

35. The Book of 2Samuel—20:1-26 Pt.1

“Rebellion, Revenge and Reason” Pt.1

(4/2/17)

As we come to 2Samuel 20 we come to the last chapter chronologically in the life and reign of David as recorded in this book (1Kings 1 & 2 records the end of his life).

The last four chapters of 2Samuel are considered appendixes to David’s life and reign.

In chapter 19 of 2Samuel, David is returning to Jerusalem to retake the throne after the revolution was defeated—the revolution that was led by his son Absalom who was subsequently killed while trying to escape.

However, not everyone was happy to see David return as king of Israel.

Let me explain the passage—and then we’ll extract some principles to apply into our lives.

I. The Passage Explained

2 Samuel 20:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ And there happened to be there a rebel, whose name *was* Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. And he blew a trumpet, and said: "We have no share in David, Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!" ² So every man of Israel deserted David, *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah, from the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, remained loyal to their king.

In the Hebrew, the word **‘rebel’** in v.1 is literally *‘Belial’*—a word that means ‘worthless’, ‘base’, ‘wicked’, and ‘lawless’.

We would say that Sheba was a worthless, wicked kind of guy who rebelled against God’s will by refusing to honor and submit to God’s king, David—the rightful king of Israel.

2 Samuel 20:3 (NKJV)

³ Now David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten women, his concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in seclusion and supported them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood.

My heart goes out to these women.

You remember, that Absalom had raped David’s concubines (secondary wives) as his first public act after entering Jerusalem (2 Sam 16:22).

David had left these ten women in the palace to watch over things when he left Jerusalem as news came to him that Absalom and his army were coming to overthrow him.

So, David’s first act upon returning to Jerusalem was to deal with the problem of these concubines.

Since they had been defiled by the rape of his son, a rebel and traitor, he couldn’t continue to treat them as his wives in good standing (as hard as that is for us to understand).

So, he decides to remove them from the palace and set them up in a house by themselves.

He made sure they were taken care of—but treated them like widows.

In other words, he had no physical contact with them and kept them under ‘house arrest’ where they were shut off from society for the rest of their lives.

The next thing David had to deal with was the problem of Sheba—

2 Samuel 20:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ And the king said to Amasa, "Assemble the men of Judah for me within three days, and be present here yourself." ⁵ So Amasa went to assemble *the men of Judah*. But he delayed longer than the set time which David had appointed him.

After the rebellion was put down, David replaced Joab with Amasa as the general of his army.

Amasa, had been Absalom’s general in the revolution—but as an ‘olive branch’ to those who had followed Absalom and as a way of saying all was forgiven—he makes Amasa his general in place of Joab (also because Joab had killed Absalom in direct violation of the king’s command).

Now, David knows that time is of the essence and that another revolution is brewing—therefore he knows that Sheba has to be dealt with quickly.

So he commands his new general to gather his troops and meet at Jerusalem within three days so that they can launch an attack on Sheba before he had sufficient time to put an army together—but Amasa doesn’t show up at the appointed time.

David doesn’t know why Amasa and his men haven’t gathered at Jerusalem at the appointed time (for all he knows he and his men have defected to Sheba and joined the new rebellion)—all he knows is that he can’t wait any longer.

2 Samuel 20:6 (NKJV)

⁶ 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 find for himself fortified cities, and escape us."

Abishai was one of David's top commanding officers, who he now orders to take his men and head north in pursuit of Sheba.

We read that Joab also goes with his brother Abishai on this mission.

Even though David removed Joab as general of his army—he still commanded the king's royal body guards (the Cherethites and Pelethites) and other mighty men in David's army.

2 Samuel 20:7-8a (NKJV)

⁷ So Joab's men, with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the mighty men, went out after him. And they went out of Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri. ⁸ When they were at the large stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came before them...

Why Amasa was late in coming to Jerusalem with his men we're not told—but as he was on his way he runs into Abishai, Joab and their men at Gibeon, which was about five miles north of Jerusalem.

Many commentators believe that Amasa wasn't up to the job of general—something Joab firmly believed as well.

He believes this because when he and Abishai fought against him when he was general of Absalom's army—they had easily defeated him even though they were greatly outnumbered.

And even though Amasa was their cousin they hated him and I believe conspired together to kill him for being a traitor to David.

2 Samuel 20:8-10 (NKJV)

⁸ When they *were* at the large stone which *is* in Gibeon, Amasa came before them. Now Joab was dressed in battle armor; on it was a belt *with* a sword fastened in its sheath at his hips; and as he was going forward, it fell out. ⁹ Then Joab said to Amasa, "Are you in health, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. ¹⁰ But Amasa did not notice the sword that *was* in Joab's hand. And he struck him with it in the stomach, and his entrails poured out on the ground; and he did not *strike* him again. Thus he died. Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri.

How could Joab be so bold as to kill David's new general—and why did David not only overlook it (for a time) but even made Joab his general again?

I believe it was because Joab had something on David—today we would say, "*He knew where the bodies were buried.*"

In other words, he knew something no one else knew about David—something that he held over his head.

This gave Joab the sense that he could defy the king and get away with it—what was this secret—the death of Uriah. (Explain)

But Joab really shows how ruthless he was by murdering his own cousin in cold blood—the man who replaced him as general of David's armies.

He kills Amasa both out of rivalry (revenge for his loss of rank) and concern that Amasa wasn't up to the job and that he did not genuinely support David.

2 Samuel 20:11-13 (NKJV)

¹¹ Meanwhile one of Joab's men stood near Amasa, and said, "Whoever favors Joab and whoever *is* for David--follow Joab!" ¹² But Amasa wallowed in *his* blood in the middle of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still [a gruesome 'gapers block'], he moved Amasa from the highway to the field and threw a garment over him,

when he saw that everyone who came upon him halted. ¹³ When he was removed from the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

It seems that Amasa didn't die right away—it's hard to imagine the cruelty that would cause someone like Joab to murder his own cousin in such a horrific and painful way—but as I said earlier, this callous murderer would reap what he had sown.

1 Kings 2:5, 31 (NKJV)

⁵ Moreover you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, *and* what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed...³¹ Then the king said..."...strike him down and bury him, that you may take away from me and from the house of my father the innocent blood which Joab shed.

2 Samuel 20:14-19 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And he went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel and Beth Maachah and all the Berites. So they were gathered together and also went after *Sheba*. ¹⁵ Then they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maachah [30 miles north of the Sea of Galilee]; and they cast up a siege mound against the city, and it stood by the rampart. And all the people who *were* with Joab battered the wall to throw it down. ¹⁶ Then a wise woman cried out from the city, "Hear, Hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come nearby, that I may speak with you.' " ¹⁷ When he had come near to her, the woman said, "*Are* you Joab?" He answered, "*I am*." Then she said to him, "Hear the words of your maidservant." And he answered, "I am listening." ¹⁸ So she spoke, saying, "They used to talk in former times, saying, 'They shall surely seek *guidance* at Abel,' and so they would end *disputes*. ¹⁹ *I am among the peaceable and faithful* in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up [Heb. is 'destroy'] the inheritance of the LORD?" (Comment)

2 Samuel 20:20-22 (NKJV)

²⁰ And Joab answered and said, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy! ²¹ That *is* not so. But a man from the mountains of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has raised his hand against the king, against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city." So the woman said to Joab, "Watch, his head will be thrown to you over the wall." ²² Then the woman in her wisdom went to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw *it* out to Joab. Then he blew a trumpet, and they withdrew from the city, every man to his tent. So Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem.

Verses 23-26 list David's cabinet—those who occupied key positions in his administration.

I. The Passage Explained

II. The Principles Extracted

A. The Rebellion of Sheba

We know definitively that Sheba was a rebel (v.1)—but why was he a rebel, I mean every rebel has a cause—something that drives them in their rebellion against—whomever or whatever.

From the story, it isn't hard for us to figure out why Sheba was a rebel.

He was a rebel because he wasn't content to live under God's will and God's rules and serve God's king (David)—he wanted power and success for himself and all the material trappings that come with it.

Discontent, as the dictionary defines it, is: *a restless desire or craving for something one does not have.*

This kind of rabid discontent can cause a person to (I'm sorry) "*lose their head*" and begin to pursue things that really don't matter and will not satisfy in life.

Isaiah 55:2 (NKJV)

² Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread, And your wages for *what* does not satisfy?...

The Bible says that everyone of us born into this world has been born with a 'God-shaped' void in our hearts—a void that only God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, can fill.

The problem is most people don't realize it is God they need to fill the void in their heart—so they often rebel against His will for their lives and pursue things like money, materialism, power, success, sexual encounters and anything else they believe will fill the void—no matter how sinful it is.

The Declaration of Independence states that all men are created equal and have been endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, and that among these are the right to *“Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”*

This means that every American has the freedom to pursue our own personal definition of happiness (as long as it is legal of course).

And because so many people define happiness as being rich, successful, beautiful, famous and popular—that's what they pursue because in their minds those things will bring them happiness.

But let's look at King Solomon for a minute—Solomon was the most magnificent king that ever lived.

Here was a man who had everything this world had to offer—he had prestige and power as king, he had riches and fame more than anyone who has ever lived.

He dined on the finest foods, wore the finest clothes, and lived in the finest palace.

He had thousands of servants to attend to his every need and hundreds of wives and concubines so that his pleasure knew no bounds

He was the wisest and most intelligent man that ever lived so much so that people came from all over the known world just to sit and hear his wisdom—I mean Solomon had it all!

If outward circumstances truly make a person happy, satisfied and fulfilled in life—then Solomon should've been the happiest man on the face of the earth.

But instead we see him write in the book of Ecclesiastes, over and over again, *"Vanity, vanity everything in life is emptiness and vanity."*

Yes, everything in life is empty and meaningless and vain—but from what perspective?—"UNDER THE SUN"—or in other words, *"life apart from God!"*

Jesus put it this way, *"A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."*

We would do well to listen to Jesus—after all He made us and knows what will fill us up and make us happy.

Jesus addressed this issue in the Sermon on the Mount—and in particular in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12).

In the Beatitudes nine times the Lord uses the word "Blessed" which is the Greek word *'markarios'*.

The word literally means *"Oh how happy"*—but not happiness as the world defines it.

This Greek word describes a person who has happiness which is rooted in the heart and not in outward circumstances—we would call it 'joy'.

You see our English word for *happy* is based on the old Anglo Saxon word *hap*, which means *chance*, as in *"whatever happens"* or *"happenstance."*

That kind of “happiness” is circumstantial—therefore, it is uncertain, temporary, and insecure.

The blessedness (happiness) of the Christian is not temporary or uncertain—it is solid and unshakable.

And right up front the Lord wanted us to know that there will be great happiness in the hearts of all whose hearts are characterized by these attitudes.

And through these Beatitudes Jesus is basically saying that it's pure foolishness to think you can fill up the void in your soul with the junk of this world—and yet how many people are feverishly trying to do that very thing.

If your marriage is lousy—go buy a new car or take a cruise (maybe you'll meet someone and that will make you happy); If you're unhappy at your job—go shopping you'll feel better.

The whole advertising industry is based on this principle that if you're unhappy in any area of your life—this product or that procedure or whatever possession will bring you that happiness.

And on and on it goes as so many are pursuing so feverishly the elusive concept of happiness when all the while true happiness is not found in a possession or in a pleasure—it's found in a Person—Jesus Christ.

Because true happiness only comes when a person fills their empty heart with God—because you can't fill an empty heart with anything this fallen world has to offer.

As one author put it, *“Jesus has come into the world to announce to man that the tree of happiness doesn't grow in the cursed earth.”*

Only Jesus can fill up an empty heart.

Isaiah 55:2-3 (NKJV)

² Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread, And your wages for *what* does not satisfy?...

³ **Incline your ear, and come to Me...Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you...**

This ‘everlasting covenant’—is the New Covenant, entered into when a person receives the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Explain)

To reject this will lead to a life of rebellion against God and His King, Jesus Christ—and that will lead to a life full of empty pursuits that often lead to an untimely death—as was the case with Sheba.

Next week, we’ll finish this message which I’ve entitled, “Rebellion, Revenge and Reason”.