

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 1B

SECOND SAMUEL

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

God's timing for the accomplishment of His will in our lives is perfect. The problem is our impatience. Instead of doing God's desiderative will, we end up in the punitive will of God. As a fugitive, David lived under great stress from but he did not kill king Saul when presented with the opportunities. He passed his tests and did not waver in his resolve to obey God's will and to leave matters in God's Hands.

He was a man of prayer. He turned to God for help and counsel all the time. Finally, his life as a fugitive was over. The turning point had arrived albeit after many years of running and hiding like a hunted animal.

With the death of Saul, the way was now opened for him to be the next king of Israel. But Saul's remaining son, Ishbosheth, and Saul's general, Abner, stood in his way. Diplomacy was needed. In the meantime David would be made the king of his own tribe, Judah.

The dark clouds disappeared as swiftly as they appeared in David's life. One moment he was a

man without a home and the next he was a king! There is much we can learn about the handling of trials and the vicissitudes of life from this chapter.

COMMENTARY

**David Anointed king in Hebron—
2:1-7**

The death of Saul was a signal for David to leave Ziklag, which was in a dilapidated state after the attack of the Amalekites. He was still in foreign territory. He and his men's lives would still in jeopardy if their farce were discovered by the Philistines. David enquired of the LORD before he made any decision. He prayed again, as was his custom.

He might have called Abiathar the priest again, who had the ephod, to seek the LORD's direction: "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" The LORD said, "Go up." David asked: "Whither shall I go?" The LORD said: "Unto Hebron". It was an opportune time for David to return to Judah, his own tribe. His two wives were from Judah. David left with all his men and their families. Although it seemed obvious, now that king Saul was dead that they should return home, David only did so after consulting with God.

Hebron had been a Canaanite royal city before the children of Israel settled in the land.¹ It was the chief city of the area and the most

¹ Joshua 10:3, "Wherefore Adonizedek king of Jerusalem sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying,"

distinguished city in Judah. Located in the high Judean hills, it was far from the Philistines thus David could strengthen his position without interference. It was also the burial ground of the patriarchs—Abraham and Sarah; Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah.² The men of Judah came to Hebron, and there they anointed David as king over Judah. This was the second time that David was anointed king. The first time was conducted privately by Samuel in front of his family members.

This second anointing was done in public. David had waited for years to ascend the throne but he could not and would not do so until the LORD had taken Saul away. David waited for God's timing. Impatience had caused many believers to stumble and fall because they went ahead of God before the time was right. The kingdom under David started very small like the size of a mustard seed. David reigned in Hebron for seven and a half years (2:11).

² Genesis 25:9, "And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;"

Genesis 35:27, "And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. 28 And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. 29 And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, *being* old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him."

Genesis 50:13, "For his sons carried him (Jacob) into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a burying place of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre."

The men of Judah informed David that the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead had risked their lives to retrieve the bodies of Saul and his sons in order to give them a proper burial. David sent messengers to Jabesh-gilead which was situated on the east side of Jordan. It was a wooded hill country on both sides of the Jabbok River about 129 kilometres from Hebron. David expressed his deep gratitude to them and pronounced a blessing from the LORD upon them for their kindness towards Saul. He made the proposal that they showed the same loyalty to him as they had shown to Saul. He announced to them that the people of Judah had anointed him king over them (2:5-7).

This was an attempt to bid for their allegiance to his kingship. It was a masterful move to win the people to his side. However, it would not be easy for the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead as certain events soon developed.

Opposition to David's kingship —2:8-17

Abner was Saul's general. He was also Saul's cousin.³ He served as the commander-in-chief of Saul's army. He put up Ishbosheth [his name means, "a man of shame"], who was Saul's sole surviving son, as king over Gilead, the Ahurites (Asher), Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin, and all Israel (2:9). Ishbosheth's original name

³ 1 Samuel 14:50, "And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle."

was Eshbaal (which means “man of the Lord”) according to 1 Chron. 8:33; 9:39. Abner brought Ishbosheth to Mahanaim, a Levite city on the east side of Jordan, not far from the Jabesh-gilead. Ishbosheth was 40 years old and he reigned for only two years over Israel.

How could David reign for seven and a half years whereas Ishbosheth reigned for only two years? The suggested explanation is that the timing of Ishbosheth's anointing as king over Israel was different from that of David's. Abner spent the initial five years and six months conquering the cities taken by the Philistines. This initial five and a half years was for the stabilizing and establishment of Saul's fragmented kingdom, especially after the rest of the nation must have heard of David's anointing by the tribe of Judah. It was only after this period that Abner made Ishbosheth king over all Israel. This explanation seems most probable.

Some have said that "*David reigned two years at Hebron over Judah, namely up to the time of the murder of Ishbosheth, and then five years and a half over Israel, namely up to the time of the conquest of Jerusalem* (Schmidt, and Clericus, taken from Keil, and Delitzsch, 295)." This view is not acceptable for it is at variance with the plain and direct statement of the text, that "David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah seven years and a half."

The opinion that the two years of Ishbosheth's reign are to be reckoned up to the time of the war with David, because Abner played

the principal part during the other five years and a half that David continued to reign at Hebron is also not tenable. This view runs counter to the plain sense of the text. Chapters 3 and 4 of Second Samuel clearly described Ishbosheth as the king of Israel right up to the time of his assassination which came after the death of Abner.

The area described was almost the whole northern region of Israel up to Benjamin in the south which shared a common border with Judah.

Abner knew that the LORD had promised the kingship to David so what he had done was actually opposing the LORD. It was therefore difficult for the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead to give their allegiance to David because doing so would incur the wrath of Abner.

Abner took his men from Mahanaim to Gibeon. This was a blatant act of defiance and aggression. He left Mahanaim, his headquarters, which was on the east side of Jordan north of the river Jabbok. He and his men crossed the river Jordan, and marched south to Gibeon which was within 9 kilometres north of Jerusalem.

At Gibeon, there was a pool of water situated at the bottom of a cylindrical hole in the rock which was about 11 metres in diameter and over twice as deep. There was a staircase cut around the side of the rock leading to the spring below. Joab with his two brothers, Abishai and Asahel, and his men were also there.

Abner suggested to Joab that each of them choose 12 men for a one-on-one hand to hand mock combat. Joab agreed. The skirmish turned into a real battle unto death. All the men on both sides began to fight. Abner and his men were beaten by Joab and his men. This was the beginning of the "second" war between the kingdom of Saul and the new kingdom of David. David found himself in a civil war! Israel fighting Israel!

**Abner Killed Asahel in battle
--2:18-32**

Abner fled and was pursued by Asahel. Abner knew that he could not outrun Asahel. Asahel was light on his feet and could run fast. He caught up with Abner easily. He was also way ahead of his brother Joab and other fighting men. He had to confront Abner on his own. Abner told Asahel to turn to one of his men and take hold of his armour -- which means -- do not fight against me but fight someone else of lesser worth. Barnes explained it as, "content thyself with the spoil of some inferior soldier for a trophy." He warned Asahel that he did not want to kill him. But Asahel would not listen and went on chasing him. Then Abner turned around and speared Asahel killing him. Asahel was fast on his feet but Abner was stronger with his spear. Then Joab and Abishai chased after Abner until evening to the hill of Ammah. There the Benjamites gathered behind Abner and stood on the hill. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin. Abner called out to Joab to stop the fighting. Joab replied that if Abner had not suggested the skirmish in the first place, this would not have

happened. So Joab blew his trumpet to end the fighting.

Abner returned to Mahanaim with his men. Joab, on the other hand, gathered all his men for a casualty headcount. He found that he had lost 19 men as well as his brother Asahel. But 360 of Abner's men had been killed. Joab's men took Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb which was in Bethlehem. Joab then journeyed with his men all night until they reached Hebron. Joab, however, did not forget the killing of his brother by Abner. He intended to avenge him.

PRACTICAL VALUE

David's kingdom started small in Hebron. The area of his rule stretched over Judah. At the very outset, there was opposition to his reign. This is a lesson for us -- when we start something for the LORD, it need not be a huge undertaking. We can start small with a humble beginning as long as what we are doing is in accordance with God's Holy will. Remain steadfast and do not give up. Enemies, trials and testing will come. Satan and his hosts will try their utmost to hinder the work of God. The best way to hinder God's work is to discourage God's servant and get him to quit!

David's life as a fugitive was over but his struggle to be the next king of Israel was far from over. He was ready to be king but were the people ready for him? Both must coincide before the kingdom of David can become a reality.

Like David, we should seek the LORD first and proceed only if

He gives the green light. When there is opposition, we should meet the challenge in the strength of the LORD. If what we do is in the LORD's will, He will be with us and we will succeed.

Abner was a man of war but a fair one. He was a loyal and courageous soldier. Joab was also a man of war but he was a self-seeking general. He cared only for promotion and the power that come with the promotion. He would stoop to any level to gain this for himself. If being loyal to David could help him attain his heart's desire for power, fortune and fame, then he would protect David at all costs.

Abner did not wish to kill Asahel. It was not necessary to take a life even in battle. Taking a life is no small matter. He gave Asahel every opportunity to leave with his life and honor intact. But to no avail. Some people are glory hunters like Asahel who knew that Abner would make a better trophy than an ordinary soldier. Asahel paid the ultimate price in pursuit of something that he did not really need.

AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 2 Samuel 2:1-7; Matthew 11:28-30.

Tuesday: 2 Samuel 2:8-17; Proverbs 15:1-4.

Wednesday: 2 Samuel 2:18-32; Romans 16:17-18.

Thursday: 2 Samuel 2:1-32.

Friday: 2 Samuel: 2:1-32.

Analysis:

Text	Practical Value
2 Samuel 2:1-7	
2 Samuel 2:8-17	
2 Samuel; 2:18-32	

Discussion Questions

1. What is more discouraging in a new ministry — a small beginning with few people attending OR enemies resisting the ministry?

2. How would you evaluate Abner's action of putting Ishbosheth, Saul's son, as king over all Israel in light of David having been anointed as king?

3. How significant is the preparation of all parties concerned in the establishment of a ministry? For example you may be ready to preach but are the people ready to listen to you? You may be ready to evangelize but are the people ready to accept? Explain your answer.

4. How would you assess Asahel's pursuit of Abner and Abner's response?

5. Name a lesson from this chapter which is of help and of relevance to your life today?
