

Death of Ishbosheth

2 Samuel 4

Lesson Outline

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Assassination of a Royal

2 Samuel 4:1-8

Dangerous Situation: 2 Samuel 4:1-4

Ishbosheth's Weakness

Ishbosheth found about Abner's death in Hebron, maybe through a messenger or from a friend. If he was unaware of Abner's meeting with David, Abner's death must have come as a great surprise. The man he trusted with the military of the nation was murdered in the city of the enemy. Questions like what was he doing there and why was he meeting with David probably crossed his mind. There is nothing more perplexing than an untrustworthy friend (Proverbs 25:19).

Ishbosheth was weakened, his hands being referred to as feeble. It was evident that Abner was the power behind Ishbosheth. Abner placed him on the throne while encouraging the people to follow after him. Because of this, Ishbosheth placed his trust in Abner, and with Abner gone he lost all hope (Psalm 118:8; Jeremiah 17:5). Ishbosheth occupied the throne but was never called the anointed of the Lord. He was an imposter seeking to take a throne that rightly belonged to someone else.

1. *Incorrect place* – he was in a position he had no right to occupy.
2. *Incorrect person* – he was unfit and unqualified.
3. *Incorrect power* – he was not blessed because he lacked the LORD'S direction.

The Israelites were troubled because their mighty captain was dead, their king was weak, and their future looked dim. David and Abner were close to uniting the nation when Joab threatened the peace with his vengeful act of murder. How the nation would move forward was questionable.

Uncertainty often produces fear. Never forget, in times of trouble the LORD provides confidence to live for Him (Psalm 27:1-6).

Ishbosheth's Situation

Two of Ishbosheth's men lost confidence in his ability to lead the nation and took it upon themselves to operate. They conspired to commit an incredibly foolish act of rebellion.

1. *They were captains* – they were military minded men commissioned to serve and protect Ishbosheth. Evidently, they followed Abner's rebellious example.
2. *They were brothers* – Baanah and Rechab were sons of Rimmon a Beerothite of Benjamin, the same tribe as Ishbosheth.

Beeroth was under the jurisdiction of the tribe of Benjamin, but reserved for the Gibeonites, who deceived Israel in Joshua's time and secured a treaty with God's people (Joshua 9:19, 18:25). Saul violated the treaty and slew many Gibeonites, which ultimately resulted in famine for Israel (2 Samuel 21:1-6). It is ironic that Saul's dynasty would officially end at the hands of two men associated with Gibeon (Galatians 6:7-8).

At this point Jonathan's son Mephibosheth is mentioned. He was lame due to a tragic accident, which rendered him unable and unfit to lead or assist Ishbosheth. Mephibosheth was five years old when the accident occurred, making him twelve when the events of this chapter unfolded. Recognizing Saul's house was weakening, the assassins may have hoped to speed up the decline. There was no need to intervene because things were rapidly unraveling for Ishbosheth, but being opportunists they took advantage of the situation hoping to be rewarded.

Deceptive Deed: 2 Samuel 4:5-8

Captains Slew Ishbosheth

The captains made their way to the king's residence at about noontime, perhaps knowing he would be relaxing in his bed. They entered the royal house pretending to be after wheat. As captains they might have been securing rations for their men, which was common in those times. It was a deceptive plot, with these men using their ability to be near the king in a manner that was treacherous.

After gaining entrance, the two brothers made their way to Ishbosheth's room where they found him resting. It appears they were not hindered or questioned in the process, apparently due to their positions of leadership. Finding Ishbosheth in his bed, the captains quickly smote him under his fifth rib, in the abdomen. Apparently Ishbosheth never saw it coming and was unable to defend himself. It was done swiftly with the two brothers able to escape without notice.

Captains Informed David

Baanah and Rechab, two men appointed to care for the king, slew him then rapidly fled the city traveling throughout the night in a hurry to get away. They went from Manahaim to Hebron, which was

a distance of about 70 miles. Knowing their deed was wicked they hoped to escape without being caught.

The two captains arrived at Hebron, found David and gloried in their conquest believing they had performed a good deed. They were greatly mistaken (Numbers 32:23).

1. *They assumed it would please David* – they forget or ignored the kind words of David concerning Saul.
2. *They assumed it was of the LORD* – they did not seek the LORD and no direction was given from Him. The brothers took it upon themselves to perform the LORD'S work.

The captains probably expected to be rewarded and praised. Perhaps they hoped David would prepare a feast or write a song in their honor. Instead they became examples of the dangers of pride, which often gives false assurance and leads in a foolish direction (Proverbs 11:2, 16:18). They proudly acted independently hoping to be in the LORD'S will. To them it appeared to be good but in reality it was a poor decision. It is dangerous to act without seeking the LORD in prayer or consulting His Word (Psalm 105:3, 119:11; Proverbs 28:5).

Accountability Required

2 Samuel 4:9-12

David's Response: 2 Samuel 4:9-10

David Remained Calm

David addressed Baanah and Rechab. He did not ignore their wicked deed but wisely looked into the matter. Before handing out his decision, David called upon the LORD as a witness. David trusted the LORD and looked to follow His ways (Psalm 18:2, 37:5). The LORD had been faithful to David, redeeming him from his troubles (Psalm 34:22, 71:23). It is important to note that David believed the LORD was able to take care of his life. He did not need to take the throne by force and required nobody else to do it for him. It is one thing to talk about faith and another thing altogether to live by faith. David's actions displayed his trust in the LORD.

David's Reminder

David brought up the situation of the Amalekite who slew Saul to the attention of these two brothers (2 Samuel 1:1-16). The Amalekite went to David with tidings of Saul's death, claiming to have been responsible for it. He believed David would be ecstatic with the news and planned to be rewarded. His actions were very similar to Ishbosheth's captains.

Instead of being rewarded, the Amalekite was slain for his action against the king. He mistook David for a man of vengeance, probably believing David was like himself. He mistakenly thought David would go to any lengths to secure the throne. David ordered the Amalekite executed because he

claimed to murder Saul. By now, the two men probably realized their great mistake. David was not a man that condoned or rewarded wickedness.

David's Direction: 2 Samuel 4:11-12

David Explained the Wickedness

The execution did not occur until sufficient reason was provided. David made it clear they were guilty due to their wicked action. This was not the act of a reckless leader but punishment handed down from the King of Judah.

1. *They slew a righteous person* – Ishbosheth, being their king, should have been respected because of his position. Ishbosheth had done them no harm and threatened them in no way.
2. *They slew a defenseless person* – Ishbosheth relaxing on his bed, perhaps sleeping, was unaware of the danger and unable to provide a defense.

Baanah and Rechab were guilty of murder. Their sinful act was punishable by death (Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:12-14; Leviticus 24:17).

David Executed the Assassins

David issued an executive order for the two brothers to be slain for murdering Ishbosheth. His decision was based upon the facts and their own testimony. David made an example of these two men, perhaps to show justice had been done to the killers of Ishbosheth. It became evident David was innocent in Ishbosheth's assassination. The execution also served as a deterrent to others that would think of acting in a similar fashion. All knew that David would not tolerate treachery and would justly punish assassins.

In a kind gesture, David honored Ishbosheth's remains. He did not have to do this but did so out of the generosity of his heart. This deed probably came to the attention of Israel's leaders and may have encouraged them to look to David as king.