



THE COMMUNITY

David's Kingship Begins | CIVIL WAR BETWEEN JUDAH AND ISRAEL

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

2 Samuel 2:1-5:5

This lesson has a lot of drama packed into three chapters. There is a divided kingdom, a sneaky con-artist, a cutting betrayal, a false sex scandal and vicious murders. Sure sounds like it could pass for a soap opera. These chapters show God's people in an extreme state of brokenness. The kingdom has split and David is the king of Judah and Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, becomes king of Israel. David must be wondering how much longer until he really will be the king of God's people! This section, more than anything, gives us a framework for how we should pursue God in our own lives. If we seek to make ourselves, or others, our god, we will fall flat on our faces. This narrative should point us to Jesus. If we look to Him, our great King and Leader, we will be strengthened and see God's promises come true.

David Anointed King of Judah; Israel Revolts (2:1-32)

After David finished his lamentation for Saul and Jonathan, David went up to Judah where he was anointed king over the house of Judah. The house of Judah is the southern portion of the area known as Palestine to us today. The house of Israel is the northern part. The men of Judah told David that some men from Jabesh-gilead buried Saul. David was pleased with these men. Here, again, we see David's heart to love and bless Saul, not curse him, despite the wicked plans Saul had for David. After David blesses the men he says, "Let your hands be strong, and be valiant" (v. 7), for now David is king in the land and wants the men to be able to trust him as an honest, righteous ruler.

In every kingdom, there is a bad apple. In Israel, it's Abner. Instead of submitting to David as God's anointed king, he decides to try to keep Saul's lineage going. He takes Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, and makes him king over all Israel. This is a grave sin on Abner's part. Instead of looking to the God who has been so faithful to the Israelites, he selfishly turns elsewhere. The rebellion doesn't end there; in verses 12-32 we read about the battle between Abner and Israel and David and Judah. Abner murders Asahel and flees from David's army. That's a good choice because David's army killed 360 of Abner's men. David only lost 19. The lesson here is that when we turn to God as our only King, He will protect, provide for and defend us. Show your group the blessings of turning to God, like David, even if it's not the popular thing to do.

Abner Joins David; Joab Murders Abner (3:1-39)

[Continued >>](#)

What's the Big Idea?

After lamenting the death of Saul and Jonathan, David becomes king of the southern portion of Israel (Judah) and faces civil war with the northern tribes of Israel. This narrative shows God establishing David's kingdom in a way that foreshadows His establishment of Christ's kingdom.

What's the Problem?

Though God keeps promises, we tend to doubt His faithfulness and rebel against Him to become our own king instead of submitting to Jesus.

David's Kingship Begins | Civil War Between Judah and Israel

Even though Saul has been dead for a while, his concubines play a vital role in chapter 3. Ish-bosheth accuses Abner of sleeping with one of Saul's concubines. Abner is greatly offended and has a sudden change of heart concerning David. The accusation has made Abner so upset that he vows to do whatever he can to turn the kingdom over to the house of David. He knows that God has promised David the kingdom. He even tells Ish-bosheth, "For the LORD has promised David, saying, 'By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and from the hand of all their enemies'" (v. 18).

Even though Abner has switched camps, Joab (Asahel's brother) does not care. He is frustrated with David: "You know that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you and to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing" (v. 25). Well, we will never know what Abner's motives and intentions were. Joab sent for Abner to speak with him privately and then he murdered Abner when they were alone. David is crushed, yet he declares, "I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the LORD for the blood of Abner the son of Ner" (v. 28). How did David prove his innocence? He mourns Abner's death, singing another lament at his grave in verse 33. It became clear to the people that David cared for Abner and did not wish him harm. In fact, David does not even wish harm upon Joab. Instead, David looks to the Lord for vengeance. "The LORD will repay the evildoer according to his wickedness!" (see Ps. 28:4; 69:24; 2 Tim. 4:14).

The Murder of Ish-bosheth; David Anointed King of Israel (4:1-5:5)

There were two men who were members of Saul's army but were opposed to Ish-bosheth being king and evidently were fans of David. They go to Ish-bosheth's house, pretending to get wheat, and murder him on his bed. They behead him and bring his head to David. These men thought they were doing something righteous, but they took matters into their own hands. David, still showing his heart for God, is appalled. God had brought him out of every adversity – he didn't need mere men to help his cause! David commands that these men be punished by death for doing what God should only do – taking vengeance. Your group should easily be able to see David's continual heart for God's glory, honor and power. David knows that God is in control and we should leave matters of justice and wrath in His hands, not ours.

Our lesson ends with David being anointed king of Israel. Finally, God has brought David to his rightful place as ruler over the whole kingdom. In verse 2, the LORD said to David, "You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel." Lead your group to see that this points to the great Shepherd of God's people, Jesus. God made a covenant with David that is ultimately fulfilled in God's promise to bring salvation to his people through Christ. God has brought us peace through "the Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant" (Heb. 13:20).

What's Our Response?

We need to trust in God's ability to fulfill his promises and establish His will and kingship in our lives.

David's Kingship Begins | CIVIL WAR BETWEEN JUDAH AND ISRAEL

What Are the Questions?

2 Samuel 2:1-5:5

Launch

When are you most likely to despair of God's ability to work His perfect plan in your life?

Explore

Read 2 Samuel 2:1-11.

1. What does David's seeking of the LORD suggest about the establishment of his kingdom in Judah?
2. Although Abner knows God's promise that David would be Israel's king (see 2 Samuel 3:18), he makes Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, king of northern Israel. What conclusions do you draw from this?

Read 2 Samuel 2:12-32.

3. What does it say about Abner that he instigates a bloody conflict with David and his men?
4. What happens as Asahel pursues Abner in battle in verses 18-23?
5. how does the conflict resolve?
6. What is the net result for David's men and Abner's men?

Read 2 Samuel 3.

7. What do verses 1-5 say about David in the midst of

this civil war?

8. What happens to cause a rift between Abner and Ish-bosheth?
9. What does Abner do to make good on his promise?
10. What does Joab do when he realizes that David has made a pact with Abner, and how does David respond?

Read 2 Samuel 4:1-12.

11. What happens to Ish-bosheth in this section?
12. How do these men justify their actions in verse 8?
13. How does David respond to the actions of these men?

Read 2 Samuel 5:1-5.

14. What happens in this section?

Apply

15. At the beginning of this section David quietly becomes king in one town out of a nation. By the end of this section, David's kingdom has grown to envelop all Israel. Read Matthew 13:31-32. How does David's kingdom compare with the kingdom of David's greater Son, Jesus Christ?

16. Read Psalm 2:2. How does Abner's opposition to God's kingdom, expressed in David, form a picture of others over the centuries who would oppose God's kingdom in similar ways?

17. Read Matthew 16:18. How does the inevitability of David's kingdom despite all sorts of opposition expressed in 2 Samuel 2-5 compare with the inevitability of Christ's kingdom being established?

18. Just as Abner was more intent on establish his own reign than submitting to God's reign through David, we have the same tendency. Where do you see that tendency in your life?

NOTES:

David's Kingship Begins | CIVIL WAR BETWEEN JUDAH AND ISRAEL

What Are the Answers?

1. David seeking the LORD, God leading him to Hebron, and the people anointing him king of Judah there suggests that it was God's plan for him to become the king, which fulfilled his promise in 1 Samuel 13:14 and elsewhere.
2. Abner ultimately opposes God's kingdom and wants his own.
3. It suggests that he's concerned with increasing his own power and influence and doesn't care about much else.
4. Abner warns him not to keep pursuing him, but Asahel won't relent. So Abner kills him.
5. Abner suggests that they stop fighting because of all the bloodshed, and Joab, David's commander, agrees.
6. David was missing 19 men, but 360 of Abner's men died.
7. He grew steadily stronger, evidenced by his amassing of wives from various places, which was a sign of power in the ancient near east.
8. Ish-bosheth accuses Abner of having sex with his father's concubine. Abner is offended and vows to use his influence to deliver the kingdom of Israel into David's hands.
9. He goes to the elders of Israel and tells them they should seek David to be king over them. Then he goes to David and offers to deliver Israel in allegiance to him.
10. Joab kills Abner and David mourns his death, making it clear to the people that he had nothing to do with his death.
11. He loses courage when he finds out that Abner has been killed, and two of his men assassinate him.
12. They suggest that they're doing the work of the LORD.
13. He has them killed, seeing that they are wicked men who killed an innocent person in his own bed.
14. The northern tribes of Israel come to David at Hebron, acknowledge God's promise that he would be king and anoint him king over all Israel.
15. They both grow subtly and sometimes indiscernibly, but it eventually becomes huge.
16. Even though Abner knew God's promise and choice of David to be king, he was more intent on establishing his own kingdom than submitting himself to God's reign. History is filled with similar examples, and we all have this tendency within us.
17. Both are destined to happen, but Christ's kingdom is much more glorious and is eternal.
18. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

And the LORD said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.'

2 Samuel 5:2



"The Community" is a small group material created by Cru. We'd love to hear your feedback on this study. Please write us at publishing@cru.org. No part of this publication may be digitally reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, without the prior permission of Cru.