

## 2 Samuel 2

- With our introduction of 2 Samuel behind us, it's time to move into the heart of our story which begins with a period of tremendous blessing for Israel
  - After 40 years of rule under the "wrong" king, the nation now receives a king after God's own heart and the turn around is dramatic
    - The Lord shows His pleasure in David's rule by instigating a period of tremendous blessing and fertility within Israel
    - But not everyone is ready to embrace David as the new king, and quickly a division emerges in the wake of Saul's death

**2Sam. 2:1** Then it came about afterwards 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."

**2Sam. 2:2** So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.

**2Sam. 2:3** And David brought up his men who were with him, each with his household; and they lived in the cities of Hebron.

**2Sam. 2:4** Then the men of Judah came and there anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, "It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul."

**2Sam. 2:5** 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.

**2Sam. 2:6** "Now may the LORD show lovingkindness and truth to you; and I also will show this goodness to you, because you have done this thing.

**2Sam. 2:7** "Now therefore, let your hands be strong and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

2-1

- In order to understand what's happening here, we need a short lesson on Israel's history and geography
  - The nation of Israel settled in the land under Joshua according to tribe
    - They were first ruled by judges who each came from different tribes and ruled over a period of centuries

- During that time there was no capital city and no temple...just a tent tabernacle that moved between Bethel and Shiloh
- For that reason, the nation maintained a strong tribal identity though it was one people according to the Old Covenant
  - And naturally, the larger tribes tended to dominate the rest
  - Manasseh and Ephraim in the north and Judah in the south began to contend for power over the rest of the tribes
  - And that began a north-south division that gained strength in the time of the kings
- When the nation demanded a king, the Lord gave them what they demanded in Saul from the tribe of Benjamin
  - At least in one way, Saul was the perfect man to lead Israel as king because he came from a “neutral” tribe
  - Benjamin was one of the smaller tribes, so it didn’t upset the power balance between Ephraim/Manasseh and Judah
  - Secondly, it was located on the Jewish version of the “Mason-Dixon Line” dividing north from south
- Therefore, both the Northern and Southern tribes were willing to embrace a king from the tribe of Benjamin because neither felt threatened by him
  - Which made Saul the perfect man to unite the people...he even maintained his headquarters in Gibeon, in the land of Benjamin
    - But soon the north-south rivalry returned because of a couple of important events
    - The ark of the Lord was stored in the tabernacle at a place called Shiloh, which sat near the division of north and south
    - This meant all Jews traveled a similar distance to worship at the tabernacle as required by the Law
  - But early in Saul’s reign, the ark of the Lord was captured in battle by the Philistines when Saul unwisely took it into battle as protection
    - Later when it was returned, Saul had it moved from its previous place in Shiloh to Jabesh-gilead far to the north

- This forced southern Jews to travel long distances to worship, and reignited the rivalry between north and south
- The second trigger to renew the rivalry happened when Samuel anointed David as Saul's successor, a man from the tribe of Judah
  - That cemented the north-south rivalry, because now the northern tribes worried about power shifting to the south
  - That rivalry will only grow during the fight for who succeeds Saul and it will come to a head after David's son, Solomon dies
  - Ultimately, it leads to civil war and the eventual split of the nation into two nations called Israel and Judah
- And you can see the seeds of that division reflected in the text even now in 2 Samuel 2 as the names Israel and Judah begin to be used
  - In v.9, the northern tribes are called "Israel" and in v.10 the southern region is called by the name of Judah
  - So as 2 Samuel begins, we see the earliest signs that the nation is straining to remain one people
  - And we'll see that struggle reflected in the circumstances and places mentioned in this chapter
- Turning to the text now, in v.1 David asks the Lord if he shall go to Judah?
  - Remember, David has been hiding from Saul by living in Ziklag, a town of Israel's enemies, the Philistines, outside the land of Judah
    - David believes he must return to Israel now, but as obvious as that conclusion might have been, David still asks the Lord
    - Specifically, David has the high priest with him, and the Urim and Thummim stones that reveal the will of the Lord
    - So David could ask the Lord specific questions of the Lord and gain specific responses
  - Nevertheless, you see the growth of this man during his decade of running from Saul merely in the fact that he did ask
    - Having the ability to hear from God and receive His counsel is not unique nor is it a mark of spiritual maturity

- Every believer has the opportunity to approach the throne of God boldly and seek the Lord in prayer
- And every believer is promised a response from the Lord in some form or fashion, according to 1 John
- The mark of spiritual maturity is making the effort to take advantage of that opportunity before making a decision so that the Lord guides us
  - David's maturity is seen in the way he didn't act until he heard from the Lord even in cases where the answer seemed clear
  - And perhaps that quality more than anything else made David a good leader...because he stayed in the will of God
- The Lord tells David, yes, go up to Judah and to Hebron, which sat on the highest point in the land of Judah in the Judean hill country
  - A high place was a significant strategic advantage in warfare, so it made sense for David and his men to make their camp there
    - So David departs with his men and notably with his two wives
    - And the mention of David having multiple wives reminds us that David is not perfect
  - In fact, the juxtaposition of v.1 and v.2 seem designed to balance one another
    - On the one hand, David is a man who seeks God's will in matters of governance, warfare and politics
    - And for that reason, David is a good king and inspiring leader
  - But on the other hand, David always had woman problems, beginning with taking multiple wives
    - The Bible teaches that marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman
    - And in the case of Israel's kings, the Bible is explicitly clear that taking multiple wives is sin

**Deut. 17:14** "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,'

[Deut. 17:15](#) you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman.

[Deut. 17:16](#) “Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never again return that way.’

[Deut. 17:17](#) “He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.

- So while multiple marriages is possible simply in the sense it is possible to establish more than one marriage at a time, they are acts of adultery
  - And as such, they are contrary to God’s plan, especially in David’s case since the Law prohibited it for Israel’s kings
  - Which means as David took additional wives, he did so without asking God’s counsel
  - For if he had asked God, the Lord would have directed David back to His law and away from that decision
- This is a pattern I mentioned in our first lesson, where David shows so much insight and obedience to God...except in the area of women
  - And of course, the worst comes later when he engages in murder and adultery over a woman who catches his eye
  - But as I also said, this issue is connected to a larger problem for David...he has no close confidant or friend
  - So he is perpetually lonely and under attack, and so he searches for earthly companionship without finding satisfaction
- Back to the text, in v.4 after David arrives, the men of Judah come to anoint David as king in keeping with Samuel’s anointing many years earlier
  - But notice, it’s the men of Judah alone who come to David, which means that for now David is only king of that tribe
    - No other tribe sends representatives to acknowledge David’s reign as king
    - And their conspicuous absence tells of the conflict underway

- These men of Judah inform David that the men of Jabesh-gilead were the ones who traveled to Bet She'mesh to retrieve Saul's body
  - Jabesh-gilead sits in tribal territory of Gad east of the Jordan river and it held the ark of the Lord
  - These people gave Saul and his sons a proper burial allowing the king to rest in dignity and it showed their allegiance with Saul
- So as David hears this news, he sees an opportunity to build a bridge with the northern tribes and perhaps unite the nation under his rule
  - So David sent messengers to these men thanking them for their kindness to Saul and asking that the Lord bless them as well
  - And then David says he, too, will show them kindness for this gesture because the men of Judah have anointed David king
- David's purpose is clear...he's extending an olive branch to the north while he assumes the posture of a king promising protection
  - He hopes the men in the north might see David's coronation as a fete accompli and fall in line to stay on his good side
  - But unfortunately, there are forces in the north already working against David to prevent him from taking rule of Israel

**2Sam. 2:8** 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.

**2Sam. 2:9** He made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, even over all Israel.

**2Sam. 2:10** 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.

**2Sam. 2:11** The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

- Enter new characters in our story...beginning with Abner, the commander of Saul's army, who takes another character, Ish-bosheth to Mahanaim
  - Abner was first introduced in 1 Samuel 14, where we learn he's the son of Saul's uncle, Ner, making Abner a cousin of Saul
    - Moreover, Abner was a rival of David since Saul made David the leader of men in battle yet Abner was the army's senior leader

- So clearly, Abner has a strong personal interest in seeing Saul's family retain control of the throne
- Abner worries about his future should David take charge, so now that Saul is gone, he moves quickly to fill the vacuum
- Abner installs a puppet leader who he can control, which will secure Abner's position over the army
  - Abner goes to the man he believes to be the last living son of Saul, a man named Ish-bosheth and anoints him king
  - The name Ish-bosheth was probably not the man's given name
  - According to 1 Chronicles 8, the man was probably named Eshbaal, which means "Man of the Lord"
- But in 2 Samuel 2-4 he's called Ish-bosheth which means "man of shame"
  - And that suggests that he is not a man of strong moral courage or character, which may explain why he wasn't in the battle
  - He may have survived because he was too cowardly to fight or he ran away, and now he's a pawn in this power struggle
- ○ Abner brings this man of shame to Mahanaim to anoint him king over numerous regions
  - The list starts with their present location in Gilead but it includes a wide region
  - It extends to the extreme northern tribe of Asher, the Jezreel valley, Ephraim, Benjamin and all of "Israel"
- In summary, Abner makes Ish-bosheth king over the northern tribes while David has been made king over Judah

2-2

- In effect, this is tantamount to the dividing of the tribes into two nations of Israel in the north and Judah in the south

2-3

- And this split continues for some time with Ish-bosheth beginning a reign over the north at age 40
- And his reign as king lasted two years while David's reign over Judah lasted seven and a half years
- The difference in these two periods of time reflects that David ruled Judah from the moment of Saul's death

- But Ish-bosheth wasn't able to consolidate his power over the north for the better part of five years
- Abner was only able to bring all the northern tribes under his power for the final two and a half years of this period
- Nevertheless, there was constant tension during that time with both sides looking for a way to consolidate power over all 12 tribes
  - And on one occasion the conflict was especially brutal

**2Sam. 2:12** Now Abner the son of Ner, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon with the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul.

**2Sam. 2:13** 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, one on the one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool.

**2Sam. 2:14** Then Abner said to Joab, "Now let the young men arise and hold a contest before us." And Joab said, "Let them arise."

**2Sam. 2:15** So they arose and went over by count, twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

**2Sam. 2:16** 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.

**2Sam. 2:17** That day the battle was very severe, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

- This meeting was an attempt at brokering a peace between the two sides

2-4

- The king of the north has traveled from Mahanaim down to Gibeon which is just north of the border of Judah

2-5

- They sit separated by a great pool, which provided some protection against an ambush
- This pool has been excavated and is visible today in Israel

2-6

- It was a silo or cistern built partly above ground and partly underground
- It was huge, about 37 feet across and 35 feet above ground and forty-five feet underground

- Before they get very far in the peace talks, Abner suggests that they settle the conflict with a test of honor and strength
  - His idea was to pit the men against each other in a contest to the death, as a way of predicting who would win in a battle
  - The one who wins this contest would claim to rule all tribes
- So they select twelve men from the delegations of the north and the south, one man representing each tribe of Israel
  - And each pair engage in hand-to-hand combat to the death
  - After the 12 engagements, the side that won the most would claim victory
- But after 12 rounds, each round has been a draw with both men killing their opponent, which was an unexpected outcome
  - After both sides watch all the men die in this contest, passions are running high and tension boils over
  - And so after the contest ends with no winner, it turns into a battle between the two delegations
- In the ensuing combat, David's forces led by Joab get the upper hand and begin to chase Abner and his forces

**2Sam. 2:18** Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab and Abishai and Asahel; and Asahel was as swift-footed as one of the gazelles which is in the field.

**2Sam. 2:19** Asahel pursued Abner and did not turn to the right or to the left from following Abner.

**2Sam. 2:20** Then Abner looked behind him and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" And he answered, "It is I."

**2Sam. 2:21** So Abner said to him, "Turn to your right or to your left, and take hold of one of the young men for yourself, and take for yourself his spoil." But Asahel was not willing to turn aside from following him.

**2Sam. 2:22** Abner repeated again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab?"

**2Sam. 2:23** However, he refused to turn aside; therefore 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 came about that all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still.

- The delegation David sent consisted of three sons from the same family, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel
  - When Abner began to run away, one of these brothers, Asahel, took off in pursuit
  - Jewish folklore says that Asahel could outrun a horse, but he wasn't a particularly skilled warrior
- So as he was catching up to Abner, Abner tells the young man to find someone else to fight, someone he could actually defeat
  - Abner seems to be a little worried but he also seems to be telling the truth
  - He warns Asahel two times to turn left or right, meaning to pick a different target rather than attack Abner
- And when Asahel refuses to stop chasing Abner, the commander decided to stop Asahel by using the butt end of his spear
  - Abner's choice to use the blunt end of his spear may have been intended to avoid killing Asahel or perhaps it was just cruelty
  - Either way, the boy was running so fast that he literally impaled himself on the wood of Abner's spear and died
  - The rest of David's men went to where Asahel died and when they found him, they stood still meaning they stopped the pursuit
- But Asahel's brothers continued the pursuit of Abner

**[2Sam. 2:24](#)** But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner, and when the sun was going down, they came to the hill of Ammah, which is in front of Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

**[2Sam. 2:25](#)** The sons of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became one band, and they stood on the top of a certain hill.

**[2Sam. 2:26](#)** Then Abner called to Joab and said, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the end? How long will you refrain from telling the people to turn back from following their brothers?"

**[2Sam. 2:27](#)** Joab said, "As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely then the people would have gone away in the morning, each from following his brother."

[2Sam. 2:28](#) So Joab blew the trumpet; and all the people halted and pursued Israel no longer, nor did they continue to fight anymore.

[2Sam. 2:29](#) Abner and his men then went through the Arabah all that night; so they crossed the Jordan, walked all morning, and came to Mahanaim.

[2Sam. 2:30](#) Then Joab returned from following Abner; when he had gathered all the people together, nineteen of David's servants besides Asahel were missing.

[2Sam. 2:31](#) But the servants of David had struck down many of Benjamin and Abner's men, so that three hundred and sixty men died.

[2Sam. 2:32](#) And they took up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb which was in Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men went all night until the day dawned at Hebron.

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- By the end of the day, Joab and Abishai have pursued Abner north into the desert mountain wilderness of Gibeon which was in the territory of Benjamin
  - And in that area, the men of Benjamin rally to defend Abner, since Benjamin was part of the northern territory of Israel
    - They finally stage a defense atop a hill which gave them a tactical advantage over their pursuers
    - And from the position, Abner sees an opportunity to stop the fight by calling for a truce
  - Abner says further fighting will only create more loss and bitterness and he asks how much longer will Judah hold out in supporting Ish-bosheth?
    - Joab correctly responds that Abner began the current round of fighting when he proposed a contest to the death
    - Nevertheless, Joab realizes he can't defeat Abner under the current circumstances, so he retreats
    - Abner and his men move through the night until they crossed the Jordan and came to Mahanaim after walking all morning
  - After this encounter, David's delegation lost a total of 20 men while Abner lost 360 men
    - Joab took Asahel and buried him in Bethlehem and walked a full night to reach David in Hebron
    - And thus ended an attempt to reconcile the two sides, which only proved how irreconcilable they were

- But this severe loss for Abner's forces begins the unraveling of Ish-bosheth's rule over the north and ultimately leads to Abner's death
  - So in effect, this terrible loss for both sides, but especially the north, becomes useful in God's hands to bring David to power
  - It began a period of open hostility between the north and south that allowed David's superior military might to win out
- And that conflict takes us to Chapter 3

**2Sam. 3:1** Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; and David grew steadily stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker continually.

**2Sam. 3:2** Sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

**2Sam. 3:3** and his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur;

**2Sam. 3:4** and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;

**2Sam. 3:5** and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David at Hebron.

- The conflict instigated by Abner's ill-advised combat contest turns into a long war between north and south, and every battle strengthens David's side
  - The house of Saul, a reference to Abner and Ish-bosheth, grows weaker as they lose men and materials and ground
    - Meanwhile David and his family live in Hebron and his family is growing
    - His first son is Amnon, born to his wife Ahinoam, who was a woman from the region of the Jezreel Valley in Israel
    - A second son Chileab is born to Abigail, and a third son, Absalom, is born to a third wife Maacah
    - A fourth son born to another wife and a fifth and sixth son each born to additional wives
  - David is collecting wives and sons annually in the years he's been waiting to be king over all Israel

- Altogether the Scripture names at least 8 wives of David and says he had other wives and concubines unnamed as well
- Most of these additional marriages were made to establish political alliances to shore up his power in the land
- As we said before, these additional wives were evidence of a sinful pattern on David's part, since they were acts contrary to the Law
  - Moreover, the Lord specifically outlawed marrying for political advantage in Deuteronomy 7:3
  - So David is doing the wrong thing for the wrong reasons, rather than seeking the Lord's counsel and support
- Nevertheless the Lord blesses David with sons from these marriages
  - The consequences of his sin eventually comes to bear upon David's life in other ways
  - But in the meantime, as He did with Jacob, the Lord extends David kindness in the form of many sons and daughters
- Which reminds us that God's grace doesn't wait for our obedience
  - And as strange as that may sound, God blesses apart from our obedience to Him, at least in this life
  - Remember God's grace can't be earned, because grace is unmerited favor
- We are not blessed by God's grace because we deserve it...we're blessed by God's grace because we don't deserve it
  - So His blessing must be independent of our good behavior nor can it be lost by bad behavior, or else it wouldn't be grace
  - David was blessed with fertility and many sons, because it was part of how God blessed and supported the man He has chosen
- And that's the point of the story in this section...as David patiently awaits the day the Lord makes him king of all Israel, he is being blessed
  - And that same blessing will be extended to all Israel once all Israel embraces David as king
    - And in that way, we see already a connection between David and Jesus

- As I mentioned in my introduction to this book, David is a well-known picture of Jesus in Scripture
- Obviously, when someone is a picture of Jesus, that picture will, by necessity, be limited and incomplete
  - Every person apart from Christ has sin, so we can't compare to our Lord in every way
  - But in some aspects of a person's life, the Lord may direct events and circumstances to create a connection to teach us
- And the Lord produces many such connections between David and Jesus, including this moment as David is producing sons while waiting
  - The Bible says that the Lord is waiting for His people Israel to receive Him as king over all Israel
  - They rejected Him when Jesus came to them the first time, and Jesus told them He will not return until all Israel receives Him
  - Just as David has offered himself to all Israel but most have rejected him for now, so he too awaits their acceptance
- But in the meantime, David has many sons (and daughters) proving that God is prepared to make David's reign fruitful even as he awaits
  - And likewise, the Lord is bringing many sons and daughters to glory, the writer of Hebrews says
  - And Paul says this

[Gal. 3:26](#) For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

[Gal. 3:27](#) For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

[Gal. 3:28](#) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

- So David pictures the way our Lord works to produce a family for His future kingdom as He awaits Israel's acceptance
  - And then in a future day we can all walk into the Kingdom on the same day to reign and live together
    - That's David's perspective...he's building his court even as he waits for the day he will rule his country

- And the Lord's blessing of David suggests that the nation as a whole is to be blessed when they accept their king
- And that too is a picture, since we know that when Israel finally receives their Lord, they will come into great blessing also

**Rom. 11:11** I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

**Rom. 11:12** Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

- Israel's rejection of Jesus became opportunity for the Lord to bless the rest of the Gentile world
- And so Paul asks, if Israel rejecting Jesus can lead to good things, then how much better things will result from their acceptance?
- The good thing that results is Israel and all the world entering into the Kingdom, which is a very, very good thing
- And then comes the political shift that opens the door for David

**2Sam. 3:6** It came about while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David that Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul.

**2Sam. 3:7** Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah; and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?"

**2Sam. 3:8** Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, "Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show kindness to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hands of David; and yet today you charge me with a guilt concerning the woman.

**2Sam. 3:9** "May God do so to Abner, and more also, if as the LORD has sworn to David, I do not accomplish this for him,

**2Sam. 3:10** to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba."

**2Sam. 3:11** And he could no longer answer Abner a word, because he was afraid of him.

- As the war between the north and south rages, Abner decides to strengthen his position within the house of Saul
  - Remember, Abner is the true power in the north, and Ish-bosheth, the man of shame, is merely a figurehead selected because he is Saul's son

- Abner has allowed this man to have the title and rewards of power while he runs the country and makes the decisions
- And at some point, Abner decides he needs an insurance policy against the chance that Ish-bosheth decides to push him out
- In v.6 Abner seeks to make himself strong in the house of Saul, which refers to Abner having sexual relations with a royal concubine
  - Concubines were a type of wife taken by powerful men to help ensure an heir
  - They were slave wives who did not enjoy the freedom or privileges of true wives but had sexual relations with the king
  - They are baby-making machines, in a sense, so that the king would be assured of enough sons to continue his dynasty
- So one day Abner decides to take one of Saul's concubines to produce his own heir, presumably so that he might one day contend for the throne
  - If he can produce a son from one of Saul's wives, then he might have a way to maneuver that son to the throne
  - And if that happens, Abner becomes even more powerful over the army and the nation
- But the concubines of the dead king are inherited by the new king like any other property
  - So Abner was showing disloyalty to Ish-bosheth by taking the concubine in this way
  - So Abner's move is clearly a challenge to the king's right and authority
- When Ish-bosheth learns of Abner's act of betrayal, he confronts Abner over it in v.7 asking why Abner made this move?
  - The fact that Ish-bosheth challenges Abner rather than simply ordering his death is evidence of Ish-bosheth's weakness
    - And yet at the same time, Abner knows the game is up and his plot against Ish-bosheth's reign has been exposed
    - So at the very least, his influence over Ish-bosheth will be greatly reduced and any son born of that concubine will not live long

- And at worst, Abner will always be looking over his shoulder waiting for Ish-bosheth to kill him
- So caught red-handed, Abner makes a calculated decision to display indignation and claim to be the one insulted and mistreated
  - He doesn't deny the charges, but instead points to his efforts to support Ish-bosheth against David as proof of his loyalty
  - Of course, they were nothing of the sort...he was simply acting in his own interests
  - And if anything, Abner had greatly *weakened* Ish-bosheth's position by losing battle after battle
- But Abner knows he must put this pretender king in his place or else Ish-bosheth might think he has the power to contend with Abner
  - So Abner asks if he's become a dog's head for Judah?
  - The term dog's head could be euphemism for a male prostitute
  - So Abner is saying he's being accused of being a prostitute for Judah sent to bed the concubine
- Of course, his indignation is entirely an act to protect himself from the truth, but his anger has the intended effect on the king
  - As Abner protests, he promises that in retaliation for the king's insult, he will ensure David will be installed as king over all Israel
  - Perhaps Abner saw the writing on the wall and realized David's victories on the battlefield meant it was only a matter of time
- So he uses this encounter as an excuse to shift his loyalties to David, and yet the man doesn't even bother to run away from Ish-bosheth
  - Ish-bosheth is so weak and scared of Abner that the king does nothing to counter Abner in the moment
  - And Abner clearly knew that the man was no threat to him
- So soon after Abner makes good on his promise by reaching out to David secretly to deliver the north into David's hands

**2Sam. 3:12** Then Abner sent messengers to David in his place, saying, "Whose is the land? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel over to you."

[2Sam. 3:13](#) He said, “Good! I will make a covenant with you, but I demand one thing of you, namely, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul’s daughter, when you come to see me.”

[2Sam. 3:14](#) So David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, saying, “Give me my wife Michal, to whom I was betrothed for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.”

[2Sam. 3:15](#) Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish.

[2Sam. 3:16](#) But her husband went with her, weeping as he went, and followed her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go, return.” So he returned.

- Abner sends messengers to David and says Israel is your land, so let’s make a covenant and I’ll make sure you receive it all
  - The deal is essentially that David promises to protect Abner’s life and position in return for Abner helping him defeat Ish-Bosheth
    - David leaps at the chance to gain the upper hand and put the seven year conflict to rest
    - But shrewdly, David puts forth a condition that would test Abner’s sincerity and cement his control over the north
  - David says he wants the wife he was given by Saul at an earlier time
    - Micah was one of Saul’s daughters, who loved David truly and who David desired as well
    - Saul promised Micah to David as a wife if David delivered 100 Philistine foreskins to Saul
  - David hit the goal and received Micah as wife, but later when Saul began chasing David, he was forced to leave Micah behind
    - She helps David escape without her as a sacrificial act, only to have her father Saul force her to marry another man later
    - Ever since, they have been apart and David has missed Micah
  - So now he demands that she be sent to him, which will not only prove Abner’s loyalty but also allow David to build an alliance with the north
    - By re-establishing his marriage to Sauls’ daughter, David can appease the north and lay claim to Saul’s throne in their minds

- So Abner agrees to the terms readily, proving that he truly was the power in the north
- We don't know how Abner worked to ensure this would happen, but we see David sending messengers to Ish-bosheth who agrees to the request
  - So clearly somehow Abner has made sure that the king said yes when the request came
    - And if Abner can arrange for this transaction to take place, then David knows that Abner can make anything happen in the court
    - So through this arrangement, David has proof that Abner is capable of delivering on his word
  - Meanwhile, we see Micah's situation and it's surprising...her new husband seems to genuinely care for his wife
    - He's distraught at seeing her taken from him and he follows her all the way to the border with Judah
    - He literally accompanies her as far as he can walk without entering enemy territory and he cries the whole way
  - Obviously, in the 17 years or so that these two have been married, the husband has formed a genuine bond with the woman and loves her
    - So David's request is hurting this man deeply, and yet David's interest in Micah at this point seems political, not romantic
    - It's a cold-hearted move on David's part, and it's foreshadowing what David will do in even worse ways to another man
  - Notice that we don't see David inquiring of the Lord on this move, and in fact, David is violating another law by bringing Micah back to himself
    - The Law says that a broken marriage cannot be restored if another marriage has taken place in the meantime

**Deut. 24:1** "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, **Deut. 24:2** and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, **Deut. 24:3** and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife,

[Deut. 24:4](#) then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

- Once Micah married Paltiel, she could no longer go back to David as his wife, or else he commits adultery on Paltiel
- And for that matter, once David took a new wife, he couldn't take Micah for the same reason
- But this is a central weakness in David's life, taking women when he wanted for any reason, and his conversations with God go conspicuously silent at this time
  - He acts in his flesh and though God will often bless the outcome to suit God's own purposes, there are consequences later
    - I think it's safe to say every believer has at least one area of weakness where we tend to act without seeking God's counsel
    - It's our secret (or not so secret) sin and it's where we go time and time again
  - Each time we find ourselves in that place, we know we should be there, and yet we let our flesh draw us in again
    - Like David, it might be the one thing that stands in contrast to our otherwise strong life of obedience
    - Or maybe it's the tip of an iceberg of sin, but either way, it's where we need to start in our fight against the flesh
    - Whatever is our central weakness is also our first opportunity
  - How much different would David's story be if he had taken his weakness with women to the Lord early in his life?
    - How many pains and sorrows might David avoided?
    - And if you don't know his life story well, don't worry we will see it all play out in this study
  - But even now we see David sowing the seeds of trouble, and even though God's grace continued, that doesn't stop sin's consequences

- That's the place we end tonight...recognizing that David still received God's grace and blessing though he made mistakes
- But those mistakes brought their own misery and God often allows those consequences to come so that we might learn
- That's David's story...incredible blessing because of the grace of God
  - And troubling consequences as a result of his own missteps
  - But the effect of great grace and great consequences in David's life was to make him a great man