

2 Samuel 19:40-20:26 — The Corrupted Kingdom

January 7, 2024

Good morning, CrossWinds Church! If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. We are grateful to have you. We had a great Christmas series.

This morning, we return to our studies in 2 Samuel. After today, there are four more chapters and we will be done with the book. There is a lot of interesting stuff in the final chapters of 2 Samuel that are usually ignored. Come prepared to learn things you didn't know and be challenged in ways you didn't expect.

Since we were last in 2 Samuel in the month of November, Let's begin with an overview of the book.

Review

2 Samuel is about the rise and fall of King David. 1 Samuel ends with King Saul dead. 2 Samuel begins with David finally in charge of the nation. His kingdom goes amazingly well. Israel becomes a superpower in the ancient world. David administers his kingdom well. There is justice, equity, and blessing. Then, at the height of his power, he lets things go to his head. While on his roof, he sees a beautiful woman named Bathsheba bathing on a roof below him. Even though she was another man's wife, he called for her. He had an affair with her. She ended up pregnant so he killed her husband so he could take her as a wife.

To say God wasn't happy about this is an understatement. Even though David repented, he faced consequences for his sins. He killed Uriah. Four of his sons will die by the sword. God promises there will always be a sword and rebellion as part of his house.

As part of those consequences, David's son Absalom rose up against him and carried out a coup. David and his men ran for their lives because most of the nation backed Absalom, instead of David. When we left off in our studies, Absalom's coup failed. David's smaller army defeated Absalom's much larger army, and Absalom was killed in the battle.

Now the nation was in a pickle. Nobody expected Absalom's coup to fail. Nobody expected Absalom to die. With Absalom dead, they had no king. What should they do? At that point, the people talked of asking David to return as the king. David worked hard to restore unity in the splintered nation and decided to install Amasa, Absalom's former military commander, as commander of the troops of the reunited nation. This would also demote Joab, his current military commander. Joab killed Absalom in direct defiance of David's instructions.

As we pick up the story, the people assembled to bring David and his men back across the Jordan back to Jerusalem to re-install David as king. The purpose of chapter 20 is to show us just what kind of kingdom David had at this point. As we will see, it was a corrupt kingdom, not a unified one run by God-honoring integrity.

This chapter organizes itself under these four headings. First, we see David's kingdom was now characterized by bickering and fighting. Second, David's kingdom was characterized by many who suffered for sin. Third, David's kingdom had a deep state. Fourth, David's kingdom was run by people in love with power, not serving the people.

David's restored kingdom was characterized by fighting and bickering.

And King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar the priests: "Say to the elders of Judah, 'Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his house, when the word of all Israel has come to the king?' 2 Samuel 19:11 (ESV)

The northern kingdom of Israel, which consisted of ten of the twelve tribes, was the first to have the idea of asking David to return to Jerusalem and resume the kingship as he had before Absalom's rebellion. The problem was the tribe of Judah, the tribe that held the capital city of Jerusalem, did not ask David to return as king. We don't know why. David also didn't know why, so he sent messengers to the priests of Jerusalem. They were always loyal to him. He wondered why they were not asking David to return and resume his place as king.

The message prompted the tribe of Judah to action. In no time, they sent their troops to the other side of the Jordan River to be part of the parade that escorted David home.

The king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him. All the people of Judah, and also half the people of Israel, brought the king on his way. 2 Samuel 19:40 (ESV)

Here is where the trouble began. All the people of Judah, but only half of Israel, brought David back as king. What happened? I can only guess. Judah was located closer to the Jordan River than most of the other tribes. They had no trouble gathering their people and sending them to escort David. Some of the other tribes in Israel were far away from the Jordan River. Most likely, their people were still traveling to the welcome home parade.

The people from the tribe of Judah were tired of waiting for everyone else to arrive; even though only half of their brothers and sisters from the other tribes

were present, they started the parade and brought David back to Jerusalem anyway. That didn't sit well with the rest of the people.

It reminds me of our house on Christmas morning. I am an only child, so I am used to a small Christmas. For us, this year was different. There were ten people and three dogs in one house. On Christmas Eve, we agreed everyone would be in the living room at 10:00 AM on Christmas morning to open presents. As a guy, 10:00 AM gave people plenty of time to sleep in on Christmas. When 10:00 AM came on Christmas morning, and it was time to open presents, my wife kept hitting the pause button. She didn't want to start because everyone wasn't there. Some were still in the bathroom. Others were still in the bedroom. My personality wanted to start because it was 10:00 AM. Thankfully, I have learned to listen to my wife because she is more concerned about offending people than I am. If I listen to her, I offend less people. She wanted to make sure everyone was present, even if it took us extra time.

That is a similar situation to what we have happening here. For the tribe of Judah, it was time to start the welcome home parade, even if everyone wasn't there. They should have listened to my wife and waited until everyone was there and saved themselves a lot of relational headaches.

Let's work our way through the argument between the tribe of Judah and the rest of the tribes of Israel and see how it develops and what we can learn to avoid the silly conflicts they found themselves.

In conflict, assume the best about people, not the worst.

Then all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king, "Why have our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away and brought the king and his

household over the Jordan, and all David's men with him?" 2 Samuel 19:41 (ESV)

They were offended they brought David back to Jerusalem without waiting for everyone from all the tribes to arrive. The tribes of Israel claimed the reason Judah did this was because they were trying to steal the king away from everyone else. They claimed they claimed the parade was started early from evil motives and an evil heart.

I doubt the tribe of Judah intended to steal the king away from everyone else, but they inadvertently offended everyone by not waiting for them. Notice the tribes of Israel didn't give the tribe the Judah the benefit of the doubt. They didn't assume the tribe of Judah was innocent until proven guilty. They just accused them of evil intentions and an evil heart.

Isn't that the same thing we do in everyday life? Someone offends or overlooks us, and we assume the worst motives in their heart. All the evidence we see we use to prove them guilty, not innocent.

Assuming the worst about people's hearts and intentions stirs up conflicts. It doesn't help them die down.

I think the truth about this situation is that Israel was attributing to the tribe of Judah what it wanted for itself. The tribes of Israel wanted the glory of bringing King David back; after all, it was their idea. They accused the tribe of Judah of trying to steal David away because they planned to steal David away. As so often happens, they accused the tribe of Judah of something they were guilty of themselves. Don't we see that today? What people accuse others of is what they are often guilty of.

The first step to de-escalating a conflict is, when something goes off the rails, assume the best about people, not the worst.

In conflict, act humbly, not defensively.

All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "Because the king is our close relative. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king's expense? Or has he given us any gift?" 2 Samuel 19:42 (ESV)

Judah answered the people in the tribe of Israel truthfully, but they did it in a way that just rubbed salt in the wound. Judah was not trying to steal King David away for themselves. They were not eating the king's provisions. No free lunch. It was since the king was so closely related to them that when all of them were present, it seemed appropriate for the parade to begin. The people of Judah didn't have bad motives. They were naive and insensitive to how their actions made other people feel. Instead of acting defensively and justifying their actions, they should have acted humbly and apologized. That would have made the problem disappear instead of kicking it up a notch.

Isn't that true for us? When we end up in a conflict, if our first reaction is to respond defensively, it doesn't help. Even if you have done nothing wrong, it irritates the person with whom you have the conflict. Respond humbly, saying we are sorry, apologizing for offending or hurting other people is essential to de-escalating a conflict, instead of making it worse.

In conflict, learn to overlook an offense.

And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, "We have ten shares in the king, and in David also we have more than you. Why then did you despise us? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?" ... 2 Samuel 19:43a (ESV)

Now that the people of Israel were offended by the defensive self-justifying men from Judah, rather than overlooking the offense and taking it in stride, they decided to fight back with an “I-am-bigger-than-you-are approach.” The tribe of Judah thought they were special because they were closely related to David. The tribes of Israel claimed they were more important. After all, Judah only had one tribe but Israel had ten tribes. It was the tribes of Israel’s idea to bring King David home, not Judah’s idea.

Where do you think this argument is headed? It will only get worse. There was no humility and no assuming the best. It was now a contest between Israel and Judah about who could claim to be the bigger, the toughest, and the most important group.

Isn’t this the way many of our conflicts head? It ends up in a contest of, “Who is the most important?” Instead of learning to humbly overlook offenses.

In conflict, refuse to speak insulting words.

...But the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel. 2 Samuel 19:43b (ESV)

It devolved into a spitting match. It was name-calling and insults from one tribe to the other. Who could fling more spit on the other guy? Who could say something more hurtful or spiteful?

The Hebrew word the ESV translates as *fierce* means to speak cruel, insulting, or hurtful words.

Notice where it all started. It was a simple offense. The tribe of Judah left too early for the victory parade. It was no big deal. Now people are tearing each

other apart trying to see who could say more creative curse words. This is so foolish. They completely forgot about what started the fight in the first place.

Doesn't this sound like ordinary life? The pointless bickering between Israel and Judah is a picture of the kind of bickering that rips apart marriages, families, churches, and small communities. It starts with pride in our hearts. Someone says something or does something that might not have been intended to hurt us, but we react by assuming evil intentions, saying hurtful things, and making uncalled-for accusations. Unless one or both parties humble themselves like Jesus, it will lead to deeply injured people, church splits, and broken marriages.

As Christians, one of the hardest parts of spiritual maturity to develop is how we handle our conflicts with other people. Most people do not leave the church over doctrinal issues, it is relational issues. Someone said something to us or did something that might not have been done to hurt us, but rather than humbling ourselves, pursuing unity, and seeking to understand, in our pride, we get offended and walk away in a huff, just like the people in the tribe of Israel did.

How does the Bible tell us to handle conflicts?

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. Proverbs 19:11 (ESV)

...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:2-3 (ESV)

We are to overlook offenses. We are to bear with one another in love. We are to work hard to maintain unity. This is a Christian distinctive. The word around

us loves conflict. It loves assuming the worst about people. Tells you to be defensive, not humble.

I know what some of you are thinking. You say, “I would forgive but you don’t understand how they hurt me... You don’t know the things they said to me... You don’t know how I hurt on the inside after what they have done.” To you I would say, listen to the words of Jesus.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14–15 (ESV)

As forgiven people, we have no option but to be forgiving people. What makes Christians stand out in the world is their willingness to forgive others after they are deeply hurt because of how Jesus has forgiven them after our sin was so offensive to God.

Conflict allows the devil an opportunity to do his work.

Now there happened to be there a worthless man, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjaminite. And he blew the trumpet and said, “We have no portion in David, and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel!” 2 Samuel 20:1 (ESV)

This guy is described as a worthless man. The word *worthless* in Hebrew is *belial*. It is a strong term associated with death, wickedness, and rebellion. This guy is a tool of the devil. When he sees the nasty bickering between God’s people, he is used by the devil to do his work. In their anger, he attempts to get the tribes of Judah to secede from David’s kingdom. The conflict between God’s people gave the devil an opportunity to do his work.

Think about how foolish this would be. Twenty-four hours before, the tribes of Israel wanted to be the first to bring David home and reinstall him as king.

Now, after all the hurtful bickering, they are trying to secede from the kingdom.

There is a lesson for us in this. When tempers flare, good sense evaporates. Isn't that true? In a disagreement, people will do and say senseless things they will regret, like calling for ten tribes to secede from the nation.

So all the men of Israel withdrew from David and followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah followed their king steadfastly from the Jordan to Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 20:2 (ESV)

The picture we have of David's kingdom is that while he was trying to unite the nation, it was not united. The people were bickering over pointless conflicts. Offenses were not overlooked. David returned to Jerusalem with only a portion of his kingdom intact.

My friends, this is what the kingdoms of this world look like. People vying for power and control. It is people getting offended and spending lots of time fighting with each other instead of working together. If you doubt that, simply turn on the news.

The church is to be different. Look what Paul says should characterize God's people.

...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3 (ESV)

...do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Ephesians 4:26–27 (ESV)

David's restored kingdom had many who suffered after sin.

As David returns to Jerusalem, notice the first thing we read about when he came into the city.

And David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten concubines whom he had left to care for the house and put them in a house under guard and provided for them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood. 2 Samuel 20:3 (ESV)

This is important. The author puts this front and center for a reason. These women, through no fault of their own, were doomed to live the rest of their lives as weary captives in a house without the companionship and love of their husband. In the past, they were grateful for their beauty, which is probably why they became one of David's wives, but now David could not be with them, since Absalom, upon taking over the city of Jerusalem, raped them to destroy their relationship with his father.

David knew what happened to these women, the pain and loneliness with which they would suffer for the rest of their lives was on account of his sin. Look what God told Nathan, the prophet, to tell David about what would happen as a consequence of his affair with Bathsheba.

Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.' " 2 Samuel 12:11–12 (ESV)

That is what happened. On the roof of the house where David lusted after Bathsheba, Absalom raped the wives David left behind to keep the palace, and in so doing, he ruined their lives. David provided for them. David cared for them, but they lived as widows because he could never be with them.

In my mind's eye, every time I think of David in this house and the loneliness on the faces of these wives, he was reminded that their suffering took place because of his sin.

What a reminder for us. When we sin, other people suffer. When we sin, those who suffer the most are usually those we love the most. Sin doesn't stay isolated and affects only our lives. It soaks into the lives of those close to us and damages them.

These ten wives lived in the loneliness of widowhood on account of David's sin with Bathsheba as only part of the suffering. Consider what we studied earlier in the battle between Absalom and David, when 20,000 men died. That was likely only the number of men Absalom lost. Those were fathers. Those were sons. Those were 20,000 broken families on account of David's sin.

This is a good reminder for us. When we sin, others will suffer. When we sin, those we love the most will often suffer the most.

The characteristics of David's restored kingdom are it was characterized by bitter bickering between people. It was also characterized by suffering people. Many people suffered for the sins of their leader.

David's restored kingdom had a Deep State.

When David was brokering a peace deal between the tribes of Israel and Judah after Absalom's failed coup to create unity, he promised to make Amasa—Absalom's former army commander—the new commander over his army. That would remove Joab, David's current army commander, from his position. For David, this would solve two problems. First, it would help create unity in the divided nation. Second, it would demote Joab, who, as we will see, was getting a little full of himself. He flagrantly disobeyed David's orders and killed Absalom, when he was told not to do that.

With Sheba's rebellion underway, David called Amasa, whom he appointed over the army, and gave him this command.

Then the king said to Amasa, "Call the men of Judah together to me within three days, and be here yourself." 2 Samuel 20:4 (ESV)

Get an army together from the tribe of Judah. We need to chase down Sheba. We can't let him build a coupe like Absalom did.

So Amasa went to summon Judah, but he delayed beyond the set time that had been appointed him. 2 Samuel 20:5 (ESV)

Why did it take Amasa longer than three days to gather an army? It might have been because he was the former commander of Absalom's army, so the people of Judah didn't trust him. It might have been too short a timeline to gather the people. Maybe he wasn't a motivated person. I don't know. Ultimately, the reason doesn't matter. What matters is Amasa was not there with an army after three days. Time was of the essence to apprehend Sheba. David had to make tough decisions.

And David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord's servants and pursue him, lest he get himself to fortified cities and escape from us." 2 Samuel 20:6 (ESV)

David didn't ask Joab to lead the army when Amasa failed to show up. He passed over Joab and went to his brother Abishai.

And there went out after him Joab's men and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men. They went out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri. 2 Samuel 20:7 (ESV)

If you skim this, you will miss something important. Let's look at who went in pursuit of Sheba in reverse order. All David's mighty men. These were his best full-time soldiers. The Cherethites and Pelethites were David's bodyguard unit. Which group of soldiers led the march at the front of the list? It was Joab's men.

Why weren't Abishai's men involved? Joab was no longer in charge. Why did Abishai take Joab's men instead of his own men on this mission?

When they were at the great stone that is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them... 2 Samuel 20:8a (ESV)

We do not know the location of this great stone. They were not far out of town when Amasa ran to catch up with them. He was supposed to be in charge of the army, but the army left without him. This does not look good for a commander.

...Now Joab was wearing a soldier's garment, and over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath fastened on his thigh, and as he went forward it fell out. 2 Samuel 20:8b (ESV)

For the first time, we learn that it wasn't just Joab's men who were in pursuit of Sheba, but Joab was there. Amasa was running to catch up to an army he was supposed to lead, whose former commander was still among them and leading them. This doesn't look good.

Joab had a short sword fastened to his left thigh. When he leaned forward to bow before Amasa, it fell out. This made him look clumsy, as if he couldn't keep his sword in its sheath.

To Amasa, even though Joab's sword was out, it appeared to him that was only because of a clumsy accident. Amasa didn't expect anything evil from Joab. After all, they were relatives. They celebrated holidays together.

And Joab said to Amasa, "Is it well with you, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. 2 Samuel 20:9 (ESV)

Is it well with you my brother? In Hebrew, that is the word Shalom. The word means peace. It is the warm greeting you give to a family member or close friend. Joab took his right hand, his fighting hand, and grabbed Amasa by the

beard to pull him close to give him the kiss of friendship. In reality, holding Amasa's head up didn't allow him to look down.

But Amasa did not observe the sword that was in Joab's hand. So Joab struck him with it in the stomach and spilled his entrails to the ground without striking a second blow, and he died. Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri. 2 Samuel 20:10 (ESV)

Joab sliced him open from bottom to top so fast and efficiently that his guts fell on the ground in front of him. He still had a beating heart and breathing lungs, but his organs were in the dirt in front of him. Amasa would die but in a horrid way. It was going to take a while. It would be gruesome with his guts hanging in front of him.

This is the way Joab treated his relative because he wanted to be back in control of the army. He was willing to kill his relative. He was willing to disobey his king so he could be in control. If you think about it, this is not the first time Joab did this.

In 2 Samuel 3, after David made peace with Abner, the commander of Israel's army under King Saul, Joab also killed Abner against David's will. He killed him in a similar deceptive way. David commanded Joab not to kill Absalom, but Joab killed him anyway. Joab has a listening problem. He claims to be loyal to the king, but he acts like he is the king. Joab is a member of the deep state.

Joab didn't shed a tear after killing Amasa. All that mattered was that he was in charge, so the pursuit of Sheba could resume. This time, it was not that simple. Amasa's brutal killing stunned everyone.

And one of Joab's young men took his stand by Amasa and said, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab." 2 Samuel 20:11 (ESV)

One of Joab's soldiers said that everyone who was for David and Joab, should follow Joab, but for the soldiers, after what Joab had done, it was no longer that easy.

And Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the highway. And anyone who came by, seeing him, stopped. And when the man saw that all the people stopped, he carried Amasa out of the highway into the field and threw a garment over him. 2 Samuel 20:12 (ESV)

We are supposed to be grossed out by Amasa wallowing in his blood. He was in agony from the irreparable wounds. Eventually, they pulled him aside, put him in a field, and threw a jacket over him so he wouldn't be a distraction to the rest of the soldiers.

When he was taken out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri. 2 Samuel 20:13 (ESV)

Have you noticed there are two rebellions taking place against David? There was Sheba, whose rebellion was the external and easily identifiable rebel. There was also Joab. He was an internal rebel who was part of David's government. He did not try to become king, yet he acted like he was the king. He claimed to be loyal to David, but he did what he wanted to do instead of submitting to David.

David's restored kingdom was a corrupted kingdom because it had a deep state led by the likes of Joab, who did what they wanted and David could not effectively reign Joab in.

Joab will continue to be a thorn in David's side. He will be a source of corruption as he pretends to be loyal but does his own thing. David couldn't get rid of him. When it came time to pass the throne to Solomon, his son, the first order of business he instructed Solomon on was getting rid of Joab, the deep-

state operative. Unless Joab were dealt with, Solomon would not be in charge, just as David was not truly in charge. , but he told his son Solomon that getting rid of him was job one if he was going to have a stable kingdom, getting rid of the deep state. Look at David's words to his son Solomon before he died.

“Moreover, you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner the son of Ner, and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed, avenging in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist and on the sandals on his feet. Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace. 1 Kings 2:5–6 (ESV)

There is a lesson here. If we do not confront our challenges, they will be passed on to those who follow us. This was a problem David should have confronted, but for whatever reason, he tolerated Joab's insubordination rather than confronting it.

Let's summarize what we learned. So far, we have seen that David's restored kingdom has pointless conflicts. It has people wounded by the sin of their leader. It has self-serving, corrupt officials running a deep state over whom David could not effectively exercise control. The next scene tells us a little more about the kind of leadership Joab brought to the table.

David's restored kingdom abused power instead of caring for people.

And Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel of Beth-maacah, and all the Bichrites assembled and followed him in. 2 Samuel 20:14 (ESV)

The good news is Sheba was not successful in leading a revolt against David. His initial persuasion of the northern ten tribes to secede from David fell apart after tempers cooled. He ended up at the city of Abel which



members of his family. That city is about as far north as you can be in Israel and still be in Israel. He was trying to get beyond the reach of David, but he was not beyond the reach of Joab, who was in hot pursuit. Abel was 100 miles north of Jerusalem.

And all the men who were with Joab came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maacah. They cast up a mound against the city, and it stood against the rampart, and they were battering the wall to throw it down. 2 Samuel 20:15 (ESV)

Joab heard that Sheba and his family were in the city. They built a pile of dirt to get an approach to the city. He built a huge battering ram and started pounding the city walls to knock them down. It was while the battering ram was pounding the ways that a wise woman called over the wall.

Then a wise woman called from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab, 'Come here, that I may speak to you.'" And he came near her, and the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Listen to the words of your servant." And he answered, "I am listening." 2 Samuel 20:16–17 (ESV)

Joab, we need to talk.

Then she said, "They used to say in former times, 'Let them but ask counsel at Abel,' and so they settled a matter. 2 Samuel 20:18 (ESV)

Joab, do you know what city you are attempting to destroy? We have a reputation for talking our problems out, not for fighting to the death. People from all over the world have come to this city to settle their disputes.

I am one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel... 2 Samuel 20:19a (ESV)

The "I" is in the emphatic tense. She claims they are not a city of troublemakers. They are a city of peaceful, loyal citizens of Israel.

...You seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why will you swallow up the heritage of the LORD?" 2 Samuel 20:19b (ESV)

We are a city that has been around for a long time. To attack us is to attack a loyal and faithful city in your own country. Joab, what are you doing battering down the wall of a city in your own country, threatening to destroy your loyal citizens?

Joab answered, "Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! 2 Samuel 20:20 (ESV)

This is ironic. Amasa, Abner, and Absalom would disagree with him on this one. He was willing to kill anyone that got in his way. Amasa was probably still wallowing in his blood under a jacket in a field when Joab spoke these words.

That is not true. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, called Sheba the son of Bichri, has lifted up his hand against King David. Give up him alone, and I will withdraw from the city." And the woman said to Joab, "Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall." 2 Samuel 20:21 (ESV)

This woman says, if all you want is one scoundrel opposing the king, this will be easy. We will send his head over the wall. His head was delivered by literal airmail.

Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they dispersed from the city, every man to his home. And Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king. 2 Samuel 20:22 (ESV)

Notice what Joab neglected to do. He neglected to tell the city's people why he was there and what he wanted. The Bible told Joab this should happen whenever the Israelites attacked a city.

"When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it." Deuteronomy 20:10 (ESV)

Joab never offered peace to the city. He never said what he wanted. He knew Sheba was in the city, so he planned to break down the wall and kill everyone in the city to get the one person he wanted. If it weren't for a wise

woman who forced him to talk, the entire city would have been killed. It didn't matter to Joab that it was a faithful city in his own country. Just as Joab casually killed Amasa to maintain his power and control, he was about to kill all the inhabitants of a city in his own country to get one person.

These two scenes about Joab were written to give us a better understanding of Joab's character and leadership style. Joab was a thug.

This chapter closes with significant words where it is easy to miss their importance.

David's restored kingdom was a corrupt kingdom.

Now Joab was in command of all the army of Israel; and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was in command of the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and Adoram was in charge of the forced labor; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder; and Sheva was secretary; and Zadok and Abiathar were priests; and Ira the Jairite was also David's priest. 2 Samuel 20:23–26 (ESV)

When we read this, it is easy to miss the significance of these words. It summarizes the leadership in David's restored but corrupted kingdom.

What makes this list significant is there was a similar list given in 2 Samuel 8 that summarized the leadership in David's first kingdom before his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. Let me read that list to you to compare the two lists.

So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people. Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder, and Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were priests, and Seraiah was secretary, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and David's sons were priests. 2 Samuel 8:15–18 (ESV)

There are two important differences in these lists that show the difference between David's initial kingdom and his restored but corrupted kingdom.

1. David was not in charge.

The list in 2 Samuel 8 began with these words.

So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people. Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army... 2 Samuel 8:15 (ESV)

Those words are missing in the second list. In David's original kingdom, David was truly in charge. David made sure things were done justly and equitably. In David's restored kingdom, was David truly in charge, or was Joab in charge? Joab was in charge! He refused to submit to David's will.

Was Joab a leader who did things justly and equitably? Absolutely not! He murdered people in cold blood who threatened to diminish his vice-like control on the kingdom. He almost killed an entire loyal city of Israelites to get only one person. David was no longer in charge, and things were not just and fair. They were about greed, power, and control.

So David's kingdom was restored, but it was by deep state operatives under him who didn't care what David thought and did whatever they wanted to stay in power and control.

There is another way

2. Slave labor was introduced.

In 2 Samuel 20, we read this line that was not present in 2 Samuel 8.

...and Adoram was in charge of the forced labor;.. 2 Samuel 20:24a (ESV)

In David's restored corrupted kingdom, the draft was introduced. The people were not drafted to serve in a war but were drafted to serve in the king's building projects. Before this, the king served the people by ensuring justice and equity. Now, the people served the king and his projects. Frequently, these

projects were not for the betterment of the people but for stroking the king's ego. They were huge building projects where the people were forced to work.

In David's restored kingdom, instead of the government serving the people, the people served corrupt leaders in the government.

When David's son Solomon built the temple, most was done with forced labor. When Solomon died and his son Rehoboam was put in place, the people asked to be relieved of the heavy burden of forced labor Solomon put on them. Rehoboam didn't handle the request well. He decided to add to the forced labor instead of diminishing it.

My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.”... Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was taskmaster over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And King Rehoboam hurried to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. 1 Kings 12:14b+18 (ESV)

This increase in forced slave labor led to the people killing the government leader in charge of it and the split of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms from that point forward.

2 Samuel 8 was a description of the order, justice, and righteousness in David's kingdom. 2 Samuel 20 was a description of a restored but corrupted kingdom filled with disunity between the people, many people who suffered for the sin of their leader, deep state operatives, and people in control who cared more about power than the people they served.

Conclusion

David was a true spiritual giant. He was a man after God's own heart. He slayed Goliath. He wrote many of the Psalms. He was anointed by God. He was

a great leader of God's people. But he was just a sinful man like the rest of us. He fell into sin like the rest of us, and others suffered.

The title of this series is "A Better King." That is because as amazing of a king as David was over God's people, Israel needed a better king than David.

We need a better king than David. Every human leader, even good ones like David, will fail us.

The good news is we have a better king. It is the long-awaited son of David named Jesus. He is the better king we can trust. Jesus' kingdom is not filled with deep-state corruption and unwise decisions. Jesus is the righteous king who ensures things in his kingdom take place with justice and equity.

Anyone who bows the knee to Jesus becomes part of his kingdom, beginning now and lasting for all eternity. Today, as you look at the corruption in all human governments and long for something better, bow the knee to Jesus. Jesus is the better king we can trust. His kingdom is one we long to join.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

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