

Sunday Night Message

August 16, 2020

2 Samuel 20 – The Rebellion of Sheba

Topics – David; Sheba

Series – 2 Samuel

Introduction

God was very clear through the prophet Nathan when he told David:

"Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife." (2 Samuel 12:10)

All because he lusted after another man's wife, and then had her husband killed to cover it up.

David's daughter Tamar was raped by her brother; his son Amnon was murdered by his brother; his son Absalom led a rebellion which forced him out of his own kingdom, and ultimately resulted in the deaths of twenty thousand men.

And if all that wasn't bad enough he now has to deal with another revolt against him coming this time from a man by the name of Sheba.

Not to beat a dead horse, but I think we all need to be reminded the cost for our sin is way too excessive for the amount of pleasure we receive from it.

Ravi Zaccharias is quoted as saying: "Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay. –"

Chapter twenty will reveal not only through the squashing of this rather small rebellion, but it will also show us what happens to David's concubines – the ones that had been defiled by Absalom during his rebellion. We will also get another glimpse of the sinister nature of Joab in action.

I. The Rebellion of Sheba (vs. 1 – 2)

Here we see yet another rift between the northern tribes and the tribe of Judah. In chapter nineteen (vs. 40 – 43), we saw the event that led up to this split. Sheba was from the tribe of Benjamin, which was the same tribe that Saul, Mephibosheth, Ziba, and Shimei came from. It seems that this tribe particularly had problems with David, and it is also evident that they had some degree of influence over the northern tribes.

Though it appears that "every man of Israel"(v. 2) is initially part of this rebellion, it seems that the insurgency is short lived, even before David's men react to it.

There are two ways to think about this rebellion, which might be able to help us understand all rebellion:

1. David was experiencing these problems partially because of his sin with Bathsheba.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

(Galatians 6:7)

Thank the Lord as God's children don't reap all that they sow; the bulk of the punishment that we deserve was reaped by the Lord Jesus on the Cross of Calvary. However, there will always be temporal consequences for the bad things that we do while here on this earth.

2. Sheba was in rebellion against God's anointed man because he was a lost man who was had no other choice but yield to his own sinful, fleshly desires. He was doing what he wanted, not what God wanted. We are supposed to yield to the authorities in our life because God wants us to, not because we want to. The only time that we are permitted to resist God ordained authority is when that authority goes against God's clearly revealed will.

God says that we are to assemble together, so we are justified in disobeying an executive order that says that we can't do it.

However, there is nothing in the Bible that forbids us to wear masks, or have our temperatures taken, etc. So, though we may not agree with those orders, and we may not think they are constitutional, we have no clear permission from God to disobey those mandates.

A second thought about Sheba, and others like him. He was a man that was wrong who was convinced he was right. He was strong-willed and assertive, and convinced a bunch of people (at least initially) to follow him. Be careful who you listen to. There are a lot of loud-mouths out there in politics, in the news media, and on social media; they are yelling and screaming, completely convinced that they are right, and they are trying to get everybody else riled up to follow them in their cause.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (James 1:19-20)

II. The Retirement of David's Concubines (v. 3)

This is kind of an isolated verse in this chapter. It gives us closure and clarity to the events surrounding the rebellion of Absalom, but it really has nothing to do with Sheba and the rebellion that David is facing in this chapter.

These were the concubines that David left at Jerusalem to "keep the house" (2 Samuel 15:16) when he was fleeing from Absalom. These were also the women that Absalom was counselled by Ahithophel to sleep with "in the sight of all Israel" (2 Samuel 16:21 – 22).

Aren't you glad that God's people have done away with this practice of multiple wives and concubines? This was a system that the Israelites learned from the heathen nations that surrounded them. It was never the will of God for a man to marry more than one wife.

*"And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to **his wife**: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no*

more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
(Matthew 19:4-6)

How unfair this was for these concubines. They probably had very little choice about marrying David in the first place. They also had no choice about staying in Jerusalem or leaving with David. They certainly had no choice about being raped by Absalom. And, now they were being put under house arrest ("in ward"). They did nothing wrong, and yet they are reaping some pretty harsh consequences.

Jewish writers say that the widowed queens of Hebrew monarchs were not allowed to marry again but were obliged to pass the rest of their lives in strict seclusion. David treated his concubines in the same manner after the outrage committed on them by Absalom. They were not divorced, for they were guiltless; but they were no longer publicly recognized as his wives; nor was their confinement to a sequestered life a very heavy doom, in a region where women have never been accustomed to go much abroad.¹

III. The Remissness (Lateness) of Amasa (vs. 4 – 5)

Amasa was the man who led the forces of Absalom who was recruited by David to lead his own army after the rebellion was put down. He replaced Joab for two reasons.

1. Joab had disobeyed a direct order from his commander-in-chief. He was told to take Absalom alive, and Joab personally assassinated him.
2. David was trying to unify the nation. Amasa had some people who were loyal to him, and by making Amasa part of his cabinet, he would automatically receive the support of his followers.

Amasa's first duty as general was to gather an army to fight off Sheba. This was no easy task as the men were just sent home, and as many of David's men did neither like nor trust Amasa. At any rate, he failed at his task and did not report back to David with an army by the appointed time. His failure would cost him both his job and his life.

IV. The Recruitment of Abishai (vs. 6 – 7)

Time is of the essence and because of Amasa's failure to gather the army on time, David appoints Abishai, Joab's brother to go after Sheba.

He does not reinstate Joab. However, we see that Joab's men follow Abishai.

Notice also the Cherethites and the Pelethites follow Abishai. These two groups are usually mentioned together. They were attacked by the Amelekites along with Ziklag when David's wives and children were taken (1 Samuel 30:14). They were loyal to David when Absalom rebelled against him (2 Samuel 15:18). Later on, they appear to be Solomon's personal bodyguards (1 Kings 1:38; 44).

¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 208.

Notice also “the mighty men” – see 2 Samuel 23:8 – 39 for a list and description of the mighty men.

V. The Revenge of Joab (vs. 8 – 13)

Apparently Joab pretended to accidentally drop his sword when he was approaching Amasa. He picked it up and grabbed Amasa by the beard which, according to Ryrie, was a common way to greet a friend.

“Taking hold of someone’s beard and kissing his cheek was a customary Oriental greeting.”²

Amasa was unsuspecting, which allowed Joab to easily kill him. This is the second military leader that Joab murdered against the wishes of David (2 Samuel 3:27). Joab also murdered Absalom against David’s direct order.

Joab and Abishai then continue to pursue Sheba, but before the men would follow them, somebody would have to move Amasa’s body and cover it. This same man called the army to make a decision regarding following Joab (not Abishai). Abishai was the one appointed by David, but here the army was clearly called to follow Joab. This is really a military coup.

Notice the power that Joab yielded over the army. He killed the man David had just appointed as leader in cold blood, in full view of the army, and yet they still followed him.

VI. The Resourcefulness of a Wise Woman (vs. 14 – 22)

Joab chased Sheba (and all of the Berites, or Bicrites) all the way to a city called Abel beth-maacah where they found him, and they would have destroyed the entire city, but a wise woman intervened and promised to deliver Sheba if the city would be spared.

According to Deuteronomy 20:10, peace was to be offered to a city before it was to be destroyed. If peace was accepted, then the inhabitants were to be made tributaries to the conquering army. Apparently, the woman was appealing for peace base upon this law.

Joab agrees and Sheba’s head is thrown out over the wall of the city. Joab is satisfied and heads back for home.

VII. The Re-instatement of Joab (vs. 23 – 26)

Joab is once again listed as the leader of the army. David knows that he cannot get rid of Joab as he has too much power with the military.

Joab, however, deserved punishment for the murders of Abner, Absalom, and Amasa; and he will get it, eventually. Joab’s sentence was delayed but not done away with (See 1 Kings 2:5 – 6; 28 – 34).

Notice “Adoram” (1 Kings 4:6) – he was over the tributaries (people who were placed under forced labor – Joshua 16:10; Judges 1:28)

² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: King James Version*, Expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 518.

