# **2 Samuel 1:17 - 2 Samuel 2**

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2 Samuel / 2 Samuel 1:17–27; 2 Samuel 2

# Introduction

God has brought about Saul’s end, at last. God installed Saul when Israel asked for a king, but he was not God’s choice. God did choose him, but as an example of the best that man could offer. In fact, in [1 Samuel 8](https://ref.ly/1Sa8), when the people demand a king, the prophet Samuel tells the people: *this is what he’s going to be like*.

God installed him, knowing Saul had a choice how he would reign. As God said to Cain way back at creation: “If you do what’s right, will you not be accepted?”

But Saul has two conspicuous sins:

• He impatiently offers an sacrifice he’s not eligible to - he should have waited for Samuel.

• He fails to complete the Lord’s command to destroy the Amalekites

And you remember Tony’s message last time, the somewhat ironic episode when an Amalekite brings the news of Saul’s death. A man from the people whom Saul was meant to eliminate.

So Saul is rejected, and the young warrior-bard David is chosen. “A man after God’s heart.” [1 Sam 15:28](https://ref.ly/1Sa15.28)

**1 Samuel 15:28 NASB 2020**

So Samuel said to him, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you.

So it *is given*, God says. In ch16 David was anointed. But he has to wait *years* for Saul to be removed. And we have seen David’s incredible patience and forbearance as Saul has become increasingly desperate in his schemes to destroy David.

In his desperation, he seems to ignore the rising threat of the Philistines, Israel’s long-standing enemies, a people who have come in and settled the region of Gaza.

Last time we read the decisive battle at Mt. Gilboa. Here, Saul and three of his sons fell, including David’s close friend Jonathan.

Thus ended the reign of Saul.

So now we read the aftermath. What will happen in the now leaderless Israel?

## Today’s Text

The text divides into three sections

[2 Samuel 1:17-27](https://ref.ly/2Sa1.17-27)

This is David’s song of mourning over Saul and Jonathan

[2 Samuel 2:1-11](https://ref.ly/2Sa2.1-11)

David is anointed king over Judah

[2 Samuel 2:12-32](https://ref.ly/2Sa2.12-32)

Conflict between David and Ish-Bosheth’s champions: Joab and Abner.

# The Song of the Bow

Read:

**2 Samuel 1:17–18 NASB 2020**

Then David sang this song of mourning over Saul and his son Jonathan, and he told *them* to teach the sons of Judah *the mourning song of* the bow; behold, it is written in the Book of Jashar.

The Hebrew is closer to: “David lamented this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son.”

Both the verb and noun are from the same root.

It is in keeping with David, the bard, to use music to express grief.

We talked about grief and emotion at some length recently in chapter 30. David was a man who did not bury his feelings like so many men do today.

Grief is something that the ancients gave time and space for. And they would do it communally. If you remember [Genesis 50](https://ref.ly/Ge50), forty full days are take for embalming the man Israel, and then 70 days of weeping. After that, they go up to Goshen to bury him, where again their is a great outpouring of grief that the natives comment on.

Grief *does* take time. And it is healthy to give appropriate time to it.

So David pens this song. The English text indicates that this is a lamentation called “The Bow” which David commanded to be taught to the men of Judah.

That is an interpretation of the Hebrew, and seems to be considered the most likely meaning. It could mean David instructed Judah to learn archery!

But the bow of Jonathan is highlighted in the song, and I think this is the best understanding too.

A lamentation of remembrance for God’s first anointed king over Israel.

Read the song:

**2 Samuel 1:19–27 NASB 2020**

“Your beauty, Israel, is slaughtered on your high places!   
  
How the mighty have fallen!   
  
“Tell *it* not in Gath,   
  
Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon,   
  
Or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice,   
  
The daughters of the uncircumcised will celebrate.   
  
“Mountains of Gilboa,   
  
*May there be* no dew nor rain on you, or fields of offerings!   
  
For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,   
  
The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.   
  
“From the blood of those slaughtered, from the fat of the mighty,   
  
The bow of Jonathan did not turn back,   
  
And the sword of Saul did not return unstained.   
  
“Saul and Jonathan, beloved and delightful in life,   
  
And in their deaths they were not separated;   
  
They were swifter than eagles,   
  
They were mightier than lions.   
  
“Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,   
  
Who clothed you in scarlet, with jewelry,   
  
Who put gold jewelry on your apparel.   
  
“How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle!   
  
Jonathan is slaughtered on your high places.   
  
“I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;   
  
You have been a close friend to me.   
  
Your love for me was more wonderful   
  
Than the love of women.   
  
“How the mighty have fallen,   
  
And the weapons of war have perished!”

Divide up the song:

• v19 is an introduction. It introduces this phrase “How the mighty have fallen,” which is sung three times in this song. It’s like a refrain.

• v20-21 commands that this not be celebrated; on the contrary let God’s enemies be ignorant and the mountain on which it took place be cursed.

• v22-23 honours Saul and Jonathan. They were brave in battle, and “beloved and delightful in life.”

• v24 commands mourning over Saul specifically - he richly provided luxuries for Israel’s woman

• v25-26 is a personal mourning for his friend Jonathan. This part is unusual in a corporate song.

• v27 closes the song, repeating that refrain.

It really is incredible to read this when you know the story! When you know that David had to flee for his life from Saul multiple times.

The multi-year conflict between Saul and David. You would think David would be thinking - at last! I’m freed from this persecution and what the LORD has promised can finally be fulfilled!

I think we see two things in David. Two things are instructive for us.

First, David is honouring the office of anointed king of Israel. Remember [1 Sam 24:6-7](https://ref.ly/1Sa24.6-7)

**1 Samuel 24:6–7 NASB 2020**

So he said to his men, “Far be it from me because of the Lord that I would do this thing to my lord, the Lord’s anointed, to reach out with my hand against him, since he is the Lord’s anointed.” And David rebuked his men with *these* words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And Saul got up, left the cave, and went on *his* way.

He not only refused to raise a hand, he rebuked his men. Last time we saw David’s wrath against the Amalekite who claimed to be the one to kill Saul.

Saul was the anointed king. God had rejected him, but he still held the God-appointed office. The office is worthy of respect and honour. Paul the Apostle gave an example of this too:

**Acts 23:1–5 NASB 2020**

Now looking intently at the Council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life with an entirely good conscience before God up to this day.” But the high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law, order me to be struck?” But those present said, “Are you insulting God’s high priest?” And Paul said, “I was not aware, brothers, that he is high priest; for it is written: ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’ ”

That quote is from [Exodus 22:28](https://ref.ly/Ex22.28)

**Exodus 22:28 NASB 2020**

“You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

For us, it brings to mind [Romans 13](https://ref.ly/Ro13), which is important to read and understand. It confirms that the principle of honour for leadership extends beyond Israel and even to secular leadership.

**Romans 13:1 NASB 2020**

Every person is to be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Paul also said [1 Tim 2:1-4](https://ref.ly/1Ti2.1-4)

**1 Timothy 2:1–4 NASB 2020**

First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercession, *and* thanksgiving be made in behalf of all people, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

So there Paul says he wants the Church to be regularly praying - and even giving thanks for - all people *including* those in authority, even if we disagree with them. No exception is given if they are ungodly! And Paul certainly dealt with ungodly leadership.

It’s something that is *due* to authorities by virtue of the office.

So, there’s that...

Secondly, David is going way beyond simple honour here. His words and his love are genuine. David spent a long time in Saul’s household, and he developed a brotherly relationship with Jonathan and likely a father-son relationship with Saul.

Even though things soured quickly with Saul, David retained genuine love for Saul.

He is proving himself a model of Jesus Christ in that he has genuine love for Saul, his enemy.

One commentator highlighted that this is kinda like [Hebrews 11](https://ref.ly/Heb11), the famous Hall of Faith passage. In it there are several different Old Testament saints who are honoured and elevated as examples of faith. Jacob is there, for example. And you think: Jacob?! An example of faith?!

But [Hebrews 11](https://ref.ly/Heb11), like David here, chooses to forget all the bad and celebrate only the good.

The passage is a reminder that, in Jesus Christ, all the mistakes, sins, errors, missteps are GONE. Our sins are forgiven and removed. Only the good remains. There will be those saved into God’s Kingdom having done perhaps only a few commendable things. Saved, “yet only as through fire” as [1 Corinthians 3](https://ref.ly/1Co3) puts it.

Saul did only a few things right, but they were remembered. By David, and by God.

## Grief for Jonathan

A final note of David’s personal grief expressed.

In particular David’s love for Jonathan stands out.

One commentator said:

• David’s wife Michal loved David the warrior but could not accept David the dancing musician.

• Saul loved the musician but could not accept David the warrior.

• Only Jonathan loved and accepted the whole person.

Maybe…

Just to re-read the verse:

**2 Samuel 1:26 NASB 2020**

“I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;   
  
You have been a close friend to me.   
  
Your love for me was more wonderful   
  
Than the love of women.

“Wonderful” is a Hebrew verb with a root meaning *extraordinary, surpassing* or, indeed, wonderful.

And in the poem David says - *that is what feminine love is like*.

But the particular friendship he had with Jonathan was *even more so*.

We talked about this back in session 12 when we covered [1 Samuel 18](https://ref.ly/1Sa18). David and Jonathan were very much kindred spirits, both very spiritually sensitive, and both demonstrated faith-based bravery. As such, they became incredibly close friends. Jonathan, who by rights would be heir to his father’s throne, actively supports David.

Same-sex friendships that are based in a common faith can be phenomenally strong and valuable.

# David and Ish-Bosheth Anointed

Let’s start reading the next section:

**2 Samuel 2:1–4 NASB 2020**

Then it came about afterward that David inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?” And the Lord said to him, “Go up.” So David said, “Where shall I go up?” And He said, “To Hebron.” So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. And David brought up his men who *were* with him, each with his household; and they settled in the cities of Hebron. Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

I want you to observe David’s sensitivity to the Lord’s leading. Saul is dead. He has honoured the deceased. He knows he is called to be God’s leader.

So what does he do?

Is it time to be proactive? To perhaps send messengers throughout Israel? To argue that Saul’s failure to defeat the Israelites, and the death of his three sons, means that it’s time for political change?

You can almost see the pamphlets and posters for his campaign...

Nope.

He seeks the Lord’s wisdom before doing *anything*.

I thought it was interesting that the author took the time to put this exchange.

**Lord, shall I go to one of the cities of Judah?**

Go up.

**Lord, where to?**

To Hebron.

It could easily have been summarised as “David inquired of the LORD, and the LORD commanded him to go up to Hebron.”

But the *conversation* - in all its simplicity - is recorded for us.

I think it clearly illustrates the dependence David has on God.

In [Psalm 32:8](https://ref.ly/Ps32.8)

**Psalm 32:8 NASB 2020**

I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go;   
  
I will advise you with My eye upon you.

David certainly lived that.

Sometimes, I do wish for such straightforward direction from the LORD. When we’re facing a major life decision. What career should I pursue? Where should I live? What college should I attend?

We 100% should pray about these things. Much. But it doesn’t tend to work out that God gives such plain direction, does it?

It seems to me David had a rare relationship with God. Reading ahead, I noticed David have a similar conversation with God in chapter 5, where God gives specific guidance in warfare against the Philistines. Spoiler: it’s successful.

But then, in chapter 6, David gets ahead of God and tries moving the Ark without consulting God. It *doesn’t* go so well.

We talked about this in our Understanding the Bible series, didn’t we. Yes, David enjoyed close conversation with God and specific direction, but he would have required a prophet every time to instruct him. For us, we actually have a more free access to God.

In our age, we have the whole of the Bible, and we have the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Jesus said to the twelve men who would found the Church: “wait until you’re clothed with power” … the Holy Spirit.

Subordinate to this, we also have the counsel of our brothers and sisters in the church. And we have our own wisdom to prayerfully consider the options we have and make a decision.

So our approach should be, with life decisions, to bring them all to God in prayer, to bring them to trusted brothers and sisters for prayer and wisdom, and keep on in the Word of God.

God is able to direct us. It’s rarely as simple as it appears to be here for David, but God wants to communicate to us. Our part is to humble ourselves and listen. Listen to the Bible, listen to the Spirit, listen to the counsel of our brothers and sisters.

**Micah 6:8 NASB 2020**

He has told you, mortal one, what is good;   
  
And what does the Lord require of you   
  
But to do justice, to love kindness,   
  
And to walk humbly with your God?

**Proverbs 16:9 NASB 2020**

The mind of a person plans his way,   
  
But the Lord directs his steps.

**Hebron** - or *chevron* - by the way is a city still standing today, around 25 miles south west of Jerusalem.

MAP

It is very significant to Israel during the patriarchal times. Abraham dwelt there for a time and built an altar. Abraham bought a field and cave for burying his wife Sarah there, and this was the very first part of the Land of Canaan that Abraham came to own.

It had to be recaptured under Joshua, and then was given to his friend Caleb after the conquest. Why? So he could defeat all the Anakim - giants - who lived there.

At the time of David it was settled and secure in Israel. David already sent spoils to Hebron and many other places after he defeated the Amalekites in ch30.

# Reading

Reading on, still in v4

**2 Samuel 2:4–7 NASB 2020**

And they told David, saying, “It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul.” So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said to them, “May you be blessed of the Lord because you have shown this kindness to Saul your lord, and have buried him. And now may the Lord show kindness and truth to you; and I also will show this goodness to you, because you have done this thing. Now then, let your hands be strong and be valiant, since Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.”

This recalls the last part of [1 Sam 31](https://ref.ly/1Sa31). After Saul’s death, his body was abused by the Philistine, and these men bravely went and recovered his body - and his sons’ bodies - and buried them.

You may remember Jabesh-Gilead from [1 Samuel 11](https://ref.ly/1Sa11). It’s the city besieged by the Ammonites early in Saul’s reign, before he was fully accepted. The Ammonites were demanding the surrender of the city and the loss of the right eye of everyone there.

We read that “the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul” and he rallied Israel to deliver them. This event was pivotal in establishing Saul’s reign. As we read about these men honouring Saul in his death, it’s clear they never forgot the good Saul had done for them.

This is one of the examples of a good thing Saul did that is remembered.

Because the men of Jabesh-gilead did this, David honours and blesses them for their kindness. I think there is a measure of politics here, too. Of course they would be loyal to Saul and to his line, and so David blesses them and then confirms - Judah has anointed me king.

# Reading

**2 Samuel 2:8–11 NASB 2020**

But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul’s army, had taken Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim. And he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, even over all Israel. Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he was king for two years. The house of Judah, however, followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

Abner was Saul’s cousin and the commander of Saul’s army, serving in that role for all of Saul’s reign.

You may remember the events in [1 Samuel 26](https://ref.ly/1Sa26) when David crept into Saul’s camp, stole his spear and water jug, and then called out to Abner and said “you failed to do your duty.”

He installs Saul’s son Ish-Bosheth as king over various territories. In effect, this is the northern region.

MAP.

You can see Mahanaim is actually on the eastern side of the Jordan river, far away from the Philistine territory.

It’s the site where Jacob met with “the angels of God” back in [Genesis 32](https://ref.ly/Ge32), and then had that curious wrestling match. So it was regarded with some reverence as a holy place. It was situated on the border of Gad and Manasseh, and was given as a Levitical city in [Joshua 21](https://ref.ly/Jos21).

Who is Ish-Bosheth? His name has not appeared in Scripture before now.

Let me show you a few verses that have spoken of Saul’s family:

**1 Samuel 14:49 NASB 2020**

Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchi-shua; and the names of his two daughters *were these:* the name of the firstborn *was* Merab, and the name of the younger, Michal.

Three sons, two daughters.

And in several verses it seems clear that these three are *all* his sons:

**1 Samuel 28:19 NASB 2020**

Furthermore, the Lord will also hand Israel along with you over to the Philistines; so tomorrow you and your sons *will be* with me. Indeed, the Lord will hand the army of Israel over to the Philistines!”

and

**1 Samuel 31:6 NASB 2020**

So Saul died with his three sons, his armor bearer, and all his men on that day together.

We might conclude that Saul had three sons, and they all fell that day. But as Tony has already shown us, Saul had another son.

**1 Chronicles 8:33 NASB 2020**

Ner fathered Kish, Kish fathered Saul, and Saul fathered Jonathan, Malchi-shua, Abinadab, and Eshbaal.

His name there Eshba’al means “man of Ba’al”

So he’s knows as both “man of Ba’al” and “man of shame”

You get the impression Saul was not overly fond of this particular son of his.

What’s not written is why Ish-Bosheth didn’t fall in the battle.

Josephus the historian wrote:

**The Works of Josephus: New Updated Edition Chapter 1: How David Reigned over One Tribe at Hebron, While the Son of Saul Reigned over the Rest of the Multitude; and How, in the CIVIL War Which Then Arose, Asahel and Abner Were Slain**

3. (9) But as soon as Abner, the son of Ner, who was general of Saul’s army, and a very active man, and good-natured, knew that the king and Jonathan, and his two other sons, were fallen in the battle, he made haste into the camp; and, taking away with him the remaining son of Saul, whose name was Ishbosheth, he passed over to the land beyond Jordan, and ordained him the king of the whole multitude, excepting the tribe of Judah; (10) and made his royal seat in a place called in our language Mahanaim, but in the language of the Grecians, The Camps;

Seems reasonable. No idea how he researched that.

That’s Ish-Bosheth. The last son of Saul, the shameful man. Saul’s legacy is the man of shame..

And so while David is anointed by the men of Judah as king in Judah, Ish-Bosheth is installed as king by Abner.

• Notice: the men of Judah *plural* installed David.

David accepts the kingdom when all the men of Judah accept him and install him.

• The single man Abner installed Ish-Bosheth.

The work of one man, and I wonder if not for Abner, would he have been installed?

## Two Kingdoms

Two kingdoms then.

We have this early division that seems to foreshadow the coming Israel/Judah split that will occur in the days of Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

We have

• David, the king God has chosen.

• Ish-Bosheth, the king man has chosen.

David’s name means “to love” or “beloved.”

Ish-Bosheth means the man of shame.

The beloved, and the man of shame.

God’s chosen king, and man’s chosen king.

It is God’s desire that we are ruled by love. God *is* love, and His desire is to live out His life of love.

However, so often we choose instead deeds of shame.

David’s reign here over Judah is 7.5 years. In chapter 5 we will read of his anointing over ALL Israel and his move to Jerusalem.

It seems that, in those 7 years, it seems there was peace with the Philistines. Bearing in mind, the Philistines had a decisive victory over Israel with the death of Saul. They paraded Saul’s body and weapons around, they announced the good news in all cities. Israel abandoned some cities, which were then lost to the Philistines.

Initially I thought, why didn’t they just press on and defeat Israel?

It could be a few things. David was allied with the Philistines, and with the Israeli kingdom now divided, and with their ally David reigning in the south, perhaps they felt that was good enough.

I do think that this is a case where the LORD intervenes providentially to keep them from coming against Israel for 7 years.

Meanwhile, Ish-bosheth’s reign in Mahanaim is only 2 years.

So the 2 year reign must fit somewhere in the 7.5 years reign of David.

In the next couple of chapters we will read how the kingdom is united and transfers to David upon the death of Ish-Bosheth.

Therefore it must have been a period of 5 years or so before Ish-bosheth is installed as king in Mahanaim.

We have very little data about the events in those 7.5 years. We will read of 6 sons being born to him in Hebron next time.

But, we do have this interesting yet somewhat enigmatic episode occurring at some point during those years:

# Reading - The Dual and the Battle

**2 Samuel 2:12–13 NASB 2020**

Now Abner the son of Ner, went from Mahanaim to Gibeon with the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul. And Joab the son of Zeruiah and the servants of David went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon; and they sat down, *Abner’s men* on the one side of the pool and Joab’s men on the other side of the pool.

We have Abner, who is the commander for Ish-bosheth’s army, and Joab the commander for David’s army.

And we might think:

• Abner … booo! The baddy.

• Joab … yay! David’s commander. What a guy.

Abner is for sure on the wrong side right now. We know this. But we will see him repent.

We already read Josephus comment that he was good-natured, something this passage draws out.

Joab, on the other hand. One commentator describes him as “cruel, revengeful and imperious.” Which I immediately had to look up in the dictionary. It means domineering, arrogant, dictatorial.

The reality is, the Bible rarely neatly divides into goodies and baddies. In fact, only Jesus Christ is truly good.

Most of the rest of the time, we are dealing with complex situations in which everybody is acting sinfully at least in part.

I’ve said David is often portrayed as righteous. But only insofar as he is a type or picture of Jesus Christ.

Even in our text today, we read of his polygamy, having two wives. And those 6 sons I mentioned? All by different women...

Not good...

So Abner and Joab meet. The text reads that Abner was the one to initiate. He certainly travelled the furthest.

They meet at the Pool of Gibeon

PICTURE.

My research only went as far as checking Wikipedia, sorry.

But it is interesting, a pool dug into limestone nearly 30m deep, with steps so one can descend to fetch water.

### Reading

**2 Samuel 2:14–17 NASB 2020**

Then Abner said to Joab, “Now have the young men arise and hold a martial skills match in our presence.” And Joab said, “Have them arise!” So they got up and went over by count, twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve from the servants of David. And each one of them seized his opponent by the head and *thrust* his sword in his opponent’s side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon. That day the battle was very severe, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by the servants of David.

So Abner suggests a “martial skills match.”

The Hebrew word really means play or have sport.

It’s a gladiatorial battle.

Presumably the idea was that these 24 would fight and decide the stronger side without the need for much bloodshed.

And indeed, somehow, *everybody* falls in the battle.

I wonder if that is intended to depict that *nobody* is victorious in a civil war.

A nation divided against itself cannot stand.

The meaning of the name Chelqat haTzurim is unclear. "Portion or allotment of the flints or stones” doesn’t seem to make much sense.

The match doesn’t yield a clear winner, and so a more severe battle arises in which team David gets the upper hand.

### Reading - The Pursuit

**2 Samuel 2:18 NASB 2020**

Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel; and Asahel *was* *as* swift-footed as one of the gazelles that is in the field.

Unusually, these three men are denotes as sons of their *mother*. Zeruiah being David’s sister. The Bible doesn’t record the name of her husband, but Josephus figured out his name was Suri, somehow.

I already introduced Joab.

Abishai will go on to become one of David’s famous “mighty men” - so we can picture him as strong.

Asahel, well, we only know he was a good runner...

**2 Samuel 2:19–23 NASB 2020**

Asahel pursued Abner and did not turn to the right or to the left from following Abner. Then Abner looked behind himself and said, “Is that you, Asahel?” And he said, “It is I!” So Abner said to him, “Turn aside for your *own good* to your right or to your left, and take hold of one of the young men for yourself, and take for yourself his equipment.” But Asahel was unwilling to turn aside from following him. Then Abner repeated again to Asahel, “Turn aside for your *own good* from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I show my face to your brother Joab?” However, he refused to turn aside; so Abner struck him in the belly with the butt end of the spear, so that the spear came out at his back. And he fell there and died on the spot. And it happened that all who came *thereafter* to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still.

Abner really does not want to kill Asahel, twice asking him to drop back. Pleading with him. He doesn’t seem to consider there being any risk that Asahel would defeat him.

**2 Samuel 2:24–26 NASB 2020**

But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner, and when the sun was going down, they came to the hill of Ammah, which is opposite Giah by way of the wilderness of Gibeon. And the sons of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became one troop, and they stood on the top of a hill. Then Abner called to Joab and said, “Should the sword devour forever? Do you not realize that it will be bitter in the end? So how long will you refrain from telling the people to turn back from pursuing their kinsmen?”

That is, Abner is saying - look, stand down!

**2 Samuel 2:27–32 NASB 2020**

Joab said, “As God lives, if you had not spoken, then the people *of Judah* certainly would have withdrawn in the morning, each from pursuing his brother.” So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the people halted and no longer pursued Israel, nor did they continue to fight anymore. Abner and his men then went through the Arabah all that night; so they crossed the Jordan, walked all morning, and came to Mahanaim.   
  
Then Joab returned from pursuing Abner; but he gathered all the people together, and nineteen of David’s servants were missing, besides Asahel. However, the servants of David had struck and killed *many* of Benjamin and Abner’s men; 360 men were dead. And they carried Asahel *away* and buried him in his father’s tomb, which was in Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men traveled all night until *the day* dawned at Hebron.

Thus chapter ends.

Abner is able to defuse the situation from escalating. He serves as a peacemaker.

We see the body count:

Only 19 men from David/Joab’s army fall, compared to 360 from Ish-Bosheth/Abner.

Perhaps David’s army could have pressed for a greater victory. Probably, this was Joab’s preference.

I believe God worked through Abner here. He seems to be a good, exemplary man. Yes, he installed Ish-Bosheth, but this could be considered an act of loyalty to his master rather than an act of rebellion. And in the end, he will repent from this and defect to David.

David will show great respect to Abner and Ish-Bosheth both in the coming chapters.

More so than to Joab!

# Conclusion and Summary

David’s Christ-like kingdom is coming in; Saul’s human-like kingdom is going out. And God’s kingdom comes in by love, not by taking it by force.

I think our lessons are:

1. That reminder about the value of friendship. It is good to seek friendships, and may God grant that wonderful friendships develop here.

2. The reminder to honour leadership. We are to pray for our leaders - whether local, national or international.

3. Civil war - or in-fighting - there are no winners.

4. Abner is exemplary as a peacemaker.

We see David as a model of Christ once again.

We see him resisting the temptation to push his own agenda or to fight for what God has promised. He’s waited for God to remove Saul, and he continues waiting for God to direct the next steps. He’s patient to wait over 7 years with only partial fulfilment, trusting God for the fulness.

And, we see him wait patiently until the men of Judah appoint him as king. He won’t be king of all Israel until chapter 5, when “all the tribes of Israel” come to him in Hebron.

He is completely subordinate to God the Father.

So it is with Jesus Christ. He did not force Himself as king. In fact, when He was rejected by Israel, He said:

**Matthew 23:37–39 NASB 2020**

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

Jesus has been patient for 2,000 years. But the day will come, and Israel will collectively cry out for Him.

[Zechariah 12](https://ref.ly/Zec12) tells of the time when many nations will come against Israel and Jerusalem, and God will miraculously protect them. He will pour out a spirit of grace and pleading, and they will at last call out for “Me whom they have pierced.”

And so they will call for Him. And the day will come when Jesus will indeed reign as king.

The Kingdom of David is coming in. The kingdom of “the beloved.”

God’s kingdom is a kingdom of love because God is love.

**1 Corinthians 13:4–7 NASB 2020**

Love is patient, love is kind, it is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not arrogant. It does not act disgracefully, it does not seek its own *benefit;* it is not provoked, does not keep an account of a wrong *suffered,* it does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; it keeps every confidence, it believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.