

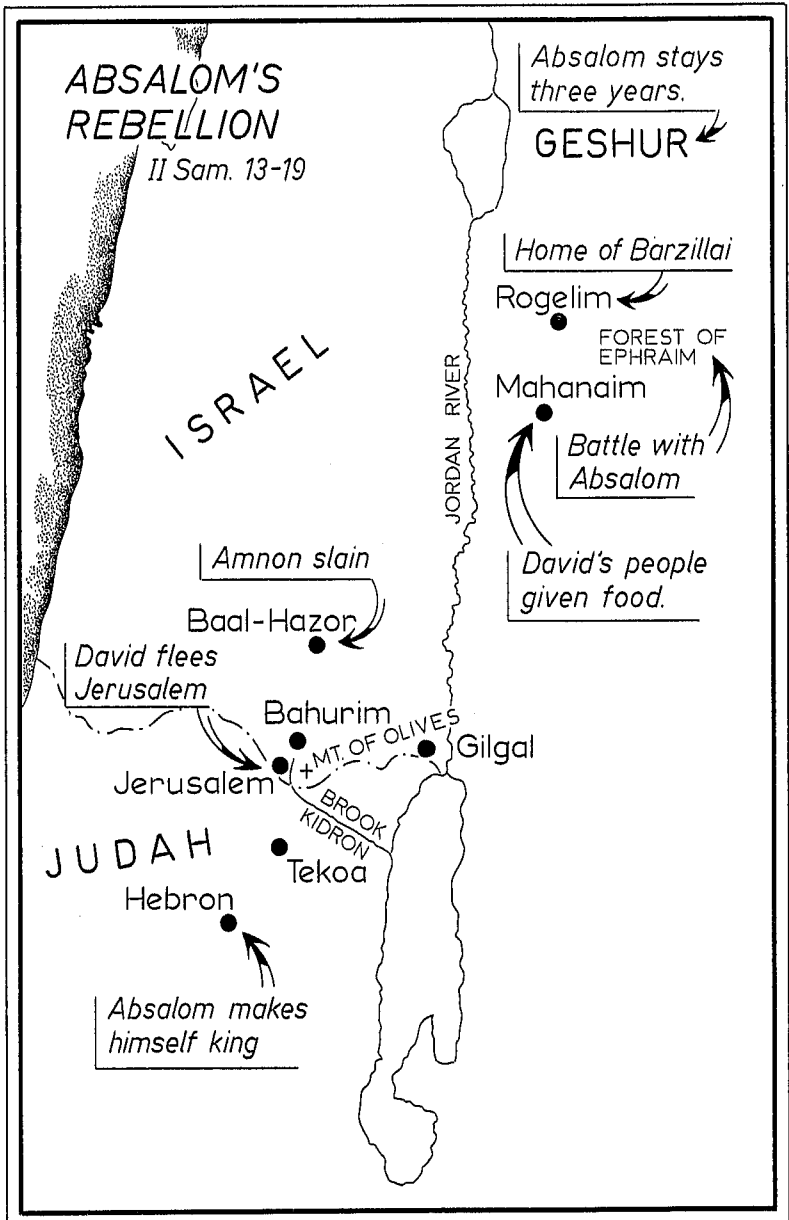
## STUDIES IN SAMUEL

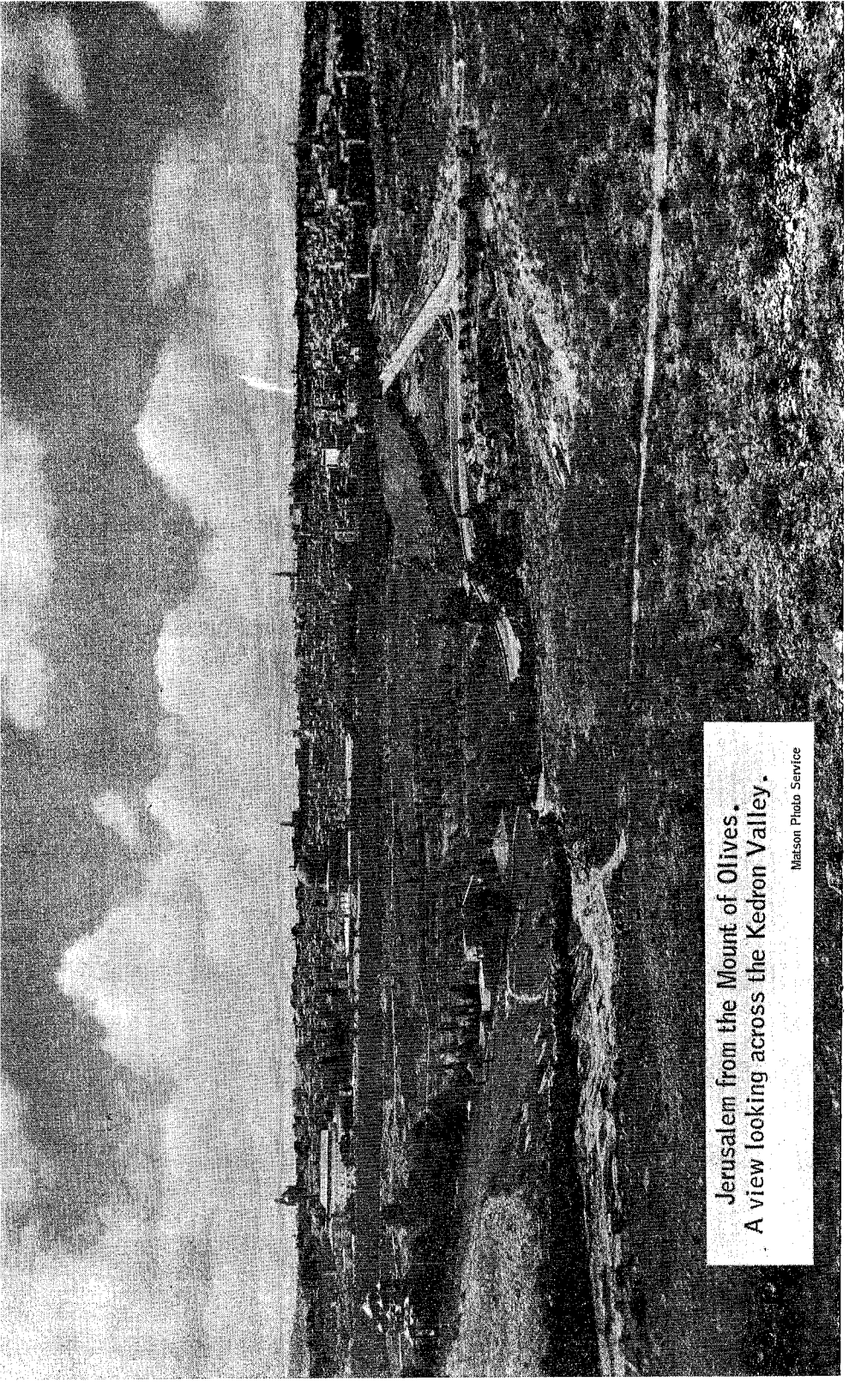
### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 20

- Vv. 1-3 *Sheba's revolt.* Some of the Israelites still felt that David had usurped Saul's throne. This was especially true of the men of Benjamin. They found a leader in Sheba.
- Vv. 4-9 *Amasa's indolence.* David had made Amasa his captain in Joab's stead and sent him to put down Sheba's revolt. Amasa proved inept and was very tardy in performing the king's bidding.
- Vv. 10-13 *Joab assassinates Amasa.* Joab went out to assist Amasa, but he killed Amasa instead. This cold-blooded murder of David's captain by his former captain is inexcusable.
- Vv. 14-23 *Sheba's death.* David's men under Joab were forced to pursue Sheba to the extreme northern boundary of Israel. He had entrenched himself in the city of Abel, but some of the wise citizens of the city slew him.
- Vv. 24-26 *Israel's leaders.* It was necessary for the kingdom to be reorganized after Absalom's and Sheba's revolt. Some of the officers who were first appointed by David were still in office. Other new offices had been formed and some of the older leaders had been replaced. It was still a very efficient organization.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Peaceable men are men of wisdom.* When Sheba fled to Abel, some of the people said that they were "peaceable and faithful" (v. 19). These men did what they knew was right. A land is blessed when it has this type of men.





Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.  
A view looking across the Kedron Valley.

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2. *The powers that be are ordained of God* (Romans 13:1 b). God intends for men to have good government. David saw to it that his people had good, efficient rule. More governments of this kind are needed in the present critical stage of world affairs.

## V. DAVID'S LAST DAYS AND SONG, 20:1—24:25.

1. The Reorganization of the Kingdom, 20:1-26.

### *Sheba's Revolt.* 20:1-3

And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name *was* Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.

2 So every man of Israel went up from after David, *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

3 And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women *his* concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

### 1. *Who was Sheba?* 20:1

Sheba is described as being a man of Belial, another way of saying that he was a shameful and worthless man. His genealogy is given, and he is described as being the son of Bichri, a word meaning "first-born" in the original language. This is the only reference found to the man's name in the Bible. Being a Benjamite, Sheba was the catalytic agent for solidifying the opposition to David as expressed by Shimei when Shimei said that David was ruling in the place of the house of Saul. Although Shimei rescinded his action and asked for David's forgiveness,

Sheba was more base and resolute. He championed the cause of all who supported the house of Saul by saying, "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse." He asked every man of Israel to return to his home and refuse to participate further in the affairs of David's kingdom.

2. *Why were the men of Judah left alone? 20:2*

Judah had occasioned the dispute between her people and the Israelites living in the northern tribes; and when Sheba led a revolt, many of the men from the other bordering tribes joined him, thus leaving Judah as the main support for David. Although every man of Israel went up from after David and followed Sheba and only the men of Judah were loyal to their king, the revolt was not open enough to prevent David's going on up from the Jordan valley to Jerusalem. Once again David was able to rule from the great city.

3. *Why did David isolate the concubines? 20:3*

Absalom had gone into his father's concubines when he spread a tent on the roof of the palace and took them as members of his own household, in the sight of all the people who followed him (II Samuel 16:21, 22). This rebellious act on the part of Absalom was designed to indicate that Absalom was taking over everything which had belonged to his father; and although David had left them behind to pursue their normal activities of keeping the house, he felt that they had been shamed and it would not be proper for him to reinstate them to their former positions. He did not turn them out to fend for themselves but put them in separate quarters and ordained that they should be provided for but left to live as widows.

*Amasa's Indolence. 20:4-9*

4 Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present.

5 So Amasa went to assemble *the men of Judah*: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

6 And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than *did* Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

7 And there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

8 When they *were* at the great stone which *is* in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle *with* a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out.

9 And Joab said to Amasa, *Art* thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.

#### 4. *Why was Amasa sent against Sheba? 20:4*

Amasa had been made captain of the host under David, when Joab was deposed. Amasa proved to be not as prompt as Joab; and while he tarried, Abishai was sent to do his work. The men under Abishai met Amasa at Gibeon, a city north of Mizpah and six miles north of Jerusalem, where Amasa was up among the people of Benjamin gathering forces. This means that some of the men of Benjamin were helping David.

Joab was not a man to be deposed by anybody. He slew Amasa by trickery and immediately assumed control, leaving a man to tell the people to follow on after Joab and David.

#### 5. *Why did David think Sheba would do great harm? 20:6*

David's future was hanging in the balance as Sheba led all the other tribes, except Judah, to revolt against David.

It was imperative that immediate action be taken to remedy the situation; and when Amasa took longer than the three days appointed for mustering the troops, David knew that allowing Sheba additional time would give him opportunity to gain more strength. He would be able to establish himself in the cities that were fenced and were provided with gates to keep out any invading armies. He could thoroughly permeate the Israelite society with his political opposition and David would not be able to ferret out all his followers. He would thus be able to escape detection and punishment.

6. *How did Joab trick Amasa? 20:8*

Joab had no responsibilities whatever with regard to the mustering of the troops, but he was probably in the company which was commanded by Amasa or else he had gone with Abishai to assist in the matter. When he met Amasa, he was clothed with a garment that had a girdle around the middle. This large belt had a sheath attached to it, and in the sheath was Joab's sword. He allowed this sword to fall out, leading Amasa to believe that he was unarmed. Joab threw Amasa off his guard by greeting him in a friendly way making inquiry about his health and calling him his brother. Being naturally right handed, he took Amasa by the beard to draw him to himself to kiss him. Joab had a sword in his other hand, probably behind his back; and when Amasa was close enough to him to permit him to stab him, Joab plunged the blade into the abdomen of Amasa. The one blow was sufficient to wound him mortally. Once again, Joab had struck without sufficient reason, except for a matter of personal honor and vengeance.

*Joab Assassinates Amasa. 20:10-13*

But Amasa took no heed to the sword that *was* in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth *rib*, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him

not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.

11 And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoreth Joab, and he that *is* for David, *let him go* after Joab.

12 And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still.

13 When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

7. *What was the soldier's reaction to Amasa's murder?*  
20:12

The men were stunned by Joab's slaying Amasa; and when they came to the spot where his body was lying, they stood still. Although Joab had left one of his men there to encourage them to follow him and Abishai as they pursued Sheba, the evidence of the murder of Amasa caused many of them to hesitate. Only when the man removed the corpse out of the highway into the field and covered it with a cloth did the men decide to go ahead and follow Joab.

*Sheba's Death.* 20:14-23

14 And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to Beth-maachah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him.

15 And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that *were* with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down.



16 Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee.

17 And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, *Art* thou Joab? And he answered, I *am* he. Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear.

18 Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask *counsel* at Abel: and so they ended *the matter*.

19 I *am* one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?

20 And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy.

21 The matter *is* not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, *even* against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.

22 Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast *it* out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

23 Now Joab *was* over all the host of Israel: and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites:

#### 8. Where was Abel-beth-maachah? 20:14

Abel-beth-maachah was near the waters of Merom at the northern end of the land of Israel. The name of the town was a compound of Hebrew words signifying "the meadow of the house of the oppressor," and has been

identified with Abiel-el-Kumh. The circumstances surrounding its mention in the Scriptures indicate that it was a place of some importance. Joab laid siege to it in order to drive out Sheba; and in later history, Ben-hadad and Tiglathpileser led their armies against it (I Kings 15:20; II Kings 15:20). The Berites were a people mentioned only at this point, but their mention here indicates that they must have lived in the north part of Israel. The town of Beroth, a city in the northern part of Galilee, not far from Kadash, is a likely spot for their center of activity. These people were far removed from the center of activity in Israel and were easily influenced to follow Sheba in his revolt.

9. *How did Joab attack the city? 20:15*

Abel was so strongly fortified that Joab found it necessary to throw up a rampart against the city. The earthwork which he made was up against the outside wall of the city; making it possible for his men to attack the wall with some success. The blows with which they hammered the city were beginning to take effect and the wall was starting to crumble when their siege was broken by the wise woman.

10. *Why did a woman speak for the citizens? 20:16*

A woman took the lead in stopping Joab's attack against Abel. She is described as a wise woman. This same kind of terminology was used with regard to the woman of Tekoah whom Joab fetched to intercede on Absalom's behalf (II Samuel 14:2). These women must have stood in the same kind of company as that of Deborah, who was Israel's female leader in the days of the judges (Judges 4:4). These women were not banded together in any kind of order, but they were women who showed unusual wisdom and took action when action was needed.

11. *What was the reputation of Abel? 20:18*

Abel was known in ancient times as the home of citizens who were very clever. They had the reputation of

being able to make judgments which were right and good, and many matters were brought to them to be resolved. The woman demonstrated this wisdom and she described herself as being a peaceable and faithful citizen of Israel. She felt that Joab and Abishai were out to destroy the city and herself, a mother of Israel. She felt that this destruction was needless, and asked them why they would devour the inheritance of the Lord in such a holocaust. Joab denied that he was intending to destroy Abel. He was only after Sheba, a worthless fellow who had led a revolt against King David. Joab showed that he was sincere in this by promising the citizens that if Sheba was delivered to them, they would withdraw their siege.

12. *How did the matter end? 20:22*

The woman was able to make good on her promise to throw Sheba's head over the wall to Joab. Her words were wise, and she persuaded the leaders of the community to follow her advice. They captured Sheba, cut off his head, and threw it out to Joab. When Joab received the assurance that Sheba was dead, he lifted the siege from the city and dismissed his troop. Joab then went back to Jerusalem to report to the king.

*Israel's Leaders. 20:24-26*

24 And Adoram *was* over the tribute: and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder:

25 And Sheva *was* scribe: and Zadok and Abiathar *were* the priests:

26 And Ira also the Jairite *was* a chief ruler about David.

13. *What changes were made among David's officers? 20:23-26*

The office of scribe had been changed from Seraiah to Sheva. Adoram was overseer of the workmen who were forced to work for David. Ira, the Jairite, was chief officer instead of David's sons. David's sons had proved

to be ineffective, and at least two of them had been killed. Joab's office was again mentioned to show that he was back in his old place. The giving of this arrangement may be considered the beginning of the account of the real close of David's reign.

The story of the close of David's reign is not as thrilling as the narrative of the beginning of his powerful rule. He still retained an undiminished faith in God, but many things were unsavory and maladjusted. Many sins had been committed, many blunders had been made, much suffering had been endured. One can only wish that the king might have had a peaceful old age, and determine to keep such folly out of his own life so that he may lay claim to God's promise of eternal life.

## CHAPTER 20 IN REVIEW

1. Who led the revolt against David? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Of what tribe was he? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Whom did David order to muster his army? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many days did he give him to gather his forces? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Whom did David send to help him? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Who slew Amasa? \_\_\_\_\_
7. To what city did Sheba flee? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Who beheaded Sheba? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Who was David's captain in his last days? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Who was over the tribute? \_\_\_\_\_