

This is a most powerful message for the Spiritual growth of the Church. It will show our people the woes of stepping outside the bounds of Christ's Grace. It will cause many to refrain from continual sinning. It will sharpen their determination to walk by His Spirit and not by the lusts of the flesh.

Died Abner As A Fool Dieth?

By Tom Stephens

All scripture is from the King James Version

And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him." (2 Sam. 3: 32-34) [1]

No man wants it said at his funeral that he "died as a fool dies", yet that is exactly what King David said when Abner, a mighty warrior was buried. Why would he say such a thing?

The story begins when David fought alongside Abner with the armies of King Saul. With them were other mighty men of war including Joab and his brothers.

We all know the story of King Saul and how God rejected him in favor of David. We know how David fled from the palace when Saul turned against him. Years passed with David eluding Saul, yet all the time helping the nation of Israel. Many men came to help David and from them he molded an army.

Finally the time came for David to assume the throne promised him by Samuel the prophet when he was just a boy. Saul had died in battle. It would seem the time was right. Still David did not want to get ahead of God. He prayed asking, "Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?" David's family was from the tribe of Judah and his greatest following was there. God told him, yes, go to Hebron. There David's followers crowned him the king over Judah. The other tribes would continue to follow the house of Saul, crowning Ishbosheth as their king. Abner remained in Israel and became the commander-in-chief of the military. In Judah, Joab assumed that position for David, setting the two one-time friends against each other in the war that ensued.

You would expect it to be a one-sided battle with David leading only one tribe. But many fighting men believed in David and so they came from all over Israel -- more than 300,000 of them to fight at David's side.

David Anointed King Over Judah

When David inquired of the Lord, and said *"Shall I go up unto any of the cities of Judah?"*

The Lord answered, and said, *"Go up"*.

And David said, *"Whither shall I go up?"*

"Ye shall go up unto Hebron".

II Samuel 2-4 describes the reign of David from Hebron.

Ishbosheth Made King Of Israel (2 Samuel 2:8-11) [1]

"But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel." (2:8-9) [1]

"Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months." (2:10-11) [1]

Israel At War With Judah (2 Samuel 2:12-3:1) [1]

In the telling of this awful set of events, the Word of God reminds us: Israel and Judah should have been as one. Yet, we see hearts of steel against each other; kings against kings, and family against family. Terror never ends among those who are divided, yet are intended to be “one in Christ”.

“And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim in Gibeon. And Joab the son of Zeruijah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

And Abner said to Joab, *“Let the young men now arise, and play before us.”*

And Joab said: *“Let them arise.”* (12-14) [1]

This was not play as we know it, but serious skirmish—a small war designed to *not* destroy a larger group. Men will listen to, and hear, orders which come down from the leadership. Without hesitation, they will obey the orders given whether or not the order appears to be wise.

Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which pertained to Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. And they caught everyone his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow’s side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkathhazzurim, which is in Gibeon. And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

Judah had won the battle that day but as Abner fled, Asehel, the younger brother of Joab, pursued him.

“And there were three sons of Zeruijah there, Joab, and Abishae, and Asahel: and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe. And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

Asahel ran so fast he soon caught up to Abner but Abner did not desire to slay the young man. First he told him to take the armor from a dead soldier so he would at least have a fighting chance. Asahel refused. Then Abner pled with him to go back.

“Turn thee aside from following me” wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? How then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?”

Still Asahel refused and in self-defense, Abner turned and with his spear, he killed him.

Abner knew what would happen. As Asahel’s brother, Joab would take on the role of the avenger of blood and set as his goal, the death of Abner. Under the law, until there was a trial to establish his guilt or innocence and the priest died, Abner could only be safe from Joab in a city of refuge.

The cities of refuge had been established when Joshua was the leader of Israel. They were to provide a place of safety for those who had killed someone accidentally or like Abner, in a time of war. Hebron, where David ruled, was such a city. (see Cities of Refuge: Numbers 35:11-15; Joshua 20)

Abner realized the strength of David’s military and knew he could not defeat them so he called Joab, asking: *“Shall the sword devour forever? Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?”*

“And Joab said, *“As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brethren.”*

“So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any

more. And Abner and his men walked all night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

“And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David’s servants nineteen men and Asahel. But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner’s men, so that three hundred and threescore men died.

“And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulcher of his father, which was in Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker. (2 Samuel 2-3:1) [1]

Abner Joins Forces With David (2 Samuel 3:6-21) [1]

As the Bible said, it was obvious to a man like Abner, David was getting stronger. It was just a matter of time until he ruled over all Israel. But strangely enough it was a false accusation against Abner by Ishbosheth that caused Abner to turn to David and he determined not just to go to David himself but to turn Israel to him as well.

And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, “Whose is the land?” and, “Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.”

And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, “Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you: Now then do it: for the Lord hath spoken of David, saying, “By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.”

And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin. So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. David made Abner and the men that were with him a feast. And Abner said to David, *“I will arise and will gather all Israel unto my Lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.”*

But Abner had forgotten about Joab and his quest to avenge his brother’s death. Once he left the safety of Israel and came over to Judah, he would only be safe while within the walls of the city of refuge, Hebron. So, when Joab realized Abner had come over to David’s city, he was very angry.

Then Joab came to the king, and said, *“What hast thou done? Behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is now gone? Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thou coming in, and to know all that thou doest.”*

David was confident that Abner was not a spy and awaited his return to Hebron.

What’s Happening: (2 Samuel 3:26-39) [1]

Joab is now angry at David and saw his opportunity to avenge his brother’s death by sending word to Abner to return to Hebron, behind David’s back: *“And when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak quietly to him, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel, his brother.”*

And afterward when David heard about it, he said, *“I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord forever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner: Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father’s house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.”*

So Joab, and Abishai his brother slew Abner because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

David Mourns Abner's Death (2 Samuel 3:31-39) [1]

And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, *“Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner.”*

And King David himself followed the bier. And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king lamented over Abner, saying,

“Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put in fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou.”

And all the people wept again over him. And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David swore, saying,

“So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down.”

And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people. For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.

As long as Abner remained in the city of refuge, he was safe. Though he left with the King's permission, he had stepped outside its protection.

As people of God, He is our refuge. As long as we keep His Word and follow His commandments, we remain in His protection. When we begin to disobey and follow our own ways, we take ourselves out of His plan for our life. We do not honor God in the decisions we make and He can no longer protect us.

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” (John 15:4-6) [3]

As a nation, we have told God, “We do not want you in our schools; we do not want you in our government; we do not want you in our marriages.” Our choices have taken us out of God's provision and we have seen the enemy attack us on our own soil, we have seen economy distress and we have seen unparalleled natural disasters and who knows what is to come next.

Hear what Peter had to say: *“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* (2 Peter 1:1-11) [4]

Let us remain close to God so that when we die, no one can say we “died like a fool dies”. But rather let it be said, as did the Apostle Paul, *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* (2 Tim. 4: 1-9) [5]

Resources:

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2 Samuel 2-4 – This Study [1]

Joshua 20:1-9 – Cities of Refuge [2]

John 15:4-6 – “Abide In Me [3]

2 Peter 1:1-11 – Servant and Apostle [4]

2 Tim 4:1-9 – A Good Fight [5]

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