

In the previous chapter of 2 Samuel, David, as the anointed king, faces new challenges and experiences. Amidst an ongoing war between the kingdom of Judah, under David, and the kingdom of Israel, under Ishbosheth, we witness the weakening of Saul's house. The narrative brings us closer to David's family life, introducing his six sons, Amnon, Chileab, Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah, and Ithream, from his different wives. The tales of David's sons foreshadow the heartache, intrigue, rebellion, and political struggles that lay ahead in their lives and the kingdom. As we move on to 2 Samuel 4, brace yourselves for further twisting tales of power, loyalty, and conflict.

### ISHBOSHETH'S WEAKNESS AND MURDER (2 SAMUEL 4:1-8)

Upon Abner's death, king Ishbosheth felt powerless and fearful, causing nationwide distress. His reign was dependent on Abner, and his absence destabilized the kingdom.

Baanah and Rechab, Benjamites like Saul, emerged as influential figures post Abner's death. Their decisions greatly impacted the kingdom.

In verse 5, Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, is introduced. Following a tragic accident during his father's and grandfather's death, he was left crippled. His introduction underscores the unstable leadership of the kingdom, with a fearful king, ambitious generals, and a crippled heir apparent, putting the kingdom in a precarious position.

As we continue with the narrative, we find Baanah and Rechab visiting Ishbosheth in the middle of the day, only to find him in bed - at noon! While there might be a multitude of reasons why Ishbosheth was in bed at such an hour, it paints a rather unflattering picture of the state of his kingship. Ishbosheth, being the youngest son of Saul, was never groomed for kingship and was likely used to the comforts provided by his father's wealth. It seems probable that sleeping until noon wasn't an unusual luxury for him, but rather a normal part of his daily routine. This depiction underlines the weakness of his rule and further highlights the instability of the kingdom.

Two individuals kill the king, leaving it uncertain if it was premeditated or spontaneous. The phrase "they smote him under the fifth rib" (v. 6) implies a fatal wound, likely to the heart. The murder may be a "crime of passion," spurred by fear for the future given the king's incompetence and a looming war. After the act, they escape and bring the king's head to David, recognizing him as their new leader.

### DAVID'S RESPONSE AND RETRIBUTION (2 SAMUEL 4:9-12)

David reacts to Ishbosheth's death with anger, not joy. He remembers the Amalekite who expected reward but received death for announcing Saul's

demise (v. 10). Now, Baanah and Rechab have committed a worse act by killing Ishbosheth, who was innocent of any death-worthy crime, in his own bed (v. 11).

David's anger is due to factors like the method used - assassination. He fears that the men who killed Ishbosheth could target him next, demonstrating their untrustworthiness and danger, ready to murder for their own benefit.

After an assassination, David orders the execution of Baanah and Rechab, their dismemberment, and public display in Hebron (v. 12). This punishment sends a message that assassination is not tolerated in David's kingdom. It serves as a warning and emphasizes David's commitment to justice and rule integrity.

In contrast, David "took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron" (v. 12). He intended to honor Saul's family and respect authority, making his intentions clear.

### KING, AT LAST ( 2 SAMUEL 5:1-5)

Since Samuel anointed David as king (1 Samuel 16:1-13), Saul's house has weakened and dissolved, leaving the nation to recognize David as the rightful monarch. This was his third anointing, marking stages in his journey to kingship, each getting closer to God's promise.

David showed patience, strategic thinking, and sometimes, a lack of trust in God's timing. He respected God's anointing, refusing to harm Saul, but also aligned with King Achish of Gath, seemingly out of fear rather than faith.

Regardless, God's promises held true. David's path to kingship, filled with challenges, was guided by God. Now king of all Israel, we look forward to the tests and developments of his faith, leadership, and character.

Verses 4-5 detail the chronology of David's reign: starting at thirty, he ruled for forty years - seven and a half in Hebron over Judah, and thirty-three in Jerusalem over all Israel and Judah.

### A PASTORAL THOUGHT

Life rarely follows the rose-colored or burdensome paths we often envision. Most of the time, it consists of a routine, akin to the famous 1970s commercial of "making the donuts". In times of unbelievable defeat, we should resist the urge to give up, just as in times of unbelievable victory, we should resist the belief that we have fully arrived.

Life is more the sum of all its parts than it is a single part. It's a blend of highs and lows, victories and defeats, joys and sorrows. It's important not to let a single moment, whether good or bad, define our entire life.

Let's strive to live with purpose in mind. Yet, let's do it slowly, allowing ourselves the grace to grow and learn. Let's do it gratefully, appreciating the blessings we have and the journey we are on. Let's do it graciously, extending kindness and understanding to others. And above all, let's do it faithfully, trusting that even in the ups and downs, we are being guided towards a greater purpose.