

## **Ish-bosheth Murdered – 2 Samuel 4:1-12**

### **Introduction:**

David has been crowned king of the southern kingdom, but the northern kingdom is ruled by King Ish-bosheth, son of the previous king, Saul. Ish-bosheth gained his power through the strength and support of his general, Abner. Abner was not only a valiant warrior but also a leader of people. Ish-bosheth lost the support of Abner, and Abner was ready to hand the northern kingdom over to David. Before this could happen, Abner is murdered by David's general, Joab. Ish-bosheth stands alone now. He is still the king, and the people look to him for leadership, but will he be able to keep the ten tribes under his rule united? He may have the title of king, but will the people follow him? The answer is found in 2 Samuel 4.

### **Ish-bosheth and his Commanders – 2 Samuel 4:1-3**

1. How did king Ish-bosheth respond at the news of Abner's death (v. 1)? Why?
2. How did the people of Israel (ie. the northern kingdom) respond to this news?
3. Who were Baanah and Rechab (vss. 2-3)? What was their role? Why might they be introduced at this point of the story?

### **Mephobosheth – 2 Samuel 4:4**

4. Interrupting our story about Baanah and Rechab is the story about Mephibosheth.
  - a. Who was Mephibosheth? How does this tie him to the story of the kingdom?
  - b. What made him different from other people in the kingdom? Was he a threat to the throne?
  - c. How did Mephibosheth come to be crippled? How might this show God's mercy?

## **Assassinating a King – 2 Samuel 4:5-8**

5. When do Rechab and Baanah arrive at the home of King Ish-bosheth (v. 5)?  
What is the king doing?
6. What did the people suppose these two men were doing in the king's house at that time of day (v. 6)?

It is still a custom in the East to allow their soldiers a certain quantity of corn, together with some pay; and these two captains very naturally went to the palace the day before to fetch wheat, in order to distribute it to the soldiers, that it might be sent to the mill at the accustomed hour in the morning.<sup>1</sup>

7. According to verse six, what did Rechab and Baanah do to the king?
8. Verse 7 circles back to what happened in the king's chamber once again. What added detail do we get about this assassination?
9. Where did these commanders go (v. 8)? What gift did they bring?
10. What message do Rachab and Baanah deliver to King David (v. 8)?

## **David's Response to the Death of Ish-bosheth – 2 Samuel 4:9-12**

11. According to verse 9, who was David counting on to protect him and deliver him from his enemies?
12. According to verse 10, what did David do to the one who brought the news of King Saul's death? Was it simply the news of the death of the king that caused David to slay the messenger? (cf. 2 Samuel 1:16)

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<sup>1</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [\*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 197). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

13. According to verse 11, what made this assassination of Ish-bosheth a greater crime? Why?
14. What sentence does David pronounce on these men (v. 11)?
15. What happened to the young men who killed Ish-bosheth (v. 12)? Why might David have their hands and feet cut off?
16. Why is the head of Ish-bosheth buried in the tomb of Abner in Hebron (v. 12)?

### **Conclusion:**

One man stood in the way of David becoming king of all the tribes of Israel – Ish-bosheth, the son of King Saul. Once again it is at the hand of a foreigner that this rival to the throne is killed, for Rachab and Baanah were from Beeroth, a city not within the tribes of Israel but united to them in a time of need. The historian who recorded these events wanted everyone to know that not only was David not responsible for these deaths, but it was not even from the hand of their own people.

These men thought they were helping David get to his goal of being a king. What they failed to realize that this was not David's goal so much as it was the path God had put David on. David was willing and ready to wait for things to unfold in God's way in God's time.

Have we ever been guilty of playing the role of Rachab and Baanah? We think we know what is best for someone so we set things up and prepare the way for what we think will be their success? Maybe it is the father who gets the son into the school he thinks the son should attend. Maybe it is the arranged meeting of a really nice guy by mom. Maybe it is a job the folks think their daughter should have despite her mentioning a call to go to the mission field.

Proverbs 16:9 in the New Living Translation reads: "We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps." This is the way things should go. May we, like David, be able to wait to see what the Lord says is next instead of insisting on our way, or on our timing.