

## The Lord's Inheritance

2 Samuel 20 - 21

Key Verse: 20:19

*"We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the LORD's inheritance?"*

Despite trying his best to restore Israel after Absalom's conspiracy, David's troubles didn't end. Upon his return, David's kingdom was threatening to dissolve into tribal conflict. At the end of chapter 19, the northern Israelites complained that southern Judah was given a more honorable place in the parade across the river. Judah responded by saying that they were more closely related to David than the Israelites, but the Israelites countered with the fact that they have more tribes. Tempers were flaring and the stage is set for open conflict. Sheba, a troublemaker, comes on the scene, who happens to be a Benjamite, a member of Saul's tribe (remember Shimei), and he starts a rebellion against David shouting, "We have no share in David, no part in Jesse's son! Every man to his tent, O Israel!" So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bicri. But the men of Judah stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem." (v1b-2) It's kind of amazing that a no-name trouble maker pulled so many men away from David. Men from the 10 tribes of Israel followed Sheba but the men of Judah stayed with David. Men come and go, and the fact that a person like Sheba could draw men to himself, even though David had led the nation successfully, defeating their enemies, shows just how much the world is very much a "what have you done for me lately" kind of place. From this we see just how much we are dependent upon God, for he is the ruler of history.

David sensing the urgency of the situation orders Amasa, his new army commander, to summon the men of Judah in three days. David realizes his appointment of Amasa was a mistake, because Amasa couldn't gather the men by his deadline. The men of Judah simply didn't respond to Amasa's command. Dreading the loss of time, David gave the commission to Abishai, and not to Joab, which probably wounded the pride of the old general. This was David's way of punishing Joab for disobeying his command and killing his son Absalom. "David said to Abishai, 'Now Sheba son of Bicri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your master's men and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities and escape from us.'" 7 So Joab's men and the Kerethites and Pelethites and all the mighty warriors went out under the command of Abishai. They marched out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bicri." (v6-7) David once again, in a time of crisis, depends upon his loyal, personal guard, a small force of fighting men, the Kerethites and Pelethites, to carry out his commands.

Along the way, Amasa joins up with them but he didn't have the discernment he needed to stay alive, let alone lead the army. As Joab approached Amasa to greet him, he faked his dagger falling from his belt, this opened the way for Joab to have the dagger out and ready for action without raising suspicion. Then Joab, with a friendly greeting, took Amasa by the beard to kiss him, which was a sign of respect and kindness, and it says that he used his right hand, which was their fighting hand, leaving the dagger in his, weaker left hand. This is why Amasa was not on his guard against Joab because he thought they were on friendly terms. Not only that, they were cousins – their mothers were sisters of David. (1Ch 2:16) Regardless of all this, with one shot Joab plunges his dagger into Amasa's stomach and spills his guts all over the ground. And

thus Joab gets revenge for losing his rank against an innocent man. I think that Joab has possibly sunk to his lowest point. He wasn't the least bit afraid of David, Amasa or his brother Abishai as he takes command of the army. In a display of defiance, after murdering Amasa, Joab leaves him in the middle of the road, wallowing in his blood, for all to see. He doesn't even give Amasa a decent burial. Joab strong arms his way into leadership. Eventually Joab will pay for what he has done, but not for the moment. And now a murderer was pursuing a traitor. Who was going to win? Since both Amasa and Joab were David's nephews, you wonder why would God let all this senseless killing happen. And you realize that this is God's righteous judgment as He fulfilled Nathan's prophecy that, "the sword would never leave David's family." (2 Sam 12:10) How tragic, David's own family members are killing themselves. And by the time David hears of it, it's too late as Joab is once again firmly entrenched as the commander of the army.

Meanwhile Sheba went through all the tribes of Israel trying to build his following. Finally Joab catches Sheba holding up in a city called Abel Beth Maacah, or Abel for short. Joab proceeds to set up siege ramps as he plans on destroying the whole city. As they were battering the wall to bring it down a woman calls out to Joab. Take a look at verses 16-17. "a wise woman called from the city, 'Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come here so I can speak to him.' 17 He went toward her, and she asked, 'Are you Joab?'" "I am," he answered. She said, "Listen to what your servant has to say." "I'm listening," he said." Besides being called wise, this woman is also courageous. In a time where women didn't have much authority or place in society, she steps forward and takes the lead. Who was she to go and talk to the commander of the army? Her name wasn't even recorded, but has enough courage to change the course of history for her city. All of us should learn something from her. We need to have courage, stand up, and take action without fear. She did it to save her city; we need to do it to make God known at IIT.

Now that she had Joab's attention, she continues in verses 18-19. "Long ago they used to say, 'Get your answer at Abel,' and that settled it. 19 We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the LORD's inheritance?" Apparently the city of Abel was famous for its wisdom and this woman sure lives up to its name. She is making a political statement to Joab and questions his judgment saying, "Are you confident that what you are doing is going to help you build bridges to bring David back? Do you really think that slaughtering innocent people that are known to be the mother of Israel will win back the hearts of the Israelites?" She really poked Joab's conscience, or what was left of it, and challenged him that he was swallowing up the Lord's inheritance. The Lord's inheritance (1 Sam 10:1) included both the people (Ex 34:9) and the land (Ex 15:17) and if Joab killed God's people, he would be swallowing up the Lord's inheritance. Joab realizing what she means, takes a step back and essentially says, "No, No, that's not the case, I only want Sheba. Hand him over and I'll leave." Wow, this woman now has the commander of the army on the defensive as he says, "Far be it from me..." She is truly masterful and displays that the tongue can be sharper than the sword, when you have wisdom from God.

Then in her wisdom she goes and has the head of Sheba thrown over the wall. Apparently Sheba was not very wise because he didn't have this woman on his side. Was it right for her to

offer Sheba's head? Was she a hero or guilty of murder? I believe that this nameless woman was the hero of the story. She was wise and peaceable, she saved many lives. It's interesting that she didn't ask if he wanted Sheba dead or alive. She didn't even ask the people in the city if this was ok. She just takes initiative and gets the job of saving her city done. I wonder where are all the men while this is going on? Through this we can learn that when we have difficulties, we have to talk things out, otherwise something bad can happen. If she didn't talk it out, the whole city would have been destroyed. Many people would have died. As Christians, we all belong to the same body of Christ, just as Joab and his men were from the same body as the woman and the people of the city. We shouldn't be enemies. When we have differences, what we need to do is talk it out. Don't be afraid to talk to someone if they have done something to offend you. Work it out. If Joab was willing to listen, then how much more should we be. So remember next time when someone offends you, don't fight but talk, and not the gossip type either.

Once Sheba's head was tossed over the wall like a volleyball, Joab sounded the trumpet and all the men left for their homes and he went back to Jerusalem. And that's it the rebellion is done. Joab, for all his problems, was an effective leader and he could carry out a task to completion. However, once again David failed to deal with a major problem. As he didn't take any action against Joab for murdering Amasa. And at the end of chapter 20 Joab appears on the list of David's royal administrators.

The events in chapter 21-24 seem not to be chronological order. The event in chapter 21 seems to have taken place after David had extended kindness to Mephibosheth and before Absalom's conspiracy. Let's take a look at 21:1. "During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought the face of the LORD. The LORD said, "It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death." David used to have victory after victory but now it is getting harder and harder to lead, rebellions are popping up, Joab doesn't listen and now famine hits the land. During this crisis, David sought the face of the Lord. I don't know why it took 3 years for him to do it but thankfully he finally did. It's interesting that this incident happens during David's reign after Saul is dead. What we learn from this is that they have to chew the wages of past sin, of Saul's sin. Time does not wear out the guilt of sin. Nor can we hope to escape it simply because judgment is delayed. We can't escape our sin because it is always before us. David understood this and he wrote this in Psalm 51:3. "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me." When I think of this it is somewhat scary that one day we will have to pay for all our sin, everything that we did in the open and in secret. And it makes me even more thankful and blessed it is to live under the grace of Jesus. It's true, we still have to deal with our sin, but we are not under condemnation but under the grace of Jesus.

The reason God was punishing Israel with famine was because of Saul's sin of trying to wipe out the Gibeonites. During the time of Joshua, Israel was removing their enemies from the land but the Gibeonites were spared destruction because of a peace treaty that Israel made with them. (Jos 9) Even though the Gibeonites deceived the Israelites into making the treaty, still Israel upheld it. Later however, Saul violated the oath when God sent him to destroy the Amelkites. (1 sam 15:3) Saul extended it to the Gibeonites, and tried to wipe them out, even though God didn't want it. Instead of repenting, Saul justified himself thinking that this is what

God wanted. In this way Joab and Saul were very similar. And it's not only them, don't we love to justify our actions instead of repenting?

In order to resolve the issue, "David asked the Gibeonites, 'What shall I do for you? How shall I make amends so that you will bless the LORD's inheritance?'" (v3) "They answered the king, 'As for the man who destroyed us and plotted against us so that we have been decimated and have no place anywhere in Israel, let seven of his male descendants be given to us to be killed and exposed before the LORD at Gibeah of Saul—the LORD's chosen one.'" So the king said, "I will give them to you." (v5-6) Seven men were chosen to pay the price for Saul's sin. To us this seems unfair, why did they have to pay for something they didn't do? However this is the nature of sin and its consequences get passed down from generation to generation. The sins of an abusive father don't affect him alone, his children must carry them as well. You may wonder why the Gibeonites choose seven men. Seven has the sense of completeness, so when they chosen seven, it meant that they would be completely avenged.

David agreed to their request but he remembered the oath he made to his friend Jonathan and so David spared Jonathan's son Mephibosheth. In the end seven men were handed over and killed that day. Two of them were the sons of Rizpah. In her sorrow, she stayed there and guarded their dead bodies from the animals day and night. It was a heavy price to pay. When David heard what Rizpah had done, his heart was moved by her and he had Saul's and Jonathan's bones, as well as the seven men, gathered up and put in a proper burial place. "After that God answered prayer in behalf of the land." (v14) The Lord sent rain upon the land and the famine was removed.

During the course of studying these two chapters, I had a difficult time. What message can we take away from these terrible events. How do these chapters connect and how is God glorified through them. I will tell you this week I earned my money, or at least I would have if I got paid for doing this, which I don't. The connection I found revolves around "the Lord's inheritance." It is mentioned in both chapters. The Lord's inheritance refers to what belongs to the Lord. So it comes down to this simply matter, are you part of the Lord's inheritance? Are you a person that belongs to the Lord? We become the Lord's inheritance the moment we believe that Jesus Christ is God's one and only Son and that He died for our sins and was raised from the dead and we put our faith and hope in him. This passage is a picture of the fallen world in which we live in. Throughout history there have been evil people, like Joab, Saul, or Sheba, doing evil things all the time. And are we going to choose to live in the darkness like them or do you want to live in the light with Christ? If we are not part of the Lord's inheritance, then it becomes survival of the strongest but if we are the Lord's inheritance then we have the Lord's protection. God is faithful to His inheritance and he answers their prayers. The Lord gave the woman wisdom because she was faithful and as a result her city could remain peaceful. The Lord answered the David's prayer to end the famine because he was part of the Lord's inheritance. At the end of chapter 21, we see how God protected David and his men even though they fought against giants, (the line of Rapha were giants) some even with 12 fingers and toes. However even though we are part of the Lord's inheritance, we must live according to the way God wants us to live. Being a part of it doesn't give us a license to do whatever we want. We have a wonderful privilege to live as God's people, we can't take advantage of that fact but must live humbly, with the heart of God according to his will and purpose. The Lord

protects his inheritance, he is faithful to his promise and he answers our prayer. I pray that you may accept God's invitation and be part of His inheritance.