

II Samuel 13-19:10 David's House Becomes Divided

Introduction

Following the sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah, as God promised, *"The sword shall never depart from David's house"* (II Samuel 13: 10). David's sin was odious to God and represented an act of treachery against God when compared to all the ways God had blessed David throughout his life. As the next few chapters unfold, destruction of the core of David's family becomes the center point of his life.

Chapter 13 Lust, seduction and incest (rape)

Vs. 1-14 David's oldest son, Amnon became consumed with lust for the only daughter of David listed in scripture, Tamar. Tamar was the sister of Absalom, third born son of David, and their mother was named Maacah, while Amnon's mother was Ahinoam. Amnon became distraught with his lust for his sister and from the description in scripture a type of depression began to overtake him. His friend, a cousin, Jonadab, helped him develop a plan to entice Tamar to come to his room, and when she came to tend to Amnon who was feigning illness, he took hold of her and raped her.

Vs. 15-19 *"Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, 'Get up and go away!'"* The aftermath of sin is often disgust and loathing. Satan puts something on the heart of a person and they begin to covet that very thing, and become consumed by their covetousness. Coveting is simple a "desire to control or possess" the object of our coveting, and often it is an irrational aspiration from the beginning. Once Amnon had control of the object of his coveting, sex with his sister, he loathed and despised her and cast her aside violently and without caring for the plight he had placed on her, loss of virginity, shame and the probable loss of ever marrying. She begged him to not send her away, in other words, she begged him to honor her by marriage.

Vs. 20-29 When Absalom learned of the rape of his sister by their brother Amnon, he began to develop a plan of retaliation. When Tamar's father, King David, learned of the treachery, he said and did nothing. He was silent on the matter.

Absalom's plan was two years in the making; cunning and stealth were used to create the setting in which he would vindicate Tamar. Absalom set up a sheep shearing party in Baal-hazor, near Ephraim, about 30 miles north of Jerusalem. Absalom invited all his brothers to come for the sheep shearing, a boys night out, if you will, and in the midst of the drinking

and eating, when Absalom gave the word, the sheep shearers pounced on Amnon and killed him; the other sons of David who were in attendance jumped on their mules and fled. Word came back to David that all his sons had been killed by Absalom and he mourned bitterly. Amnon's friend and cousin, Jonadab, reports to David the previous report was false and only Amnon is dead due to the treachery against Tamar two years earlier.

Vs. 34-39 Absalom fled to Geshur and was given safety by his mother's family there. Geshur was a tribal state in the tribal area of Manasseh, east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. Absalom remained in Geshur for three years, and David longed to reach out to him for he had made peace with the death of Amnon.

Chapter 14 The blood avenger

In the judicial system of Torah there are laws concerning the response to murder and manslaughter. The death of Amnon was premeditated and planned out, it was murder and murder demanded stoning. On the other hand, while Torah distinguishes between murder and manslaughter, the family of the one killed has a freedom to pursue the one who committed the manslaughter and take his life unless he is seeking asylum in a city of refuge. These family members are known as "blood avengers". There were two cities of refuge near Geshur, Golan and Ramoth-Gilead. Neither of these cities of refuge are cited as the place where Absalom retreated as he had family who could take him in and protect him. Geshur was not an Israelite city so the Israelites blood avenger had no jurisdiction in Geshur. David and his family could act as "blood avengers" and seek to either kill Absalom or return him to Jerusalem to be judged for murder and possibly executed. David made no effort to go after Absalom and this may have been due to the laws of murder and the likelihood that Absalom would be executed if returned to Jerusalem.

Joab, a nephew of David, and a leader in David's army, saw that David mourned for Absalom and devised a plan to get David to return Absalom to Jerusalem to be reunited. He recruited a woman to set David up to make a ruling in her favor, then when she showed David that the story she told was actually David's story of one son who killed his brother. This was very similar to the way Nathan the prophet confronted David following the Bathsheba and Uriah situation (chapter 13).

Just as with Nathan's story which he told to confront David with the ugly truth of his sin, this woman's story convicted David that he must return Absalom to Jerusalem. David sent for Absalom but for two years refused to see Absalom face to face. Absalom understood that reuniting with his father may force David to judge Absalom for the murder of Amnon, but that would be better than living as a prisoner and having no access to his own father and family.

After two years Absalom forced the issue till David brought Absalom into the king's chambers and a sweet reunion took place.

Chapter 15 Absalom conspires to overthrow David

Vs. 1-6 As sweet as the scene described in 14:33 might seem it was only a prelude to Absalom beginning to lay the ground work for an overthrow of David's throne. Absalom:

- Obtained horses and chariots for himself
- Obtained 50 foot soldiers loyal to him
- Began to intervene with those coming to the king for judgments and he began to convince then the king did not care and would not give them audience. "If only I were appointed as a judge in the land any man with an issue could get it heard and receive a proper judgment".
- If a man began to prostrate himself before Absalom, Absalom would reach out and kiss the man – stealing away the hearts of Israel (treachery)

Vs. 7-12 Absalom creates a distraction with David by telling David he needs to go to Hebron and fulfill a vow he made to God while hiding in Geshur. This was most likely a Nazarite vow. Knowing this to be a good thing and blindly buying the ruse, David wishes him god speed in fulfilling the vow. From Hebron Absalom sent spies to all the tribes preparing the people to accept Absalom as king instead of David. When hearing the trumpet sound, the people were to all proclaim, "Absalom is king in Hebron". Additionally, Absalom took 200 men with him to Hebron and called for David's counselor, Ahithophel to join him in offering sacrifices. The conspiracy against David was powerful. Of significant note is that Absalom establishes his self-proclaimed monarchy in Hebron, another attack against David as this is where David's monarchy began as King of Judah.

Vs. 13-29 Finally a word is sent to David alerting him that the country has turned against him and are following Absalom. David prepares his household to depart Jerusalem and head into the wilderness, across the Kidron valley and brook to the east. Zadok the High Priest comes with the Levites carrying the Ark, preparing to journey with David, wherever it is he is going. David sent Zadok back, along with the Ark which he states must remain in Jerusalem. Perhaps God will be gracious and allow David to return to his home and see the Ark one more time. David leaves 10 concubines in his palace to care for the palace, some servants from foreign lands are sent home to their old countries and the rest of the entourage follows David out of town.

Vs. 30-37 David crosses the Kidron valley and brook and headed up the Mount of Olives where he walked barefoot, head covered and wept (the signs of true sorrow). Sacrifices were made at the top of the Mount of Olives and at the top of the mount he meets one of the priests who had served David for many years, Hushai. David had learned that his advisor

Ahithophel had deserted to be with Absalom and was to serve as Absalom's advisor now. David prayed that Ahithophel's advice and guidance for Absalom would be foolishness.

Hushai wished to join David where ever he went. David counseled him to remain and offer his services to Absalom, confounding the advice of Ahithophel and acting as a spy in the house. The priests, Zadok and Abiathar, along with their sons, working with Hushai would form a spy network against Absalom and keep David informed of all that was going on. And so he did.

Absalom made his entry into Jerusalem.

Chapter 16 David meets interesting characters and Absalom defiles his father's concubines

Vs. 1-4 David is old, perhaps 70 years old at this time and he is fleeing with wives, children, servants and some soldiers. The first character he meets after Hushai is Ziba, the servant given to Mephibosheth, grandson of Saul, son of Jonathon. Ziba has gifts for David and his entourage, donkeys to ride, 200 loaves of bread, 100 clusters of raisins, summer fruits and a jug of wine. These are for David to take with him to sustain his travel party. Ziba reports that Mephibosheth has remained in Jerusalem and has hopes that Absalom will restore some of Saul's kingdom to Mephibosheth as the rightful heir to Saul, thus rejecting the kindness David has shown for so many years to Mephibosheth. David grants the land he had given Mephibosheth to Ziba.

Vs. 5-13 Next as they approach the small town of Bahurim (just east of the crown of the Mount of Olives), they were confronted by a man named Shimei, whose family was loyal to Saul. Shimei throws rocks and dust on David and the people, cursing David as a man of bloodshed, a worthless fellow, who needs to leave the country. Abishai, one of David's loyal followers offers to cut off the head of this infidel, but David resists, feeling perhaps God is behind Shimei's rejections and curses, and is teaching David a lesson that he is responsible for learning. Remember the curse of 12:10-15 following the sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah? Perhaps David senses he deserves this vitriolic outburst and rejection/ curses of Shimei.

Vs. 15-23 Absalom enters Jerusalem and takes over David's palace. He accepts Hushai who convinces him that he is there to serve the king; whomever God puts on the throne. Absalom asks his new advisor, Ahithophel, what they should do next. Ahithophel suggest that Absalom should go into each of the concubines David has left and lay with them, thus asserting his authority over his father's house. Absalom follows this advice, thus fulfilling Nathan's curses in 12:11, *"I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with them in broad daylight. Indeed, you did it secretly, but I will do*

this thing before all Israel and under the sun". Absalom regarded the counsel of Ahithophel as the very words of God.

Chapter 17 David on the run

Vs. 1-14 Absalom's advisor, former advisor to David, Ahithophel, introduced a plan to take 12,000 men and go after David and his party and strike David down and bring the others back as captives. The plan was to hit David while all were exhausted from the fleeing Jerusalem. Absalom and all his elders liked this proposal but decided to bring Hushai in and ask his opinion to the plan.

Hushai rejected the plan as David was very war savvy and would keep some distance between himself and the people traveling with him. He would be hard to find, and, his mighty men were fiercer than any others and would be nearly impossible to defeat. Such a plan would lead to great destruction among the soldiers who were to attack David and the defeat and carnage would not promote a sense of loyalty to Absalom by all the people.

Furthermore, Hushai counseled that Absalom himself should lead the party going after David. Absalom's defeat of his father would bring all of Israel to unite under this great warrior king, Absalom; all the people from Dan to Beer-sheba would hail Absalom as their rightful king. Absalom and his elders liked this plan and made ready to put it into action.

Vs. 15-22 David's plan to leave Hushai in Jerusalem to act as a spy worked. Hushai informed Zadok the priest of the plan and he sent word to David so David could prepare himself for the attack that would soon take place. God's provision remained with David in most interesting ways. As Jonathon and Ahimaaz were leaving to inform David, they were spotted and followed by Absalom's men. They made it to the Bahurim where a kindly patriot hid them in a well, covered the entrance of the well so it could not be discerned, and they thus avoided capture. Bahurim is the general location where David had been met by Hushai and later by Ziba, servant of Mephibosheth.

When they came up out of the well they continued their pursuit to find David to warn him. David was camped along the Jordan River, somewhere north of the Dead Sea. They told David of the plan and encouraged him to cross the Jordan and go north to Mahanaim in the land of the tribe of Gad, formerly Ammonite territory. When David and his party reached Mahanaim, men of the area welcomed David and his party and brought them many things to comfort themselves: beds, basins, pottery, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched seeds, honey, curds, sheep, and cheese – all provisions to comfort and nourish weary travelers on the run. As an exile from his own place, David is welcomed by these in the hinterland of the nation of Israel – seemingly outsiders. As Jesus was heavily rejected by

the theocratic leadership in Jerusalem, as the gospel was transported around the known world, He was highly embraced by many in the hinterlands of the world.

Mahanaim has an interesting history. It is a rugged country with low mountains and a strong river, Jabbok. It is the place Jacob wrestled with God and he was about to reunite with his brother Esau. Here, God blessed Jacob with his spiritual name, Israel, and gave him a word of prophesy that his name would endure for all time. God promised to be with Jacob just as now God was providing for his servant, David.

To recognize the evil that is Absalom, we are given two short insights:

1. Vs. 23 records that Ahithophel was so distraught that his recommended plan to Absalom has been rejected he went to his own house and killed himself by strangulation or hanging. Ahithophel was a traitor to King David. David is seen as the forerunner of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who was betrayed by Judas, someone very close to Jesus, who subsequently hanged himself. Coincidence? I think not!
2. Vs. 24-26 records that when Absalom crossed the Jordan River, he replaced his brother Joab as leader of the army and appointed Amasa. Amasa was the son of an Israelite who had violated Joab's mother, Abigail, David's second wife, thus bringing greater hatred and dissension among his military leaders. Think about the statement Absalom is making with this new appointment. Absalom is on his way to murder his own father to secure the kingdom for himself, he has already shown his treacherous hand as a rebel and a usurper, and now he makes a further statement against his own brother who to this point has been loyal to him.

Chapter 18 Absalom's rule comes to a tragic end

Vs. 1-5 While in Mahanaim David prepared to go to Jerusalem, fight Absalom's army and take the throne back. He numbers his army and appoints commanders over thousands and commanders over hundreds. He has three generals, his nephews Joab and Abishai, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. David prepares to lead the army to Jerusalem but all the people persuade David to remain in the city as he is too great a prize for Absalom's army. David relents and remains behind in the city, but before the armies went out, David pleads with them to *"deal gently with Absalom for David's sake"*. All the people heard David's plea for gentleness for Absalom. Here again we see pictures of Christ in the life of David. From the cross Jesus prays, *"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"*. In Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost the Jews listening to the disciples preaching finally get it, they killed the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. As they were cut to their hearts they pleaded to know what they could do in response to this great sin. In love the answer comes, *"Repent, be baptized and receive the forgiveness they desire"*. In addition, God will grant them the gift of the Holy Spirit as well.

Vs. 6-8 The battle begins in the forest of Ephraim, several miles north of Jerusalem. 20,000 of Absalom's soldiers were slaughtered as the battle scattered over the countryside. The forest itself devoured more people than did the sword.

Vs. 9-18 Absalom was riding his mule and came face to face with David's servants. Absalom became a casualty of the trees as mentioned in the previous verse by virtue his hair became entangled in the branches of a tree as he rode under the tree and his mule continued, leaving Absalom hanging between heaven and earth by his hair in the tree. One of David's men spotted Absalom but refused to kill him. Instead he reported to Joab and Joab ran three staves through Absalom's heart. After Absalom was pierced with three staves, he continued to live. Ten armor bearers of Joab beat Absalom till he died and cut his body out of the tree. Joab blew the shofar and called the battle off, restraining his men from chasing the armies of Israel any further. The traitor king was dead – the war was over.

Absalom's body was taken into the forest and thrown into a great pit. The army erected a large pile of stones over the pit.

Vs. 19-33 Two important pieces of information were to be relayed to David as he waited in Mahanaim: his men have been triumphant over the armies of the Israelites; and, his son, Absalom, has been killed. Ahimaaz, son of the high priest, Zadok, ran to tell David the war is ended in his favor; and a Cushite was sent to tell David his son Absalom had been killed. David's response is one that is so often quoted, a haunting sad response from a father who has been challenged by his son, and the son died in the challenge,

“O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

These haunting words can be heard as the backdrop of Jesus' words in Matthew 23:37-39;

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I have wanted gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ ”

Chapter 19:1-10 David's deep grief

Vs. 1-10 I have heard it said there is no grief like the grief that comes with the death of a child. Most of us have witnessed that terrible sense of loss as we walked through the valley of dark shadows with those we love. Some of us have walked through those valleys seemingly alone, even when surrounded by many loved ones. King David is no different. Absalom was his beloved son. It did not matter that Absalom was a traitor and wished his

own father dead. If David had died, Absalom would have killed all the rest of the family to ensure no other family member would do to him what he had done to David. None of that mattered to David. Perhaps in his sorrows David felt the pangs of guilt as he heard the voice of Nathan the prophet declaring the curses that would befall David following the murder of Uriah. Perhaps David owned the blame for Absalom's cold heartedness and self centeredness. Sorrow blended with guilt!

Perhaps here we see a picture of God who grieves over the sinful nature of man. Even man who proclaims love for Him and then does evil in His sight; man who might even claim there is no God of Creation. Again, from the cross, **"Forgive them"** rings out above the ruckus and circus atmosphere of the crucifixion.

This is the voice of David, broken hearted, grieving, and guilty because his son has been killed.

Thoughts and Questions

1. What can we learn of the nature of God through this study?
2. What pictures of the Messiah can we see in this study?
3. For David, what are the wages of his sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah?
4. Are there applications from this narrative that relate to how we should live our lives today?
5. Even though it appears God has brought consequences on David for his great sins, did God ever leave or reject David? On what did you base your answer?

