for His wayward sons. God has said that He is not only willing to die for His children but in Jesus Christ God in the flesh has died for wayward mankind.

3. *Why did Joab rebuke David? 19:5*

The people were greatly discouraged. As a captain over all the host, Joab knew the feelings of the people. The time demanded action. The soldiers had fought valiantly and won, and they had every right to expect a warm welcome. David's demeanor greatly abashed the men. The king was in sadness over an aspect of the outcome of a victory; and their ardor was dampened. If the men were permitted to continue without a welcome, they would return to their homes with an ill feeling of disappointment and wrong at the hands of David; and in the end, they would turn against David. Joab was the intimate counselor and advisor of the king; and he had the courage by nature to speak boldly to the king. The time was right for such speaking.

4. *What confusion had David caused? 19:4*

Joab said that David appeared to love his enemies and hate his friends. He was weeping over Absalom who had proved to be a very dangerous enemy. He acted as if he were angry with his men who had put down the revolt. David did have these mixed emotions, and they were apparent to those who saw his actions. Joab also said that David had no regard for his leaders and soldiers. He gave his men the impression that if everybody else had been killed and Absalom had lived he would have been happy.

5. *What action did Joab suggest? 19:7*

Joab advised David to leave the chamber where he was weeping and mourning and go out to his men and put their minds at rest about the outcome of the battle. The word used here to describe the speaking to his men is the same as was used with regard to Shechem's speaking to

Dinah (Genesis 34:3). David had caused a very grievous misunderstanding among his men, and he needed to assure them that he did not feel the way he appeared to feel. Joab did not specify what evil had befallen David through his career, but David had seen hard times. He was forced to flee for a long time as Saul sought to kill him. David was brought very low when his sin with Bathsheba was exposed. He was greatly distressed when Amnon forced Tamar, and his sin led to Absalom's killing Amnon. Perhaps one of the greatest evils which have befallen him was the revolt of Absalom, although he had been extremely grieved when Absalom was killed. Joab said that the evil which he was about to bring on himself by his continued mourning over Absalom would be greater than all these others.

5. *What men had fled to their tents? 19:8*

This passage should be compared with 17:24 and 18:16. The people of Israel were at a loss. Israel here mentioned should be construed to mean the followers of Absalom. They would be the ones placed in such a predicament by the death of the leader, but the fact that they had gone back to their homes left David's men free to come out of the battlefield and stand before the king.

The Return to the Jordan. 19:9-15

9 And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom.

10 And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?

11 And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, *even* to his house.

12 Ye *are* my brethren, ye *are* my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?

13 And say ye to Amasa, *Art* thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab.

14 And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as *the heart of one man*; so that they sent *this word* unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants.

15 So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

7. *What was the popular opinion among the people?*

19:9, 10

The people of Israel were confused and their loyalties were divided. They knew that David had saved them out of the hands of their enemies—the Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, Syrians, and Philistines. They knew that he was in exile, having been driven out of his kingdom by his own son, but Absalom, whom they had anointed to be their king, was dead. Their line of reasoning led them to the place where the majority of them were agitating for bringing David back to rule in Jerusalem.

8. *Why did David summon Judah? 19:11*

David represented the people of Judah as being the last to come back under his banner. They would have been last if they had not hastened to come in before Israel found their way back. Amasa was mentioned as a diplomatic gesture. This would flatter Amasa and secure his allegiance to David. David wanted Amasa, since he was a member of the tribe of Judah and had been Absalom's commander. Judah responded to David's invitation and met him at Gilgal, a convenient, sacred place located west of the Jordan.

9. *Why the pledge to Amasa? 19:13*

David did another unaccountable and unjustifiable thing in appointing Amasa commander-in-chief of the army in the place of Joab (19:13). One can understand his exasperation with the latter for his deliberate disobedience in the death of Absalom, and for the insulting language he used to the king. But, for all that, to make the former rebel chief to be the head of the army, superseding the loyal and victorious commander who had saved the king's throne for him was really too much; and one wonders where David's common sense had gone. We can imagine the fierce and sullen resentment of Joab's veterans when they heard the news. It is a wonder that there was not an outbreak of rebellion.

The People Greet the King. 19:16-43

16 And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which *was* of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David.

17 And *there were* a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king.

18 And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan;

19 And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.

20 For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.

21 But Abishai the son of Zeruah answered and said,

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Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?

22 And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I *am* this day king over Israel?

23 Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king swore unto him.

24 And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came *again* in peace.

25 And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?

26 And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant *is* lame.

27 And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king *is* as an angel of God: do therefore *what is* good in thine eyes.

28 For all *of* my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?

29 And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

30 And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king *is* come again in peace unto his own house.

31 And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan.

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32 Now Barzillai was a very aged man, *even* fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he *was* a very great man.

33 And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.

34 And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?

35 I *am* this day fourscore years old: *and* can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?

36 Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward?

37 Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, *and be buried* by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.

38 And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, *that* will I do for thee.

39 And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.

40 Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

41 And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away, and have brought the king, and his household, and all David's men with him, over Jordan?

42 And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king *is* near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king's *cost*? or hath he given us any gift?

43 And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more *right* in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

10. *Why did Shimei do obeisance? 19:16*

Shimei had cursed David as the king fled from Jerusalem (II Samuel 16:5). When David returned, the Jordan river was in a flood-swollen condition. A ferry was sent to carry the king's household over the water. Shimei showed his hypocritical zeal and humility in the presence of the king by swimming across the river. He was a coward and wished to escape the punishment that he rightly should have suffered. David forgave him and let him live.

11. *Why were men of Benjamin with Shimei? 19:17*

Shimei himself was a man of Benjamin. He had cursed David because he felt that David was on Saul's throne without any right to it (II Samuel 16:8). After David had been victorious over Absalom, Shimei might well expect to be the brunt of David's retaliation. In some manner he had influenced a thousand other men of the tribe of Benjamin to stand with him, and they came out to welcome David back to Jerusalem. Ziba was among them, and he also was connected with the tribe of Benjamin. He was the servant of the house of Saul and especially accountable to Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson. All these men must have come to the conclusion that it was useless for them to oppose David's claim to the throne. They should have known that it was God's will and that David

had been anointed by Samuel to replace Saul, but their extreme sense of family loyalty and devotion had led them to foolish actions, epitomized in Shimei's cursing David when the king was driven out of Jerusalem. They were anxious to make restitution and to be included among the people welcoming David back to his throne.

12. *How could Shimei be of the house of Joseph? 19:20*

Two of Joseph's sons were adopted by Jacob as his own sons and made heads of tribes in Israel (Genesis 48:5). These two sons were Ephraim and Manasseh, and their descendants settled in the land immediately north of the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin itself lay on the northern border of Judah. Benjamin was also the son of Rachel by Jacob, the same as Joseph. They were very close to each other, and the last two sons to be born to Jacob. In the wilderness wanderings, their people had been given campsites immediately to the west of the tabernacle (Numbers 2:18-24). This close affinity gendered by a common birthright and strengthened through years of close proximity led Shimei to make reference to himself as a member of the house of Joseph.

13. *What was Abishai's proposal? 19:21*

Abishai's position was constant. When Shimei came out to curse David as they were leaving the environs of Jerusalem, Abishai had asked permission to go over to Shimei and behead him. This was typical of Abishai's militant spirit, and his first reaction upon hearing Shimei's appeal to the king was that the appeal should be denied. It was his opinion that Shimei should be put to death for the shame that he brought on David when he cursed him. In Abishai's eyes, David was the Lord's anointed, and anybody who treated him shamefully was worthy of death.

14. *What was David's reaction to Abishai's proposal? 19:22*

Once again, David affirmed that he did not have anything to do with the wicked proposals of his nephews. He disclaimed any responsibility for the death of Abner

at the hands of the two brothers. He had barely been able to restrain Abishai when he wanted to behead Saul as he and David crept into Saul's camp. He had held back Abishai when he first proposed beheading Shimei; and once again, he was restraining Abishai's unbridled desire for revenge. He had been unable to restrain Joab in the battle against Absalom, although he had strictly charged him not to harm Absalom. David had no taste for bloodshed, and he felt the day was one of rejoicing and not a time for an execution of any kind. He would not mar the happiness of being restored to his throne by putting any of his enemies to death.

15. *Why was Mephibosheth negligent of his person? 19:24*

Mephibosheth showed his sorrow over the plight of David by letting his person go unattended. The phrase "dressed his feet" may tell us something of the nature of his lameness. At the conclusion of the interview, David divided Mephibosheth's inheritance between him and Ziba. Such an action shows that David doubted Mephibosheth. David did not want to punish Ziba, to say the least. If Mephibosheth was sincere, his urging David to give all to Ziba means that he was very glad to see David return; if he was not sincere, this saying meant that he realized his jeopardous position and wanted to flatter David.

16. *How were Jonathan's descendant's dead men? 19:28*

Had David been like other oriental potentates, he would have slain all of Saul's descendants since Saul had been his predecessor on the throne. As it was, David had made a covenant with Jonathan that he would not act in this way. The two men had promised each other that they would deal kindly with each other's descendants, regardless of which of them survived the other. Mephibosheth had suffered the loss of his father in the battle when his grandfather and uncles were killed by the Philistines. He may have thought that his life was in danger also, because he had not made himself known for a number of years after

the others of his house were killed. Anything Mephibosheth possessed was his largely on account of the kindness of David. Mephibosheth acknowledged this and made reference to David's kindness in setting him among the people who were privileged to be considered members of the king's household. He could ask for nothing more from David. Mephibosheth's happiness over the king's safety seemed sincere, which would lead one to believe that Ziba had betrayed him when he reported the reason for Mephibosheth's not coming out to see David when the king was driven out from his capital city.

17. Who was Barzillai? 19:31

Barzillai was one of the men of Gilead who had brought supplies to David at Mahanaim (II Samuel 17:27). Barzillai was very wealthy, but his greatness could hardly be measured by any present-day yardstick. He was an old man, and the pleasures of court were undesirable to him. All he wanted was to live out his last days in his home in peace. Chimham was more than likely his son, although he referred to him as David's servant (verse 37)

18. How did David reward Barzillai for his kindness? 19:40

When the king went on from the edge of the Jordan to Gilgal on his way back to Jerusalem, he took Chimham with him. He had told Barzillai that he would do whatever seemed good to him and that he would show any favor which Barzillai would require of him. David was deeply indebted to the men of Gilead for supplying the provision necessary for his campaign, and he would not be likely to forget their many favors. As David laid down the reins of his government and turned them over to Solomon, he reminded Solomon of the kindness which had been showed to him by Barzillai. He commanded Solomon to "show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai, the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table, for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother"

(I Kings 2:7). In other words, David made Chimham to be equal to David's own sons and Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, to whom he had already shown great kindness.

19. *What was the quarrel between Judah and Israel? 19:41*

Half of Israel had probably been waiting for their leaders to bring them back to David. Perhaps the other half of the people had been with David all along helping him. The people of Israel felt that they had a larger share in David's work and victory than Judah, but Judah seemed to be preferred. At least they had hurried out to meet David, although this had been at David's invitation.

20. *What was Judah's reply? 19:42*

The men of Judah replied to the men of Israel by saying that the king was near of kin to them. He was from the tribe of Judah; his father, Jesse, was a man from Bethlehem, a town in the midst of the land of Judah. David had also asked for Amasa, one of his kinsmen and a man of Judah, to be captain of his army. The men of Judah felt that it was only natural for them to be the first to welcome back the king and to be closer to him than anybody else. They denied that they were given any undue favors because of their kinship to him. They said that they had not eaten anything at the king's cost which was another way of saying that he was not giving them any provisions. David had not given them any kind of gifts to bribe their loyalty to him, but it was the natural outpouring of their love for one of their own.

21. *What was the outcome? 19:43*

The arguments of the men of Judah prevailed. Their words were described as being "fiercer" than the men of Israel. The men of Israel felt that they were more numerous and thus they had a greater claim on the affections of the king. They were slighted somewhat, inasmuch as they had instigated the movements to bring David back; but David had skirted their overtures by making a direct

appeal to the people of Judah through his priests who were back in Jerusalem. For this reason, the men of Israel felt that they were despised, or that their proposition was taken too lightly. They would very much have liked to have the honor of being the first to bring the king back to his throne. All of this popular opinion with regard to the monarchy gives us a refreshing view of the nature of the kingship of Israel. David was not a despotic ruler who laid claims to the throne regardless of the affections of his people. He might well have remained in exile in Gilead if nobody had shown an inclination to bring him back. Although the king was not selected by popular vote, David was very much aware of the attitude of the people towards him. This made a very happy situation. God's chosen ruler was popular with people of goodwill, and he made every effort to treat them with fairness and kindness.

CHAPTER 19 IN REVIEW

1. Who rebuked David for his continued mourning over Absalom? _____
2. Who first mentioned calling David back to Jerusalem? _____
3. To which tribe did David send word? _____
4. By what two men did David make his contact? _____
5. Where did the men of Judah go to meet David? _____
6. Whom did David invite to be his captain? _____
7. Of what tribe was the man a member? _____
8. Who swam the Jordan to meet David? _____
9. Which son of Saul came to meet David? _____
10. Which son of Barzillai went with David? _____

PART FIVE

DAVID'S
LAST DAYS
AND SONG

20:1—24:25