

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 3

SECOND SAMUEL

CHAPTERS 4 & 5

INTRODUCTION

These chapters relate how the northern tribes were moved to give their allegiance to David thereby unifying the nation Israel under one king, and how David consolidated his kingdom when he was anointed king over all Israel. In all these events, God was in control. Christians can be comforted and encouraged to know that God, who sometimes may seem to be slow in taking action, is in fact working out His plan and purpose that is best for all. Chapter 4 describes the political vacuum left after the brutal murder of Ishbosheth by Baanah and Rechab, two subordinate military officers in the army, and David's swift and decisive judgment on them. The events set forth in chapter 5 were summarized by the statement in verse 10: *"And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him."*

COMMENTARY

Political Instability in Israel-4:1-4

News of the death of Abner reached the northern tribes. When Ishbosheth heard that Abner is dead, *"his hands were feeble"* and all the Israelites were terrified. Abner's plan

for reunification and reconciliation died with him. He was a powerful man with the northern tribes. He had successfully paved the way for the implementation of his plan but now that he was dead, there was no one to take his place and continue the process. Ishbosheth was only a figurehead. He depended on Abner to rule the land. Perhaps the people of the northern tribes were afraid of being attacked by David and his men.

Ishbosheth had two captains, Baanah and Rechab. Both were Benjamites from the same tribe as Ishbosheth.

The passage introduced Mephibosheth who was Jonathan's son and descendant of Saul. He was likewise unsuitable for the position of king of the northern tribes. Mephibosheth was five years old when the news of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan reached his nurse. She took the young child and fled. In her haste, an accident happened; the child fell and was crippled. By this time, Mephibosheth was about 12 1/2 years old (David had reigned in Hebron for seven and 1/2 years after the death of Saul). He was definitely too young to be made a ruler of Israel given the political situation at that time. We shall see later that David treated Mephibosheth kindly because of the covenantal promise made with Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:14, 15; 2 Samuel 9).

Ishbosheth Brutally Murdered — 4:5-8

Baanah and Rechab were "captains of bands" (junior officers in charge of raiding units in the army) who served Ishbosheth. They were the sons of Rimmon, an inhabitant of Beeroth. Beeroth was situated on the

northern border between Benjamin and Ephraim. In the time of Joshua, it was allied with Gibeon, the Canaanite city, which Joshua had commanded to remain unharmed (Joshua 9:16-21). Later the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, a town in Benjamin. This explained their services in the army of the northern tribes.

Baanah and Rechab were opportunists. They sensed that David would be the next king of all Israel. They had a plan and took matters into their hands. They went to the residence of Ishbosheth during noon-time knowing that he would be taking his afternoon nap. They came under the pretext of collecting wheat probably for their soldiers. When they entered the house, Ishbosheth was indeed sleeping. They seized this opportunity to kill him. Then they beheaded the body and fled south to Hebron by "the plain" in the night. The "plain" was the Arabah Rift Valley of the Jordan where they were unlikely to meet many travellers. They brought Ishbosheth's head to David in Hebron. They were confident that David would be happy and would reward them for removing this last hindrance. They laced their account with theology to cover their devious crime, saying, "*the LORD (YAHWEH) hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed*" (4:8).

David's Reaction—4:9-12

They had completely misjudged David. He was not taken in by their pious words and could see through their wicked, selfish and greedy design to ingratiate themselves. David bluntly declared that he was committed to the LORD who had delivered and saved him from every adversity. David never forgot the

LORD's goodness and greatness towards him. Since his younger days as a shepherd lad watching over his father's sheep, the LORD had protected him from every trouble and difficulty. He went on to relate the incident of the Amalekite who told him about Saul's death thinking that he had brought great news and expected to be rewarded but was instead "slewed".

David called them wicked and cowardly for slaying a righteous man in his bed. They deserved nothing less than execution for their cruel deeds. Accordingly, David ordered his young men to execute Baanah and Rechab and cut off their hands and feet, and hang them up over the pool in Hebron. This was a punishment that befitted a criminal. The hanging of their bodies in a public place was not only a deterrent but also a statement to the people that David did not have any part in removing Ishbosheth to clear the way for his rulership of Israel. David himself had forfeited two opportunities to kill Saul. It did not make sense that he would now kill Saul's son. He had waited patiently for God to avenge his enemies and to fulfil His promise in His way and time. David gave Ishbosheth a proper burial by burying his head in the sepulcher of Abner in Hebron.

David ensured that his ascension to the throne would be blameless. He did not shed one drop of blood to make himself king. He waited patiently for the LORD's will to be accomplished in his life.

David Anointed king—5:1-5

With the death of Ishbosheth, it was now up to all the tribes of Israel to accept David as their king. They assembled in Hebron, addressed

David and gave three strong reasons for wanting him as their king. They explained that they were related to David by blood —“*we are thy bone and thy flesh*” (5:1). A second reason they gave was that David had shown himself to be an able military leader during the reign of Saul. The last reason was that the LORD (YAHWEH) had given His divine approval. The LORD had said to David: “*Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel*” (5:2). The phrase “feed my people” literally means “shepherd my people”. The king of Israel was likened to a shepherd¹ tending to his sheep—one who cared, protected, provided, led and guided his flock. And to be “captain over Israel” means to be their leader.

David made a covenant “*before the LORD*” (5:4) with all the leaders of Israel gathered in Hebron. This agreement made “before the LORD” attested to the seriousness of the whole matter. It acknowledged that the LORD had brought them together and indicated that they still looked to the LORD for His continued direction and guidance.

Consequently the people anointed David as king over Israel. This was the third time that David

was anointed king.² At last, he was crowned king over all Israel. It was a long wait for David, a wait that was not without tribulations and troubles. Yet David patiently waited and resisted any attempt to accelerate the process even when opportunities presented themselves.

David began his reign at the age of 30, a good age to become king and shoulder greater responsibilities. We remember that our Lord Jesus Christ began His public ministry at the age of 30 (Luke 3:23)! The priests in the Old Testament who served in the Tabernacle and the Temple began their actual service at the age of 30 and retired at the age of 50 (Numbers 4:23). David reigned for 40 years -- seven and a half years in Hebron and 33 years over all Israel and Judah in Jerusalem. Observe that Jerusalem had not been captured yet. This tells us that the events recorded in this chapter were not chronologically arranged.

David Took Jerusalem—5:6-9

David wasted no time in capturing Jerusalem which was also known as Jebus (Judges 19:10). The Jebusites were one of the minority people of Canaan. The city sat on a wedge-shaped ridge, rising from the south towards the north. On the east and west, the ridge sloped to two

¹ Jeremiah 3:15 And I will give you **pastors** according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Ezekiel 34:2 Son of man, prophesy against **the shepherds of Israel**, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe *be* to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: *but* ye feed not the flock.

The same Hebrew word “ra’ah” is translated “pastors” and “shepherds”.

² The first time in the presence of his family members: 1 Samuel 16:12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, *and* withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this *is* he.

The second time in Hebron: 2 Samuel 2:4 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 Jabeshgilead *were they* that buried Saul.

valleys, the Tyropoeon Valley on the west, and the Kidron valley on the east. The Jebusites boasted that their city was impregnable. They defied David to take the city: *“Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither”* (5:6). This meant that even “the blind and the lame” could defend the city. It was an arrogant way of saying that “sightless eyes” and “helpless legs” were enough to repel any attack by David.

David was determined to take the city. He challenged his soldiers and promised that whosoever could get into the city by way of the “gutter” (a water shaft or channel) and smote the Jebusites would be rewarded as the chief of the army. Joab responded and went up first. David took the city and Joab became David’s chief of army (1 Chronicles 11:5, 6). Later, he named it the city of David and there, he built a citadel.

David lived in Jerusalem and made it the capital. It was ideal as the capital city of Israel and stood between the borders of Judah and the northern territories. This illustrated great political wisdom. He could not be accused of playing favourite to any one tribe. His action must transcend tribal rivalries. Jerusalem became a focal point for all Israel (even till this day!).

If David had retained his existing capital, Hebron in Judah, the other 11 tribes would be unhappy. If David had taken a city from the other 11 tribes, then his own Jews would be unhappy as that might appear as a betrayal. Some of them might argue and say that, “We have been loyal to him when he had nothing and now that the “bigger” 11 tribes wanted to make him king, he

deserted us and made his capital in their land.” To avoid such unhappiness, a neutral territory was necessary. Jerusalem was a neutral territory because it was the stronghold of the Jebusites and strategically located due to its elevation and central location between Judah and the other tribes. It is recorded that when this world is destroyed, the only remembrance of this old earth for eternity will be the name of one city, Jerusalem! London, Rome, New York, Beijing, Moscow, Tokyo and all other well known capital cities of today will be forgotten. These are all man-made capitals whereas Jerusalem is the city of God!

David built “the Millo” (a transliteration of the Hebrew word which means “supporting terraces”) round about the city. The walls of Jerusalem were built on the slopes of the hill which were particularly steep.³

The LORD Was With David — 5:10-16

“And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him” (5:10). This is the key verse of the chapter. It tells us that the LORD (YAHWEH) who is the Almighty God (ELOHIM), the Creator of the heavens and the earth and of the thousands and thousands of His angelic hosts, was with him! Who could be against him? The LORD had chosen him to be king over Israel, and surely He would provide him with the strength and the help he needed.

³ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 & 2 Samuel*, page 198.

God moved Hiram, king of Tyre, to build David his palace. Tyre was an important port on the north western shore of Canaan. For centuries, it was a trading city. Hiram made a friendly overture to David by sending his representative with an entourage of carpenters and masons together with gifts of cedar wood. They offered to build a palace for David.

David displayed a heart after God's own heart. He perceived that the LORD was blessing him and establishing his kingship over Israel. He understood that the LORD had blessed and exalted his kingdom not for his sake but for the sake of the people of Israel.

In those days, a person who had many wives and children was considered wealthy, strong and blessed. David's family further expanded and in his time, it was a sign of God's blessing. But David clearly broke one of God's stipulations, that he must not "multiply wives to himself" because his heart might turn away from the LORD (Deuteronomy 17:17). This indeed had an effect on David for in a moment of weakness, he lusted after Uriah's wife. David lived to regret his foolishness.

David Defeated the Philistines — 5:17-25

The Philistines received news that David was made king over all Israel. Instead of a divided kingdom, Israel was now united under one king. To the Philistines, a divided Israel did not pose much of a problem but a united Israel was a formidable adversary. So, they decided to launch an immediate attack against Israel while the kingdom was still young.

David enquired of the LORD. He had learned his lesson to always seek His direction and guidance. The LORD approved his battle against the Philistines and promised to deliver them into his hands. The battle was the LORD's.

The two armies met and fought at Baalperazim. The Philistines were defeated. They fled and left their images and idols, and David and his men burned them (5:21). The Philistines must have brought their "gods" with them believing that their "gods" would give them the victory. But their "gods" could not even save themselves. The Philistines lost the first battle but they came back again to fight. David once more enquired of the LORD. He was not presumptuous and did not take anything for granted. He asked the LORD and this time the LORD told him not to take them on directly but to ambush them from the rear over against the "mulberry trees". They should lie in wait until they heard the sound made by the tops of the mulberry trees when they swayed with the winds. The LORD went before them to smite the Philistines. David obeyed the LORD and the Philistines were soundly defeated. After that, the Philistines made no more attacks against Israel!

PRACTICAL VALUE

The overall lesson is the revelation that God is always faithful to His word. He had anointed David to be the king after Saul and indeed David did become king over all Israel but not immediately. God has His timing. David waited almost 14 years. He lived the life of a fugitive because Saul was determined to slay him so as to perpetuate his own

dynasty. God allowed David to experience the trials in order to mould and prepare him for the kingship. He became wiser and stronger because of it.

The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is most comforting. It reassures us that there is no accident in our lives, only God's providential care. Whatever comes our way will be for our good as long as we look to God and remain steadfast and abound in His work and will.

God gives us many promises in His Word. Sometimes we expect God to instantly fulfil those promises but God works in His time and His way. We must learn to be patient and wait upon Him. In the meantime, we must remain faithful to Him.

Making a covenant before God was a grave matter. The people in those days knew the import of such covenants and the dire consequences if they should break them. They would be punished or be deprived of God's blessing.

Likewise, we should treat covenants seriously. First, when we confess and repent of our sins and receive Christ into our hearts, we have made a covenant to obey and do His will. Second, when we take our marriage vows before the LORD, we have promised to love our wife or to obey our husband (as the case may be). Some couples take their vows lightly resulting in strained relationships and unhappiness within the family. Revere God, obey Him and honour Him at all times, whatever the circumstances.

Nothing can be greater and better than to know that the LORD God is with you. David knew that the

LORD was with him. He was much encouraged. If we know that God is with us in all that we do, we need not fear what men can do to us. And when God blesses us, remember it is not for our sake but for the sake of His people. He blesses us so that we can be His instrument and channel of blessings to others.

AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 2 Samuel 4:1-8; Joshua 9:11-17.

Tuesday: 2 Samuel 4:9-12; Psalm 103:1-5.

Wednesday: 2 Samuel 5:1-5; John 10:1-18.

Thursday: 2 Samuel 5:6-16; 2 Peter 3:8-13.

Friday: 2 Samuel 5:17-25; 2 Corinthians 2:2; 15:57; 1 John 5:4.

Analysis:

| Text | Practical Value |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 2 Samuel 4:1-8 | |
| 2 Samuel 4:9-12 | |
| 2 Samuel 5:1-5 | |
| 2 Samuel 5:6-16 | |

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| 2 Samuel 5:17-25 | |
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Discussion Questions

1. What makes people like Baanah and Rechab betray and kill for reward? Do you find such people today?

2. Do you agree with David's decision to put Baanah and Rechab to death? What can we learn from this?

3. Why does God need an eternal Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth as recorded in Revelation 21?

4. Should David have accepted the offer of a heathen to help him build his palace? Does this mean that the Christian can engage unbelievers to help build the church?

5. David enquired of the LORD when faced with an imminent attack from the Philistines? How do you apply this to your lives?
