

# The Revolt of Sheba

2 Samuel 20

## Lesson Outline

### I. Sheba Disruptive: 2 Samuel 20:1-13

A. Dangerous Person: 2 Samuel 20:1-3

B. Delayed Pursuit: 2 Samuel 20:4-13

### II. Sheba Defeated: 2 Samuel 20:14-26

A. Assault: 2 Samuel 20:14-22

B. Administration: 2 Samuel 20:23-26

## Sheba Disruptive

2 Samuel 20:1-13

### *Dangerous Person: 2 Samuel 20:1-3*

#### Sheba's Character

Sheba was immediately called a man of Belial. It implies worthlessness and is a term reserved for wicked ungodly men. As will be seen, he proved to be a lawless man that produced division in the nation. It is possible Sheba followed Absalom and hoped to keep the throne from David. Sadly, many chose to follow another questionable man, proving their character was as ungodly as his.

He was a Benjamite, which was the same tribe Saul was from (1 Samuel 9:1-2). Like Shimei, he may have held a grudge against David (2 Samuel 16:5). Saul's family and tribe struggled to submit to David's leadership. Perhaps they missed the privileges of being associated with royalty or were filled with pride (Psalm 86:14).

#### Sheba's Conduct

The leaders of Israel were upset at Judah over the way David returned to the throne, believing they were slighted by not being involved. This perceived slight turned into an argument, which led to bitterness. Interesting, an argument over who cared for David most turned into a split. Sheba took advantage of the situation. Dangerous men often use troubling times to advance their cause and one ungodly man can wreck havoc in a church or nation (Proverbs 16:27). Sheba spoke for the people and proclaimed his purpose.

1. *Sheba separated from David* – they had no part with David, implying David was not concerned with them or their issues. This was nonsense but the people agreed and quickly went from ten parts with David to no part (2 Samuel 19:43).
2. *Sheba insulted David* – they had no inheritance with the son of Jesse, implying David could favor Judah because the rest would leave him. He referred to David as a common man and not the king.

Every man of Israel followed Sheba. These men had foolishly aligned with Absalom, pledged allegiance to David, and then quickly went after Sheba. This is a reminder of how easy it is for people to follow what is trendy instead of what is correct (Psalm 1:4). The nation remained divided and David returned to Jerusalem where he dealt with the results of Absalom's rebellion. He pardoned his concubines whom Absalom had molested but confined them for the rest of their days. David did provide for their needs and protected them from others. His incorrect conduct continued to produce trouble (Galatians 6:7-8).

### **Delayed Pursuit: 2 Samuel 20:4-13**

#### **Amasa Stumbled**

With Sheba aggressively looking to divide the nation David ordered Amasa to assemble the men of Judah. The new captain was given three days to gather, organize, and prepare the troops for war. This was his first test under David's leadership. The inexperienced Amasa left but failed to return at the appointed time. We are not given the details but there are a number of reasons why he might have struggled to meet his deadline.

1. *Inability* – maybe he was overwhelmed with the responsibility. Amasa failed Absalom on the battlefield.
2. *Initiative* – maybe he took his time to gather the troops. Amasa was inexperienced.
3. *Intrigue* – maybe he delayed on purpose to hinder David. Amasa proved to be a traitor when he joined Absalom.
4. *Instability* – maybe the men did not accept or respect him as a leader. Amasa had yet to prove to the men he was qualified to lead them.

Amasa's delay forced David to change his plans. David concluded the wait would endanger their chances against Sheba so he ordered Abishai to lead the men. Notice, Abishai became David's military counselor, apparently Joab was demoted below him as well. Acting with a sense of urgency, David wanted Abishai to pursue Sheba before he had time to settle in a fortified city. Abishai left immediately, along with Joab whom may have led a smaller unit. David was a man of action, who would not fail because others delayed. The Bible challenges believers to live actively, not in laziness (Proverbs 6:6-8, 24:33-34).

**Amasa Slain**

Amasa met Abishai and the troops in Gibeon, which was located north of Jerusalem in the tribe of Benjamin. There he assumed command of David's men. It is possible, though unlikely, that he caught up with Abishai. So, why was he in Benjamin when he was directed to rally the men in Judah?

1. *Amasa was incompetent* – he became lost in his mission to gather the troops and found himself north of Judah. Not likely.
2. *Amasa was investigating* – he was testing the waters, seeing if the tribe of Benjamin completely followed Sheba. Maybe he had good intentions or perhaps he once again considered aligning against David.

Either way, Amasa conveniently met the men at Gibeon instead of returning to Jerusalem at the appointed time. Others may have given Amasa the benefit of the doubt, but not Joab. He situated his coat and belt so they would not be in the way of his sword, then approached Amasa. As he went, his sword dropped out, probably by design so he could grab it without producing any alarm. Referring to Amasa as his brother, he cordially asked about his health like a good friend would. He then grabbed his beard in order to kiss him and Amasa suspected nothing. The grabbing of the beard was an affectionate gesture that brought the man closer to embrace.<sup>1</sup> The cunning Joab took advantage of Amasa's trust and quickly smote him with his sword.

1. *It was effective* – he needed to do nothing more.
2. *It was bold* – he did this before all the men.
3. *It was rebellious* – he acted against David's appointed leader.
4. *It was cowardly* – he gave Amasa neither notice nor opportunity for defense.

Amasa was not an innocent man and may have appeared suspicious. None of this justifies Joab's actions, he could have secured Amasa and sent him to David but Joab proved to possess a murderous heart. Having treated Abner in a similar fashion, the second time with Amasa was probably easier (2 Samuel 3:27). Sin can desensitize people until their hearts are calloused. The Bible tells us this will be the case in the last days (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Joab immediately took the lead of the men and set off after Sheba. David's political move with Amasa produced two problems – a disqualified man led the army and a disgruntled man was set aside. Eventually the situation would be too great for David to control. Perhaps David failed to consider the consequences of his decision. There will always be a result to our actions (Galatians 6:7-8).

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<sup>1</sup> John Lange, "Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Samuel," (Michigan: Zondervan, 1951) p. 552

## Sheba Defeated

2 Samuel 20:14-26

### Assault: 2 Samuel 20:14-22

#### City Surrounded

Joab diligently pursued Sheba until he found him in Abel of Bethmaachah in the northern part of Israel (2 Kings 15:29). The army besieged the city, casting up a bank. This was a military maneuver against fortified cities. They placed ground up against the walls in order to throw rocks and other missiles into the city.<sup>2</sup> After filling in the trench and battering the walls, the city was ready to fall.

It was at this time a wise woman called out from within the city. She asked to speak to Joab and her request was granted. The woman pleaded for the city.

1. *The cities past* – it was a city known for wisdom and leadership, apparently settling local issues.
2. *The cities peace* – it had no quarrel with the nation and its citizens were not troublesome.
3. *The cities prosperity* – would Joab destroy a city and a mother in Israel? She implied Joab was acting in haste without seeking peace first (Deuteronomy 20:15).
4. *The cities position* – would he swallow up the inheritance of the LORD? Sheba may have been wicked but the city belonged to Israel. In destroying the city, Joab would be attacking God's nation.

The implication was the destruction of this city would hurt the nation as a whole. This woman provided a good argument that caused Joab to consider his conduct.

#### City Spared

Joab made it clear he had no ought against her or the other inhabitants but was there to capture Sheba, who had revolted against the king. The city was about to be overcome because they harbored a dangerous traitor. Their protection of the divisive Sheba generated adversity. Be careful whom you associate with (Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 1:10, 4:14). If Sheba was captured or executed, the city would be spared. The people could live in peace if they removed the trouble from within (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). It was made clear the city's good conduct was no reason to protect a criminal (James 4:17). He may have struggled with personal matters, often seeking vengeance through bloodshed, but as a leader Joab was shrewd.

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<sup>2</sup> John Gill, "Gill's Commentary on the Bible: 2 Samuel," (Bible Truth Forum: E-book, 2005) p. 259

The wise woman promised to deliver Sheba to Joab. Armed with wisdom and Joab's promise to leave, she influenced the inhabitants of the city to turn over Sheba. After Sheba was executed, Joab ended the siege, returned to Jerusalem, and reported to David. The biggest problem appeared to be communication. The citizens believed Joab and the army wanted to destroy their city, while he believed the inhabitants favored and followed Sheba. It took a wise woman to intervene and straighten the matter out. As soon as they were on the same page, they worked to assist each other (Proverbs 3:13). Once the city dealt with the criminal, they found peace. Today sin is accepted or ignored so it should not be surprising that we also find turmoil and troubles (James 1:13-15).

### **Administration: 2 Samuel 20:23-26**

#### **The List**

This is an updated account of David's leaders. The first list was a record of David's staff during the glorious years of his reign (2 Samuel 8:15-18). The second list included David's leaders after he returned to Jerusalem following the revolts of Absalom and Sheba. It is important to notice that David was surrounded with good leaders. His reign prospered because the LORD blessed him with a strong administration. Be grateful for the friends God has brought into your life (Proverbs 17:17).

#### **The Leaders**

1. *Joab* – captain of the host

After removing Amasa by taking his life, Joab remained David's top military leader. Apparently David made no attempt to remove him from the position. Perhaps replacing Joab would create more problems, maybe he was too popular to replace, or nobody else qualified. At times he was disobedient, but Joab proved to be a successful captain.

2. *Benaiah the son of Jehoiada* – oversaw the Cherethites and Pelethites

It is believed they were the royal guards and maybe the police force in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 23:22-23). These men proved to be faithful to their king. Benaiah continued in his post and appears to have had a long career (2 Samuel 8:18; 1 Kings 1:38).

3. *Adoram* – oversaw the tribute, the treasurer

This appears to be a new office. It was probably established as they expanded the borders and collected tribute from the people. He apparently remained in office until the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:18).

4. *Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud* – recorder

He continued in office throughout David's reign (2 Samuel 8:16).

5. *Sheva* – scribe

The office remained but a new man filled it. The previous man, Seraiah, was either dead or replaced.

6. *Zadok and Abiathar* – the priests

These men were dedicated servants of the LORD. They were a great blessing to David and the nation (2 Samuel 8:17).

7. *Ira the Jairite* – chief ruler about David

This appears to be a position similar to a Prime Minister. Perhaps this was Ahithophel's former position as David's leading counselor.