

STUDIES IN SAMUEL
CHAPTER 1 IN REVIEW

1. How long was it after the battle when David heard of Saul's death? _____
2. Where was David when he heard the news? _____
3. Of what nationality was the bearer of the news? _____
4. What possessions of Saul's did the man have? _____
5. How did David punish the bearer of the news? _____
6. What was the name of the song with which David lamented Saul's death? _____
7. In what other book was it recorded? _____
8. What Philistine cities are mentioned in the song? _____
9. What weapons of Saul and Jonathan did David mention? _____
10. What mountain did David curse in the song? _____

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 2

- Vv. 1-7 *David, king in Hebron.* David inquired of the Lord concerning his every move. He asked him where he should go after Saul had been killed. The Lord told him to go up to Hebron. Hebron was one of the important cities of Judah, David's own tribe. David went up to this important city, and all the men of Judah came there to make him king over them.
- Vv. 8-11 *Saul's son, king in Gilead.* Abner, the son of Ner and captain of Saul's hosts, took Ishbosheth, Saul's son, and made him king in Gilead. Gilead was the land east of the Jordan river. There were thus two rival kings in Israel.
- Vv. 12-16 *The contest at Gibeon.* Abner was the captain of the Ish-bosheth's army, and Joab was the captain of David's army. The two armies met in a battle near Gibeon. A contest was suggested, and twelve men from each side went out

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to engage in the battle. All these men fell mortally wounded, and nothing was decided by the contest. The two main armies then joined in battle.

- Vv. 17-32 *Asahel slain.* Asahel was the younger brother of Joab. He decided to pursue Abner from the field of battle. Abner did not wish to engage in hand-to-hand combat with Asahel. Asahel was a young man, and Abner was an experienced man of war. When Asahel continued to pursue Abner, Abner put out the back part of his spear. Asahel was running at full speed and ran against the sharpened end of Abner's spear. Asahel thus fell mortally wounded.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. "*With patience wait for it*" (Romans 8:25). David must have spent many years as a fugitive. He was anointed king over Israel while still a young man and living in his father's home in Bethlehem. He had gained rather immediate success as the slayer of Goliath. He was also prominent in Saul's court as a talented musician. Nonetheless he was forced to wander for years until finally the time was right for him to become king. All of us can learn a lesson of patience from this experience with David. We should not take things in our own hands but let God in His own good providence lead us step by step.
2. "*Be sober, be vigilant*" (I Peter 5:8). David had little time to rest on his laurels. A rival king was ruling in Gilead. It is ever thus with Christians. There never seems to be any time when they can let down their guard. Our adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion walks about continually seeking whom he might devour.

2. David's Reign begun in Hebron, 2:1-32.

David, King in Hebron. 2:1-7

And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.

2. So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite.

3 And his men that *were* with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, *That* the men of Jabesh-gilead *were they* that buried Saul.

5 And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed *be* ye of the Lord, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord, *even* unto Saul, and have buried him.

6 And now the Lord show kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

7 Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

1. *Why did David go up to Hebron? 2:1*

Hebron was the principal city of a coalition of surrounding cities in Judah. Caleb took Debir (Judges 1:11; cf. Joshua 14:13) and settled in this area. Abraham had made his home near Hebron. It was near Hebron that Abraham bought the cave of Macpelah for a burial place for Sarah when she died (Genesis 23:1-20). Hebron was about half-way down the length of the Dead Sea and some

ten miles west of its western shore. It was central in Judah and far enough away from the home of Saul to make it safe from any who might support a Benjamite as a king to succeed Saul.

2. *What is the meaning of the word "Hebron"?* 2:3

The word "Hebron" means a "strong fortified city." There were little cities grouped around the larger city. We read of the "cities of Hebron." The city itself was the strongest and oldest city in Judah at this time. It was something of a sacred city. Although the fact that the name was appropriate did not make necessary the selection of this particular city, the position of the city, which no doubt influenced its naming, also made it the logical place for such a service as was held in it at the anointing of David.

3. *Why did Judah first anoint David?* 2:4

David belonged to the tribe of Judah. He had been in the midst of the tribe of Judah while he was in exile. The gifts that David had bestowed upon the tribe alone would have been enough to cause this particular tribe to want to be first to anoint David as their king. All of these reasons would contribute to this desire.

4. *What did David mean when he said, "I also will requite you."* 2:6

David was a diplomat. At the time he commended the men of Jabesh-gilead for their kindness toward Saul, he also announced to them that he was King of Judah. By promising these men of Jabesh-gilead that he would "requite" them (give them a reward) and by showing a regard for Saul, David hoped to win these men over to his side. These men had taken Saul's body from the walls of Beth-shan and buried it (I Samuel 31:13).

Saul's son, King in Gilead. 2:8-11

8 But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim;

9 And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin and over all Israel.

10 Ish-bosheth Saul's son *was* forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But 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.

5. *What was Abner's motive in proclaiming Ish-bosheth king? 2:8*

Abner was the son of Saul's uncle. A number of things contributed to his proclaiming Ish-bosheth king. In the first place, (1) he would want to defend the family's pride and interests. In the second place, (2) there were Abner's own personal ambitions. These could be more probably justified if Ish-bosheth ruled. Ish-bosheth was weak; Abner was strong. Abner might easily persuade Ish-bosheth to follow his own directives. In the third place, (3) Abner had a natural interest in the tribe of Ish-bosheth.

6. *Is there a previous mention of Ish-bosheth? 2:8b*

There is no previous mention of Ish-bosheth before the time that Abner had him proclaimed king. Ish-bosheth was quite young when Saul became king. This may account for the fact that he is not mentioned. He was weak; he may have been an illegitimate son. All of these things would account for the fact that his name had not been previously mentioned. He is listed as the fourth and last of Saul's sons in I Chronicles 8:33 and 9:39.

7. *Where was Mahanaim? 2:8c*

Somewhere east of the Jordan River near the Jabbok River would be the proper location of Mahanaim. At the time of Ish-bosheth's coronation, the kingdom was disunited. This was a small beginning for a king, but about all that could be had during that time. Jacob had camped

at this place which means "two companies" (Genesis 32:1). David fled to Mahanaim when he tried to get away from his rebellious son Absalom (II Samuel 17:27).

8. *Over what territory did Ish-bosheth rule? 2:9*

Ish-bosheth ruled over Gilead. He also ruled over the Ashurites. Gilead would indicate all of the land east of the Jordan river. The mention of the Ashurites causes some question. This may have been a reference to the house of Asher which was in Galilee on the west side of the Sea of Galilee (Judges 1:32). There is a city of Asher (Joshua 17:7). It was southwest of Jezreel. Ish-bosheth also ruled over Jezreel, that land between Mount Gilboa and Mount Carmel. His main jurisdiction was over Ephraim, the tribe formed from the descendants of the son of Joseph. He also ruled over Benjamin, his own tribe. This wide domain would mean that Ish-bosheth had jurisdiction over most of the northern part of Palestine on both sides of the Jordan river.

9. *How long did Ish-bosheth rule over Israel? 2:10*

Ish-bosheth was forty years old when he began to rule. He reigned but two years. David, however, ruled over the house of Judah for seven years and six months. David must have reigned in Judah for five years and one-half, after Ish-bosheth was slain. This difference in the length of David's reign over Judah alone and the reign of Ish-bosheth over the rest of Israel can only be accounted for by supposing that David was not anointed king over all Israel immediately after Ish-bosheth's death.

10. *What is the meaning of the name Ish-bosheth? 2:10*

The word "Ish-bosheth" means "man of shame." In I Chronicles 8:33 this man is called Esh-baal. This word Esh-baal would mean man of Baal. Baal is a name for a false god. One would hardly expect that the Israelites would put a man on the throne who had a name of Esh-baal. Abner may have changed his name to Ish-bosheth when he put him on the throne. Even so his name is not

at all flattering, and we are left to wonder if this man was of rather bad reputation. Perhaps his weakness or folly had been the reason for his not being in the army. These factors might explain his name.

The Contest at Gibeon. 2:12-16

12 And 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 together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

14 And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise.

15 Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which *pertained* to Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

16 And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and *thrust* his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which *is* in Gibeon.

11. Who brought on the fighting at Gibeon? 2:12

Gibeon was five or six miles north of Jerusalem and a small distance to the west. It is situated on a knoll with terraced slopes. The village itself stands among striking remains of antiquity. Some hundred paces from the village to the east is a large reservoir with a spring. Further down and among the olive trees are the remains of another and larger reservoir, which collected the overflow water from the first reservoir. More than likely this farther reservoir is the "pool" mentioned in verse thirteen. Thus Joab was in Abner's territory. Joab was the aggressor. Later incidents would also cause a judge to point the finger of accusation at Joab. Were he introduced a bit differently, none would have difficulty in deciding who brought on

the fighting. The way in which Joab was introduced into the narrative was common of the time; nothing different should be expected.

12. *What was the "play"?* 2:14

The "play" mentioned was nothing more than the customary round of individual contests held before a battle. To speak of what occurred at this time as "play" is most certainly sarcastic. The word "Helkath-Hazzurim" as it stands means "field of the sword edges." It is appropriate that this name is applied to the scene of the conflict in which twelve champions from the army of Joab and twelve champions from the army of Abner perished together, each slaying his fellow. Variations of this word have come to mean "field of the crafty," "field of the ambush," and "field of the adversaries." The form of the word together with its meaning as it now stands in the text of the Bible is probably correct.

Asahel Slain. 2:17-32

17 And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

18 And there were three sons of Zeruah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel *was as* light of foot as a wild roe.

19 And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

20 Then Abner looked behind him, and said, *Art* thou Asahel? And he answered, *I am*.

21 And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armor. But Asahel would not turn aside from following him.

22 And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

23 Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth *rib*, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, *that* as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

24 Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that *lieth* before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

25 And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on top of a hill.

26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

27 And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.

28 So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

29 And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

30 And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel.

31 But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, *so that* three hundred and threescore men died.

32 And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulcher of his father, which *was in* Beth-lehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

13. *Who won the battle? 2:17*

The Israelites were beaten by the men of Judah. This is the meaning of the statement that Abner was beaten. Abner was the leader of Ish-bosheth's army. They fell before the servants of David, the men of Judah who were under the leadership of Joab. Although there were ten tribes in the north and only one (Judah and Simeon combined) in the south, the southern armies were victorious.

14. *Who was Zeruiah? 2:18*

Zeruiah was David's sister. She had three sons, Joab, Abishai and Asahel. These men were David's nephews and valiant men. Asahel is described as being "as light of foot as a wild roe."

15. *Why did Asahel continue to pursue Abner? 2:19*

Asahel wanted to get the glory of having killed the commander of the opponent. Although Abner, shrinking from arousing the animosity of Joab, showed forbearance in asking Asahel to turn aside and pursue one of the younger men, Asahel continued to pursue him. Abner then thrust his spear behind him and stopped abruptly. Asahel ran against the spear and so died. The hinder part of the spear was pointed so that it could be stuck in the ground when not in use.

16. *What is the meaning of "under the fifth rib?" 2:23*

This is the King James picturesque way of stating that a man was smitten in the abdomen. The American Standard Version gives the translation of the phrase as "in the midst of his body." Repeatedly throughout this part of the Bible reference will be made to men who are smitten "under the fifth rib." A man who was wounded in this area would normally die from his wounds. This happened to Asahel as Abner stuck out the hinder end of the spear. The hinder end of the spear was also sharpened so that it could be stuck in the ground (I Samuel 26:7).

17. Why did Abner call to Joab? 2:26

Abner's calling to Joab indicates that Joab had been the aggressor. He asked Joab if he wanted to see the battle continued and more lives be lost. He reasoned with Joab that in the end there would be bitterness. He asked Joab how long he intended to press this battle. Joab indicated that the battle would have been over by the next day, but since Abner had spoken Joab blew a trumpet and stopped his men from pursuing Israel. This was the end of that particular battle.

18. How many of David's men died? 2:30

The Scriptures say, ". . . there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel." We cannot be sure that this mention of twenty who died included the twelve who also killed twelve of their opponents. More than likely it did; nothing definite is stated. Had there not been the gathering of the Benjamites on the top of the hill, the slaughter might have been greater. No doubt the Benjamites tried to check Joab in order that the rest might escape. Abner pled that humanity demanded the cessation of the pursuit. Joab replied that he intended to pursue until morning. Both armies did at length return to their headquarters. It was not customary for them to stay in the field. It was their duty to go home and guard the country against other invaders.

19. How many men of Israel were killed? 2:31

Abner's losses were much heavier than the losses of Joab. There were 360 of the men of Israel killed in the battle at Gibeon. The loss of Asahel was a very severe loss. He was not only the king's nephew, but he was the brother of Joab who became David's captain. Joab never quite forgot the fact that Abner killed Asahel. From that day forth he was determined to kill Abner. He really had no right to be the avenger of blood since Asahel died in battle and Abner slew him reluctantly.

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CHAPTER 2 IN REVIEW

1. To what city in Judah did David go? _____
2. What tribe first anointed David as king? _____
3. Which of David's wives went with him? _____
4. To what city in Gilead did David send word? _____
5. How long did David rule over the one tribe? _____
6. Which of Saul's sons ruled the rest of Israel? _____
7. Who was his captain? _____
8. In what city was his capital? _____
9. Who led David's men against the men of Israel? _____
10. Near what town did David's men meet the men of Israel? _____

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 3

- Vv. 1- 5 *David's family.* As David reaches a turning point in his career, the reader of the Bible is introduced to his family. Several sons were born to him during the seven years when he ruled in Hebron. At the same time the reader is introduced to other wives whom David had married and who became the mothers of some of his children.
- Vv. 6-11 *Abner rebels against Ish-bosheth.* Ish-bosheth accused Abner of improper actions with Saul's concubine, Rizpah. Abner neither admitted the charge nor denied it. He did refuse to suffer the embarrassment of being accused and announced that he was transferring his allegiance from the son of his former king to David.
- Vv. 12-21 *Abner contacts David.* Abner was a faithful soldier, and he acted honorably in making his open contact with David. David showed himself to be a man of honor inasmuch as he sent word back to Ish-bosheth so that the king in Gilead would be informed of what was transpiring.