

2 Samuel Chapter 4

2 Samuel 4:1 "And when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled."

“Feeble ... troubled”: David had not yet solidified his power enough to exact his own judgment without jeopardizing his command. He was still “weak” and needed time to consolidate his authority. Once that was accomplished, he no longer needed to fear the strength of Joab and Abishai, who were Zeruiah’s sons (2:18).

Ish-bosheth was greatly troubled that his military man was killed. He probably thought that David would come after him next. He did not know that David had nothing to do with this. Saul's son here, is speaking of Ish-bosheth. It appears that the people were not aware of the circumstances surrounding this.

Verses 2-3: Beeroth ... Gittaim”: Beeroth was a Canaanite town belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. Gittaim was also a village of the tribe of Benjamin.

2 Samuel 4:2 "And Saul's son had two men [that were] captains of bands: the name of the one [was] Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin."

“Children of Benjamin”: It is stressed that these men were of the tribe of Benjamin (verses 2-3), perhaps to show the friction within the house of Saul and his son Ish-bosheth, and how the grab for power began once Abner was gone.

These two were men in the army. They were not related to Saul, or to Ish-bosheth. These Beerothites were not true Benjamites, but were actually captured by them. These two men were willing to follow anyone that might benefit them.

2 Samuel 4:3 "And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.)"

At the death of Saul, many of the Israelites deserted their cities, and left them to the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:7); and so the inhabitants of Beeroth forsook their city, which was near the Philistines, and went to Gittaim, a city in the same tribe, though a little further off (see Neh. 11:33).

They were actually driven out, when the Benjamites took them over. They fled to Gittaim as a refuge.

2 Samuel 4:4 "And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son [that was] lame of [his] feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took

him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name [was] Mephibosheth."

"Mephibosheth": With the death of Ish-bosheth, the only remaining heir to the throne was Jonathan's son "Mephibosheth" (9:1-13; 16:1-4; 19:24-29; 21:7). His original name was Merib-Baal, derived from the idol Baal (1 Chron. 8:34). Samuel changed his name to Mephibosheth, which probably means "He Strikes Down Shame" (see note on 2:8-11). Because he was lame and was a child, he was not a likely candidate to inherit the throne from Ish-bosheth. Hence, Mephibosheth is introduced in this passage to show that there was no real threat to David's kingship from Saul's family once Ish-bosheth was killed.

He may be introduced here to demonstrate that his youth and physical handicap disqualified him from being considered for ruling Israel. He would have been only 12 years old at the time of Ish-bosheth's death. For the history of this man (see 9:6-13; 16:1-4; 19:24-30; 21:7).

We must remember that, Jonathan was David's best friend. At the death of Ish-bosheth, there were no more sons to carry on the family of Saul. This son of Jonathan was the only real family connection that David had with his old friend. The son of Jonathan was Mephibosheth. His name meant destroying idols. This son of Jonathan is a crippled man. We are not told whether David had been aware of this son of Jonathan before, or not. He was just 5 years old, when Jonathan was killed.

Verses 5-12: Apparently "Rechab" and Baanah" were not aware of David's response to the death of Saul. They expected accolades and status for killing Ish-bosheth but instead received the death penalty for killing him under such unjust circumstances. David consistently showed that he would not take personal revenge on his enemies and would deliver the death penalty to anyone who killed in an unjust manner.

Verses 5-6: It was the custom to secure wheat for the soldiers under their command (verse 2), along with some pay. Under the pretense of that normal routine, they came and killed the king.

2 Samuel 4:5 "And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon."

According to the custom in hot countries; by the taking a siesta at midday. Ish-bosheth's bed was, of course, in the coolest and most retired part of the house.

Ish-bosheth seemed to be a very lazy man. He was lying down at noon here. He really had very little power himself. He had depended upon Abner to get him by as king. Abner is gone now, and his power is gone. These two men are not really loyal to him either.

2 Samuel 4:6 "And they came thither into the midst of the house, [as though] they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth [rib]: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped."

They not only came unto it, but entered into it, and went into the inmost part of it. The guards being asleep also perhaps, or not on duty, so that there were none to obstruct them; or if there were, they deceived them, since they went in.

"As though they would have fetched wheat": Out of the king's granaries, for the payment and support of the soldiers under them, who in those days were paid in corn, as were the Roman soldiers in later times. And these granaries might not only be in the king's house, but near his bedchamber; for in those ancient ages of simplicity there was not such grandeur in the courts of princes as now; the Targum is, "as sellers of wheat." In the guise and habit of such persons, pretending they came to sell wheat to the king's purveyors, who were at the granaries; or, as others interpret it, they went in along with the wheat merchants as if they belonged to them, and so found their way to the king's bedchamber.

"And smote him under the fifth rib" (see 2 Sam. 2:23).

"And Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped": They got out of the palace after they had committed the murder undiscovered and unsuspected.

Under the fifth rib is mentioned again here, because this is the easiest area to kill a person. These two evil men believe, if they kill Ish-bosheth, it will put them in good standing with David. This is murder. They have no cause to kill Ish-bosheth.

2 Samuel 4:7 "For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bedchamber, and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night."

"The plain": To avoid easy detection, the men traveled by way of the Arabah (2:29), i.e., the Jordan Valley. This plain extended about 30 miles from Mahanaim to Hebron.

Ish-bosheth was taking his siesta, as most of the people did in the heat of the midday. They were not satisfied just to kill him; they behead him, so that David will believe they have killed him.

2 Samuel 4:8 "And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed."

"The Lord hath avenged": The murderers of Ish-bosheth came to David and proclaimed that the Lord had avenged David. However, as happened earlier to the Amalekite (1:2-15), the men were very surprised at the response of David. David did not see their deed as the Lord's vengeance, but as murder of an innocent man.

These two very evil men did not care what they did to others, if it would advantage them some way. Saul was not hated by David. David had made no move against Ish-bosheth himself, either. These two men had heard about Abner's death, and they thought it was David who ordered his death. They, in a sense, are saying the line of Saul will die out with Ish-bosheth. They brought this head to David, believing he would be pleased that they had killed Ish-bosheth.

2 Samuel 4:9" And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, [As] the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,"

“The Lord ... hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity”: A striking contrast is shown between David and the two murderers who claimed they were performing the Lord’s work by killing Ish-bosheth. However, David praised the Lord for His providential work through Ish-bosheth’s life and proclaimed the Lord’s deliverance; thus, David condemned the murderers of Ish-bosheth and had them executed as he had done to the man who claimed to kill Saul (1:15-16).

We see that, David spoke to them of the power of God working for him, and in him. God took care of David's adversity. David knew that God had saved him over and over from capture and death from Saul. We remember that, David would not raise his sword against Saul.

2 Samuel 4:10 "When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who [thought] that I would have given him a reward for his tidings:"

No more is related, not that he killed him, or assisted in killing him, only that he was dead. By which it appears, as Abarbinel thinks, that the Amalekite did not slay Saul, and that David did not put him to death on that account, but for what follows.

"Thinking to have brought good tidings": Which would have been very acceptable to David that he would have rejoiced and exalted at it as he did; but he was mistaken so instead of that.

"I took hold of him, and slew him at Ziklag": That is, ordered one of his young men to lay hold on him, and slay him, as he did (2 Sam. 1:15).

"Who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings": A handsome present, as the Targum here, a gift, or raised him to some post of honor and profit.

We remember, from an earlier lesson, how the Amalekite came to David with the news of Saul's death. He had even taken jewelry off of Saul, to prove it was the body of Saul. David had the man killed for trying to take gain of the death of Saul. Here, these two men are trying to do the same thing; the only difference is that they actually killed Saul's son. How could they expect any better from David? David did not need vicious, evil men to help him. He did not want, or need, their help. They had murdered for money and influence. David will not let them live.

2 Samuel 4:11 "How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?"

The “slain” Israelite king was termed “righteous” (or innocent), by David. He had done no crime by allowing himself to be placed on his father’s throne. Because he was Saul’s son, his murderer could expect no better fate than the lying Amalekite (1:14-16). David’s severe justice (verse 12)

is paralleled elsewhere in the ancient Near East. For public hanging as a punishment in a case involving a capital offense (see Deut. 21:22-23).

David was totally revolted at the sin they had committed. This man was not a military man. He was a harmless puppet king. They have killed a man, who could not defend himself. The worst part was they had invaded his home, and killed him in his own bed. They are not just killers, they are murderers. God's law required the death of those who murder others.

2 Samuel 4:12 "And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged [them] up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried [it] in the sepulcher of Abner in Hebron."

The mutilation of the bodies of the criminals was itself a disgrace, and the hanging them up near the pool, to which all the people resorted, made this as public as possible and a terrible warning against the commission of such crimes by others. On the other hand, the head of Ish-bosheth was honorably buried in the sepulcher of his chief friend and supporter, Abner.

The cutting off of their hands and feet was in retaliation for their murder of Ish-bosheth. Their hands were cut off; because of the evil thing they had done with their hands. Their feet were cut off, because they had carried Ish-bosheth's head to David. They were hung up, so that others intending to do some hideous crime would change their minds, when they saw what happened to them. The head of Ish-bosheth was buried to show that David honored him.

2 Samuel Chapter 4 Questions

1. How did Ish-bosheth feel about Abner's death?
2. Why was he so afraid?
3. Who were the two men, who were captains of the bands?
4. _____ was reckoned to Benjamin.
5. Where did the Beerothites flee to?
6. What was wrong with Jonathan's son?
7. How did the accident happen?
8. How old was he, when Jonathan was killed?
9. What was his name?
10. _____ was David's best friend.
11. What does Mephibosheth mean?

12. When did Rechab and Baanah go to Ish-bosheth's house?
13. What did they pretend to be there doing?
14. How did they kill him?
15. What was he doing, when they killed him?
16. What did they do, after they killed him?
17. Why did they take his head to David?
18. In verse 9, who did David say took care of his adversity?
19. Who did David tell them about, before he passed sentence on them?
20. What did he have his men do to them?
21. What was the purpose of this type of punishment?
22. What was done with Ish-bosheth's head?