

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,
3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 12A
SECOND SAMUEL
CHAPTER 20**

INTRODUCTION

Peace and joy eluded David in his evening years. Many of the problems he had to face were the results of his sin of adultery and murder. Although God forgave him, he had to bear the consequences. However, God was gracious to him and sustained him through these difficult times.

The rebellion of Absalom his son had been quelled but he faced another rebellion from a new quarter.

Sheba, a Benjamite, followed in the footsteps of Absalom. He must be stopped or else he might do more harm than what Absalom had done. A wise woman saved the city from a bloodbath. This was the third time in David's life that a woman had featured prominently. The other two women were Abigail whose intervention saved her husband from being killed (1 Samuel 25), and the woman of Tekoa who convinced David to let Absalom return to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 14).

It is discouraging and sad to see all the deception, strife and conflict among God's people. However, it is comforting to see that God protects his people. These events are recorded for our learning and benefit.

This chapter revolves around Sheba – the introduction of Sheba

(v.1); the secession movement started by Sheba (v.2, 3), the pursuit of Sheba (v.4-13), and the elimination of Sheba (v.14-22).

COMMENTARY

Sheba Revolted—20:1-2

Sheba was a Benjamite, the same tribe to which king Saul belonged. He sounded the ram's horn to draw the people to him and declared, "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel" (v.2). This declaration of independence for all the northern tribes took place in Gilgal (19:15).

There was already strife between the northern tribes and Judah (2 Samuel 19:40-43). Sheba took advantage of the unstable political situation to incite the people against David. He was quite successful for "every man of Israel" followed him. This showed that he must have been a man of some social and political stature. It also indicated that there were still people who were loyal to Saul after his death.

The text called Sheba "a man of Belial" meaning a worthless man. The worthlessness was not a reference to his IQ but to his lack of spiritual insight. He was foolish because he rebelled against David, the LORD's anointed, and thus against the LORD himself.

This was a residue of Absalom's sin of rebellion. His act probably gave courage to others who might have the same notion to usurp David's throne. Our action has impact on others, be it good or bad. It is therefore incumbent upon leaders and parents to bear this in mind.

The Concubines Incarcerated --20:3

This short detour showed how David dealt with one of the problems when he resumed his kingship. He had left 10 concubines in Jerusalem when he escaped from Absalom. They were subsequently sexually defiled by Absalom (2 Samuel 16:21-22) and therefore were no longer acceptable to him. He confined them within the palace precincts but continued to provide for all their needs as “widows” for the rest of their lives -- they were unsuitable for marriage to anyone.

The confinement was necessary and well for the concubines. As Jamieson Fausset Brown rightly commented, “Jewish writers say that the widowed queens of Hebrew monarchs were not allowed to marry again but were obliged to pass the rest of their lives in strict seclusion. David treated his concubines in the same manner after the outrage committed on them by Absalom. They were not divorced, for they were guiltless; but they were no longer publicly recognized as his wives; nor was their confinement to a sequestered life a very heavy doom, in a region where women have never been accustomed to go much abroad.”

Amasa Murdered—20:4-13

David ordered Amasa, the chief of his army, to gather a militia force comprising the men of Judah within three days. This was Amasa’s first assignment but he failed to accomplish it within the given time frame. It was not clear whether his tardiness was due to his inability to muster the support of the people or the people’s undecided loyalty to follow David.

David called Abishai to take the king’s army and pursue after Sheba before he could take over any fortified city and escape. David told Abishai that Sheba could do more harm than Absalom. The text referred to the king’s army as “Joab’s men”. Abishai led the men in pursuit of Sheba and was joined by Joab. The Cherethites and the Pelethites were from Philistines and were probably David’s personal body guards and at times acted as couriers (cf. 2 Samuel 8:18; 20:7, 23; 1Kings 1:38,44; 1Chronicles 18:17).

When they were at Gibeon, Amasa joined them. Joab apparently stumbled and his sword fell out of its sheath as he approached to meet and greet Amasa. When he reached Amasa, Joab pulled him by the beard “with the right hand” which was a practice of greeting among kinsmen and friends. The detail about the right hand was significant -- Amasa was not concerned when Joab approached him with the sword in his left hand because the right hand was used to wield the sword. Without warning, Joab thrust the sword into Amasa and killed him in one stroke. The fact that he “struck him not again” was evidence of the skilfulness of Joab. This was a dastardly act of treachery. It was premeditated murder.

One can understand why Joab did it. He still wanted the army chief position which he had lost because David gave it to Amasa. Although he was very loyal to David, he was also utterly ruthless in destroying all hindrances that stood in his way. He was truly a man after his own heart. Joab cared only for himself. As long as the king helped Joab in his power struggle, he would remain loyal to him. He had no qualms about taking matters into his own hands even if it

meant going against the king's command like in this instance! However David did not or rather could not punish him at this time. Instead, David restored him to his position as army chief.

One of Joab's men who stood by Amasa's bloody body called upon the people who supported David to follow Joab. When he saw that they did not move but stood still to look at the body, he removed it from the highway, placed it in an adjoining field and covered it with a cloth. Then the people followed Joab in pursuit of Sheba. This was a dastard act on Joab's part. What a callous thing to just cast Amasa's body aside like the body of a common enemy or a beast. No one dared to lift a finger against him. He knew that he had the army in his pocket. He knew that he was going against the will of the king but there was nothing that the people could do to him.

Sheba Executed—20:14-22

Joab and his men went through the northern cities and eventually came to Abel of Bethmaachah where Sheba had taken refuge. They built a ramp to the city and battered against the wall to break it down. Then suddenly "a wise woman" of the city cried out: "Hear, hear, say, I pray you, unto Joab. Come near hither, that I may speak with thee" (20:16).

When Joab approached, the wise woman first ascertained his identity. She wanted to deal only with the leader of the army. When she was satisfied that he was indeed Joab, she told him that the people of Abel were peaceful and loyal. She accused him of seeking to destroy a city and a "mother in Israel" that is, a mother-city in Israel which was a part of the inheritance of the LORD! (20:19). Joab denied the accusation

and explained his purpose. The people of Abel had given refuge to Sheba, a traitor. The woman immediately replied that Sheba's head would be thrown out to him over the wall. This showed that the woman was no ordinary citizen of Abel. She spoke with authority and confidence. She went to all the people of Abel and convinced them to execute Sheba. The people of Abel did so and the city was saved. Joab sounded the ram's horn to call off the siege and returned to Jerusalem.

The Kingdom Intact —20:23-26

The closing verses of this chapter showed that David's kingdom remained intact. David's cabinet was named: Joab was reinstated as the army chief, Benaiah was in charge of the mercenary soldiers, Adoram was in charge of collecting taxes, Jehoshaphat was the chronicler, Sheva was the scribe, Zadok and Abiathar were the priests, and Ira the Jairite was David's secretary.

PRACTICAL VALUE

It was not all smooth sailing for David after his kingship was restored to him. He had a close shave when he went to battle with his men against the Philistines. He was saved by Abishai, his loyal and courageous general. The LORD is faithful to protect His chosen ones. Are we not His chosen ones? Surely He will carry us through our battles too.

In life, we will meet with opposition such as the like of Sheba. All it took for the rebellion was a speech to get the people to gang up together. It is thus important for us to watch our tongue.

Joab's loyalty to David was self serving and this was seen in his spirit of insubordination and defiance. We do see such people in the LORD's vineyard. They are a dime a dozen. They appear to be very industrious, diligent and conscientious in church work, but because of their self-serving agenda, they hinder rather than advance God's work.

Beware of sin. It can hurt people even years down the road. When we sin, we must confess, repent and pray that God in His mercy will ameliorate the consequences.

AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 2 Samuel 20:1-6; Matthew 12:22-30.

Tuesday: 2 Samuel 20 7-22; Judges 4:4-14.

Wednesday: 2 Samuel 20:23-26; Romans 12:3-13; Daniel 7:27.

Thursday: 2 Samuel 20:1-26.

Friday: 2 Samuel 20:1-26.

Analysis:

Text	Practical Value
2 Samuel 20:1-13	
2 Samuel 20:14-22	
2 Samuel 20 :23-26	

Discussion Questions

1. What new crisis arose at this time of David's reign? How well did he respond to the crisis?

2. David originally ordered Amasa to gather his army. Why did he later call on Abishai to lead his army against Sheba?

3. What possible reasons could Joab have for killing Amasa? Was his action justifiable?

4. Was David wise in reinstating Joab as the chief of his army? Did he have any choice?

5. What is your opinion of the “wise woman” of Abel of Bethmaachah?

6. What valuable lessons can we draw from this chapter?
