

SECOND SAMUEL
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.

STUDIES IN SAMUEL

Vv. 22-30 *Joab murders Abner.* Under the pretense of avenging his brother's death, Joab took Abner aside and killed him in cold blood. Joab was assisted by his other brother, Abishai.

Vv. 31-39 *David mourns for Abner.* David made it plain that he did not have anything to do with the murder of the good soldier Abner. In fact he made personal lamentation of his death and ordered his people to mourn for this good man.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. "*Children are like arrows*" (Psalms 127:4). As David composed the psalm under the direction of the Holy Spirit, he said that children were like arrows and that the man was happy who had his quiver full of them. God certainly blessed David's home with a fine group of sons and daughters.
2. "*A prince and a great man is fallen this day in Israel*" (3:38). This is a classic text of lamentation over a great soldier of God that has fallen in the line of duty. It is applicable to Christian workers today as they lay down their armor.

3. A Period of Two Kings in Israel, 3:1-39.

David's Family. 3:1-5

Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

2 And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his first-born was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

3 And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;

4 And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;

5 And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

1. *Who prevailed in the wars between Israel and Judah? 3:1*

The house of David prevailed in the series of wars between Israel and Judah. The campaign which was fought in Gibeon was indicative of the outcome of later conflicts. As David had grown stronger day by day while fleeing from Saul, more and more people saw that he would be the better king when he and Ish-bosheth held rival thrones. Saul's house had been rejected by God. It was inevitable that the house of Saul would wax weaker and weaker. David had been anointed king by Samuel, and it was equally inevitable that his house should wax stronger and stronger.

2. *Which of the wives of David was of royal blood? 3:2*

Significant it is that we read "house of Saul" instead of "house of Ish-bosheth." Ish-bosheth was insignificant; he was merely a member of the house of Saul. Noteworthy too, is the fact that we read of six wives and six sons of David.

We do not know when the last four wives were taken. *Maacah* was of royal blood. She was the daughter of a king; she was the mother of Absalom. Amnon was the natural heir to the throne of David, inasmuch as he was the oldest of the six sons mentioned.

Abner Rebels Against Ish-bosheth. 3:6-11

6 And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.

7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and *Ish-bosheth* said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?

8 Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ish-bosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head, which against Judah

do show kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me today with a fault concerning this woman?

9 So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the Lord hath sworn to David, even so I do to him;

10 To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba.

11 And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him.

3. *What was Abner's position in the house of Saul? 3:6*

Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul. The fact that Abner himself became strong, may indicate one reason why he had backed Ish-bosheth as the king in the first place. Abner was of the same family as Saul; both were members of the tribe of Benjamin. This fact alone would incline Abner towards supporting Saul's son as king. But the fact that Abner was able to make himself strong while serving Ish-bosheth indicates that Abner had personal ambitions.

4. *How had Abner strengthened himself in the house of Saul? 3:6*

Some translators view this as Abner's making himself overbearing in the house of Saul. Some say he must have fortified his own cause by using the house of Saul, but the weakness of the house of Saul is against this rendering. If he really wanted to advance himself, he would have used a stronger tool. Some translators even have said that this verse indicates that Abner ruled the house of Saul. He certainly was the strength of the opposition to David.

5. *Who was Rizpah? 3:7*

Rizpah is introduced as the daughter of Aiah. An Edomite clan bore this name (Genesis 36:24). Rizpah had been the concubine of Saul and evidently taken as a

part of the royal family of Ish-bosheth. It seems strange to us that a son would have his father's concubine, but this has been done. Absalom lay with David's concubines in order to show that his break with his father's house was full and complete (II Samuel 16:22). W. R. Smith discusses the proposition of the son marrying the wife of his father in his booklet, *Kinship and Marriage*. The custom seems strange to us, but these people were not living under the Christian dispensation. The practice did not prevail in Israel and is certainly contrary to God's intentions for the human family.

6. *What was the meaning of Abner's question? 3:8*

The alleged offense of Abner was a very serious one. At the death of a king, the wife of the king and the concubines of the king went to the successor on the throne. Treason was the crime of any other person who would dare to take them. Abner was charged with being guilty of such a crime. His question is an idle railing. It is typical of the stubbornness of the human heart rebelling against Divine will. All that Abner said was that he would not tolerate a rebuke from Ish-bosheth. By this question he made clear the fact that he had nothing but contemptuous hate in his heart for Ish-bosheth. This is the real meaning of his question.

7. *What title did Abner give to himself? 3:8b*

Abner asked Ish-bosheth if he considered him to be a "dog's head." The expression is not used elsewhere in the Bible and seems not to be a reference to his Calebite background. Some translate this as his asking if he were a Calebite captain or a turbulent free-booter. He evidently asks if he is to be considered a Judahite "dog's head." He means by this that Ish-bosheth evidently thinks that he is friendly with the enemy and despicable.

8. *Why had Abner dared to fight against God's purpose? 3:9*

Abner evidently knew that God had sworn to David that he would be the next king. He expressed this when

he said that he would translate the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah from Dan even to Beer-sheba. Abner had been motivated by personal and selfish reasons. These reasons often cause people to resist God's will for their lives and for the lives of others. Ish-bosheth was not able to resist Abner because Abner was stronger than the king himself. He also may have known that this was God's will and that it was foolhardy for him to attempt to thwart God's purposes.

Abner Contacts David. 3:12-21

12 And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose *is* the land? saying *also*, Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand *shall be* with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.

13 And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face.

14 And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver *me* my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

15 And Ish-bosheth sent, and took her from *her* husband, *even* from Phaltiel the son of Laish.

16 And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.

17 And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past *to be* king over you:

18 Now then do *it*: for the Lord hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.

19 And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron

all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin.

20 So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that *were* with him a feast.

21 And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

9. *Why did Abner negotiate so long with David? 3:12*

It was Abner who first sent an ambassage to David. David replied by sending messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son. Ish-bosheth met David's demands. Abner then counselled with the elders of Israel. Abner further contacted the Benjamites. Thereafter he went to David himself. The elders of Israel had already expressed a desire to anoint David king of all Israel, as well as over all Judah. They had been saying, "Jehovah hath spoken of David, saying, 'By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies'" (II Samuel 3:18). This prophecy dates back to the time of the anointing of David by Samuel (See I Samuel 16).

10. *Why does the author give such a full account of Abner's negotiations? 3:12*

Some critics view this section as being filled with interpolations as if a little had been added here and there. The account is historically accurate, and it appears to be homogenous but the story may seem to some to be overfull. For this reason, it is suggested that there were various accounts worked into one. There are not two or more separate accounts, however, but a very careful series of negotiations on the part of David. David received Abner's first message; David then went directly to Ish-

bosheth. He was not willing that something be done behind the king's back. After the negotiations proceeded, then he received Abner in person. Abner's ill-fated journey climaxed the negotiations.

11. Why did David want Michal back? 3:13

David was shamed by Saul's giving his wife, Michal, to another man (I Samuel 25:44). The prohibition of a man marrying a woman who had once before been married to him and later given to another man does not prevail in this instance because the marriage was not terminated by mutual consent (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Saul had simply taken David's wife and had given her to another man. The second man did not have any right to her, and she was still legitimately and rightfully David's wife. The fact that he informed both Abner and Ish-bosheth of this, does not indicate that there were two separate traditions of the account but that he informed both parties of the necessary provision.

12. Who was the man with whom Michal had been living? 3:15

The man to whom Saul had given Michal was named Phaltiel. He is given as the son of Leish. When Michal was given to him, he was introduced as being of Gallim (I Samuel 25:44). The only Gallim mentioned elsewhere is Isaiah 10:30, where a reference is evidently to a place in Benjamin.

13. How far did Phaltiel follow Michal? 3:16

This picture of a pitiable man reveals that he went along weeping behind the woman with whom he had been living until he got as far as Bahurim. This is a spot north of Jerusalem (II Samuel 16:5; cf 17:18). This was probably the last Benjamite village on the road they were traveling in Judah. He must have felt that it was unsafe for him to enter into David's territory and therefore turned back at that point. Abner commanded him to return thence; the man complied, although undoubtedly still weeping as he went.

14. *What was the wish of the elders of Israel? 3:17*

The elders of the land had already expressed their desire for David to be their king. This is intimated in the statement of Abner who said, "You sought for David *in times past* to be king over you." Abner again makes reference to the promise of the Lord indicating that the anointing of David by Samuel was rather well-known.

15. *How did David receive Abner? 3:20*

When Abner and the twenty men who accompanied him arrived in Hebron, David made a feast for them. He was glad that negotiations had proceeded to this point, and wanted to expedite the matter as much as possible. Later events revealed that David had high regard for Abner, probably the outgrowth of their many pleasant associations together when both were in Saul's service.

16. *What was Abner's final decision? 3:21*

Abner declared that he would arise and go and gather all Israel to make David king over them. This was the same thing that he had said to Ish-bosheth when he broke away from him (verse 10). At that time, Abner said he would make David king over Israel and Judah. He intended for him to rule from Dan, the farthest point on the north border, to Beer-sheba, the farthest point on the south of Judah. This was the entire promised land, and Abner said that David would then rule over all that his heart desired.

Joab Murders Abner. 3:22-30

22 And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from *pursuing* a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: but Abner *was* not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.

23 When Joab and all the host that *was* with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace.

24 Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why *is* it *that* thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone?

25 Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.

26 And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew *it* not.

27 And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth *rib*, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

28 And afterward when David heard *it*, he said, I and my kingdom *are* guiltless before the Lord for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner:

29 Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.

30 So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

17. *Was Joab sincere in making a charge against Abner?* 3:25

Joab hated Abner. The blood feud that was between them was probably insincere. Joab was expected to seek revenge for the death of Asahel. The fact that Joab was absent was probably as David planned it. The servants of David who were with Joab were military men who had been on the pursuit of an enemy troop. The bounty brought back was that which was taken from surrounding tribes. Such spoil made up the revenue of a monarchy to a considerable extent. Whoever reported Abner's visit to Joab may have given him misinformation, but there was nothing to indicate that Abner was planning to displace Joab. Abner was certainly friendly towards David,

and Joab had no reason to kill him. It was only the strong hatred for Abner on the part of Joab which led to his action. Joab's first point was that David had let Abner get away. His second point was that Abner must have come from an evil motive. Joab could not see Abner as anything but an enemy of Judah.

18. *Where was the well of Sirah? 3:26*

The well of Sirah was about a mile north of Hebron. This is the only mention of it in the Bible, and the only important thing that occurred there is the murder of Abner by Joab. The well is probably the *Ain Sirah* pointed out in modern times. The freedom with which Joab expostulated with David shows the position which he occupied both as a kinsman and as an officer in David's army. He moves about freely and acts on his own. David did not know what Joab was doing.

19. *Why was Abner so unsuspecting? 3:27*

Abner, no doubt, thought that the king had summoned him and so he turned back. The curious thing about the whole transaction is not that Joab would take blood revenge but that Abner should be so unsuspecting. We can account for his conduct only by supposing that he had a distinct certificate of safe conduct from David. An enemy would hardly move into hostile territory without such a permit.

20. *How was the death of Abner connected with the blood of Asahel? 3:27*

One of God's long-standing laws was that a murderer should not go unpunished. This statute was laid down immediately after the flood, when God said, "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6). God also indicated that He would require the blood of life at the hand of every man's brother. Joab evidently thought it was his duty to avenge the death of Asahel. The fact that Hebron was a political city of refuge does not alter the situation. It is true that the city

of refuge was for the sparing of the life of a man who had slain another without premeditation (Numbers 35:11). Hebron was a Levitical city (Joshua 21:11-13) and Hebron was also designated a city of refuge. Neither is the situation altered by the fact that Joab took him aside in the gate (verse 27). Inside or outside the city of Hebron, Joab had no real reason to kill Abner.

21. *Why did David say that he was not to blame?* 3:28

David cried out that he and his kingdom were innocent before the Lord, who avenges those slain without cause (Psalms 19:9-13). He did not know that Joab had sent to call Abner back to Hebron. He had nothing to do with the murder of Abner. He regretted the action and wanted his people to know it.

22. *What was David's judgement on Joab?* 3:29

David really uttered a prayer that the murder of Abner should rest on the hands of Joab and all his father's house. It was his prayer that there would not fail to be a sickly member in his descendants. He specified that he hoped that there would be lepers among them. The one who leaned on a staff would be an effeminate person who was unfit for manly occupation, if the staff be considered a part of the spindle used in weaving. Aquila viewed this as being one who was blind, and therefore had to walk with a stick. At least one leaning on a staff would be infirm and old. David went on to say that he hoped that there would be those who would die in war and would be hungry and begging bread. It was a very full imprecation.

23. *What part did Abishai play in Abner's murder?* 3:30

Abishai may have been the one who ran out to call Abner back at Joab's command. Abishai was also the brother of Asahel, as well as Joab's brother. He was an officer in David's army, and involved with the plot to kill Abner. He does not take the lead as did Joab, but he is guilty of Abner's murder by reason of his following Joab's directives.

David Mourns for Abner. 3:31-39

31 And David said to Joab, and to all the people that *were* with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David *himself* followed the bier.

32 And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.

33 And the king lamented over Abner, and said,
Died Abner as a fool dieth?

34 Thy hands *were* not bound,
nor thy feet put into fetters:
as a man falleth before wicked men,
so fellest thou.

And all the people wept again over him.

35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or aught else, till the sun be down.

36 And all the people took notice *of it*, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.

37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.

38 And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?

39 And I *am* this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruah *be* too hard for me: the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

24. *Did David justifiably mourn over Abner's death? 3:31*

People respected Abner. Abner's death in such circumstances would cast a cloud of suspicion over David. David did feel real grief at the death of Abner. The deep mourning into which David entered was a token of great sorrow. Rightfully did he grieve over the death of an able captain.

David's own captain, Joab, was a skillful leader, but David was not able to control him. Abner might have made a much better leader for the forces of Israel.

25. *How would a fool die?* 3:33

The fool brings an early death upon himself by his careless conduct (Proverbs 7:22). The Septuagint version puts the word *nabal* here for the word foe. A translation of *nabal* would give us a fool or a churlish man. It is doubtful that David asked if Abner died as Nabal died, but the death of Nabal was brought on by his own miserable conduct; Abner had done nothing to deserve death. Abner did not even have the honor of being made a prisoner of war. As David said, "Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters" (verse 34). He did not fall honorably on a field of battle, but was treacherously tricked.

26. *How did the people react to David's conduct?* 3:35

The people took notice of the king's mourning and they were pleased by it. They knew that David was not putting on a show. David refused to eat anything throughout the day. He fasted until sundown, when a new day began. By this kind of conduct, David demonstrated that he had nothing to do with Abner's death. The people understood that David was guiltless and the king's stature increased in their sight.

27. *What was David's evaluation of Abner's character?*

3:38

David said that Abner was a prince. He was not really eligible to succeed Saul, but he was from the royal family. His tribe was the same as that of Saul, Israel's first king. Both were from the tribe of Benjamin. He was also the cousin of Saul, and the son of Ner, brother to Kish, who was Saul's father. More than this, he was a great man. Little more could be said in appreciation of a person's character than to say that he was a great man. True greatness is hard to achieve, but Abner had proved him-

self to be this kind of person. David said this in spite of the fact that Abner had supported Ish-bosheth as successor to Saul and in spite of any suspicion with regard to Rizpah. Perhaps David's evaluation was influenced by Abner's final offer to support him as king. The estimation seems true and is quite often applied today to spiritual leaders who die untimely deaths.

28. *Why did David say he was weak?* 3:39

The word in the original text indicates a person who is tender in years, or delicately nurtured (Genesis 33:12 and Deuteronomy 28:54). Neither meaning is appropriate to David. It is, moreover, difficult to connect the word with what follows. He says that he was tender, though anointed king. Some commentators make this clause to apply to Abner, but it is better to leave it as a reference to David's appraisal of his own strength. He is comparing himself with Joab and Abishai who have proved to be too hard for him. He knows that he can hardly cope with these two vicious men, and so he prays that the Lord will reward the doer of the evil according to his wickedness.

CHAPTER 3 IN REVIEW

1. Who was David's oldest son? _____
2. Which of David's wives was of royal blood? _____
3. How many sons were born to David in Hebron? _____
4. Who was Saul's concubine? _____
5. What epithet did Abner apply to himself? _____
6. Which of David's wives had been with Ish-bosheth? _____
7. To what other man had she been married? _____
8. Who killed Abner? _____
9. Where was Abner slain? _____
10. Whose blood were the men who killed Abner avenging? _____