

We begin the last chapter with a divided kingdom. One of the sons of Saul, a guy by the name of Ishbochef, had been installed to be Saul's replacement after Saul's death, installed by Abner his general to replace Saul as the king. And then Abner stayed on. He was Saul's general, and he remained as Ishbochef's general as well.

And then on top of that, Ishibosheth and Abner as the general, they had eleven of the twelve tribes throwing their support behind King Ishibosheth. On the other side of things, you had David with that one little leftover tribe, well it was a big tribe, but one tribe out of twelve, the tribe of Judah that had thrown their support behind David as the king. And then David had assigned his nephew Joab to serve as the general of his army. And then something quite unexpected took place.

It's amazing sometimes how such normal and ordinary human events can change the course of history. It so happened that King Ishibosheth got the wild and crazy idea that he should accuse Abner, his general, of sexual relations with one of Saul's concubine widows. And needless to say, Abner did not take too kindly to that. He did not confess that it was true.

He did not deny that it was true. In fact, he just sort of skirted the issue and got angry, which is a very unsanctified unsanctified man kind of thing to do, right ladies? I'm sure you've met some in your lives. It's a very unsanctified man thing to do when faced with complicated emotions.

Forget it all. Don't want to deal with it. Don't want to think about what I'm feeling. Definitely don't want to talk about what I'm feeling, so I'm just going to get angry.

That's kind of the channel for all of the male negative emotions outside of Of course, sanctified people wouldn't act like that, but outside of sanctification. But he did not like that accusation very much at all. That accusation was enough to make Abner angry enough at Ishbochev that he would meet up with David, switch his allegiances, and then influence the eleven tribes that were supporting Ishbochev to come on over with him to David's side, and we read about that last week in our study. At this time, there was a complication.

It looked like everything was lining up perfectly for David. This general Abner is promising to deliver the remaining 11 tribes to him, but unfortunately, Joab, the general of David's army, David's nephew, he was out on a raid when all of this was happening, when Abner came in and pledged allegiances to David, and when he found out about it, he was none too happy because Abner had killed Joab's brother, Asahel, also David's nephew, in battle, it's another thing that we've studied. So just as Abner left David to go and get the 11 tribes, he already had their commitment, he was just going to go get them and bring them to David, and he didn't get very far just about one or two miles out of town before Joab caught up with him. And under disguise, under the pretence of pretending that he had a secret that he wanted to whisper to him.

He pulls him aside and he runs him through the gut and kills him. So Abner dies at the hands of Job. And that could have wrecked everything for David. I mean, that definitely could have caused the 11 tribes to say, forget about it.

We thought we could trust David. This is pretty nasty stuff. general, killed our general, and that was a guy that they really deeply respected. Abner was like, he was the big dog of the 11 tribes.

He held a lot of influence over them, and with him dying like that, it was a very possible thing that David would lose all of that support, get that close to it, and then just lose it because of some knucklehead, his nephew, that decided to take matters into his own hands. But fortunately for David, as we finished up that chapter, we saw that all of Israel, the Scripture told us, all of Israel realized that it was not David's intent, it was not his doing, it was not a state-approved decision, if you will, to kill Abner, that it was indeed a rogue agent acting on his own. So the pressure is off. The 11 tribes, they are going to come

over to David's side.

But that has not happened yet. That is yet to happen. So that's how chapter, that's how the previous chapter, chapter 3 ends with the 11 tribes getting ready to come over to David's side. And now in chapter 4, we're going to start to see that movement.

It won't happen tonight. All the 11 tribes won't join up with David tonight. That will be chapter 4, chapter 5, if you're curious. Pardon me.

So yeah, actually, if we get to chapter 5 tonight, right, we'll see that in chapter 5. It won't happen in chapter 4 though. That's what I meant to say. And it's not going to take us very long to get through chapter 4 because this is yet really one chapter, just a handful of verses that's devoted to the spiritual lesson about vengeance.

And it's one we have had, seemingly constantly, as we've studied through 1st and 2nd Samuel, we just keep getting that lesson again about, you know, don't take matters into your own hands, leave vengeance to the Lord. And then on top of that, the big verses that do appear in chapter 4, we've actually already studied them in pretty good detail as we have come across them in previous studies and needed the information from this chapter to fill out the stories. So we're going to get through chapter 4 very quickly. And let's go ahead and get started in that.

We read in verse 1, when Ishmael Sheth saw a son, heard that Abner had died at Hebron. His courage failed, and all Israel was dismayed. And that was because what are you going to do without Abner? If you're Ishmael Sheth, if you're the 11 tribes, what are you going to do?

without Abner. Abner was the man. He was the glue. He was the experienced general that gave, and that's crazy to say, but he was the experienced general that gave the 11 tribes a shot against David and his one tribe.

They needed Abner desperately. So without him, you know, on top of that, he's really the power behind the throne of Israel. So without him, then And things are very much in limbo for Ishibosheth and the 11 tribes of Israel. We read in verse 2.

Now Saul's son, that would be Ishibosheth, had two men who were captains of raiding bands. The name of the one was Ba'ana, and the name of the other, Rahab, sons of Ramon, a man of Benjamin from Be'erot, for Be'erot also is counted part of Benjamin. The Be'erotites fled to Get'ayim and have been sojourners there to this day. Verse 4, Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet.

He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. And his nurse, his nanny, took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth. And we already talked about this verse as the subtext for our study in 1 Samuel chapter 31.

It was a very tragic accident. It all began with the defeat of Israel by the Philistines. They routed them. And during that defeat, That was the battle where Saul and three of his sons, including Jonathan, were killed.

And as that news got to the surrounding towns, they all knew that this was really, really bad news. I'll read that verse to you again. This is 1 Samuel chapter 31 verse 7. It says, When the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and fled and the Philistines came and lived in them.

So when those towns got the news, Saul was just killed in this battle against the Philistines. Three of his sons were Jonathan included, a very respected man within the nation. Israel's been routed. They're either dead.

Israeli soldiers, they're either dead or they've run for their lives. And when those towns got that news, they just instantly all picked up, packed up and left their towns because they knew that the Philistines would be coming and that their lives would be at risk. So in the course of that, Jonathan's nanny grabs his son, she was watching his son while he was at battle, and either she tripped and fell on him or she dropped him but in her haste to sort of pack up and move out to Fleetown, Jonathan's son hits the ground and then is from that point on permanently disabled by that accident. Well, chapter four gives us that introduction to the son of Jonathan Mephibishev.

And it's just a placeholder introduction. We're not going to learn anything more about Mephibishev in this chapter nor in the next chapter. It won't be until chapter 9 that the story of Mephibosheth comes back into the biblical text. So this little placeholder introduction is simply to say, hey, I want you to meet this guy right now, get used to hearing his name, because in a little bit there's going to be a really good story about him, and it's going to be one that you're going to want to know and learn from.

And again, that'll be chapter 9. So reading on, verse 5. Now the sons of Ramon, the Be'erotait, Rahab, and Ba'ana set out, and about the heat of the day they came to the house of Ishbosheth as he was taking his noon day rest, I think me and Ishbosheth would have got along pretty well. This guy was a napper, he was very fond of his midday siestas, so I think smart guy.

verse 6, and they came into the midst of the house as if to get wheat, and these guys, they were military leaders, so this was usual, and this was totally acceptable for them to do, that would not arouse suspicions at all, it was really perfect cover for them if in fact they were wanting to sneak in and harm Ishbosheth in some way, hint, hint, hint. Verse 7, when they came into the house, as he, and that would be King Ishmosheth, as he lay on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him and put him to death and beheaded him. They took his head. Did we read the rest of verse 6?

No, we didn't. Okay. In the midst, go back to verse 6, let's start that over. This might take a while to get through chapter 4 tonight now, if we're losing ground.

Verse 6, and they came into the midst of the house as if to get wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach, then Rechab and Ba'ana, his brother, escaped. Verse 7, when they came into the house as he lay on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him and put him to death and beheaded him. They took his head and went by the way of the Arabah, which is basically the Jordan Valley and that's pretty much everything from the Mediterranean, pardon me, the Sea of Galilee down the Jordan River all the way to the Dead Sea. And it's on both sides of the Jordan River, so it's on Israel proper, the west side of the Jordan, but also Israel improper, that on the east side that was settled by the two and a half tribes.

So that's basically the region that we're talking about. They went that way, the way of the araba, all night. So obviously they're delivering the head of Ishbosheth to someone as proof that Ishbosheth is dead, and who do you think is going to get the head of Ishbosheth? Any ideas?

I'll just tell you this much. They're delivering it to someone that's really not going to want it and is going to be righteously indignant over it, so I don't know if that helps you to figure it out or not, but let's keep going. We'll get to it very quickly. Verse eight.

And brought the head of Ishbochef to David. Very dumb idea. They brought it to David at Hebron and they said to the king, here is the head of Ishbochef, the son of Saul, your enemy who sought your life. David's thinking, yeah, I think I remember that.

Didn't need need to tell me that. But they say, the Lord has avenged my Lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring. So David, we have a gift for you. We have solved all of your problems.

You are going to love us. So if you thought your gift giving was bad, maybe this makes you feel a little bit better about it. It's not always the thought that counts. It's definitely not the thought that counts in this case, in this case what counts is that you're delivering the decapitated head of one of Saul's sons to a guy that actually loves Saul in spite of the fact that Saul has spent the last decade plus chasing after David trying to kill him, didn't matter.

David still loved the guy Saul radically. He certainly loved his sons and because of that You know, this was this just deep down honor and respect and revered for that family and support for that family that David was committed to, and you're handing him the head of one of Saul's sons. Like what in the world were they thinking? The only thing I can think is that they didn't know David like at all.

If they thought that this was something that was going to please him, they didn't know him at all. Now before we read on, I want to point out that these two Stooges here notice how they frame this very spiritually. They say this, they say, the Lord has avenged my Lord the king, referring to David. That's the spiritual language they wrap this in.

David, God has been good to you today. God delivered the head of King Ishbochef to us, and now we get to give it to you. This is the final victory that you need to sit on the throne. Well, no, that is not the truth of the matter.

The Lord didn't do this. They're trying to credit him. Actually, what they're doing is blaming him for their wrongdoing. The Lord didn't do this.

This wasn't God's vengeance for David. This was just two opportunistic men acting on self-interest. There is a great quote from St. Augustine that says, When evil men seek to do good in their own understanding, they become instruments of destruction. And that's what we're seeing here.

They've got promotions and kickbacks in mind. We're thinking, when we give the head of Ishmael Sheth to David, and that's the final win for David, man, we're going to be like right hand and left hand of David. We're going to get very good positions within the nation. He's probably going to throw gold coins at us.

This is going to be awesome. They're thinking about promotions and kickbacks. And I just want to say that as a Christian, this is something that we need to be very careful about. I know this is a repeat lesson, so I won't be exhaustive in the repeat lesson, but just don't be too quick to say, God said and God did.

That drives me nuts. It just drives me nuts when Christians do that. Every decision they make with their mind, well, God said, God told me God did. It's not always God said and God did.

If it's God said and God did, then awesome, give God credit by all means. Don't be afraid. I don't want you to be self-conscious about getting that wrong. Oh Lord, was that really you?

I better spend a few weeks praying about that just to make sure that was you. I don't want to have you all self-conscious about it, but we do need to be careful about what we credit God as having said or having done because we are going to give an account for everything we say and that includes even the idle words, you know, like conversation. You aren't focused and too hard on. You're just kind of shooting off the cuff with a close friend.

You didn't expect anyone to ever get word of that conversation. The Lord heard that conversation. The Lord hears when you're crediting him for something he didn't do, and it's not a big deal so long as you're not making selfish choices, decisions, and then trying to use God as a justification to others to kind of say to them, well, this decision is good because it was God. And what I'm doing here, it's okay because God said, we can't use that as an excuse for the selfish things that we do in life, the bad decisions that we make, because we're going to answer for that.

Thank the Lord for grace. I don't think he's going to kick you out of heaven if you're saved. And you've credited him with some very poor choices that you've made through selfish ambition having credited God with it. I don't think he's going to kick you out of heaven for that, but we do have to answer for those things.

So be careful with that. Just make sure. If you say God said, make sure God said. If you say God did, make sure God did.

First nine. So David answered Rychab and Ba'ana, his brother, the sons of Ramon, the Be'erotai. I'm glad that's the last time I have to read that. As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life out of every adversity, and if they've even got a half a brain among the two of them, right now they know they're already in trouble because they know this conversation is not going in a good direction because Here's what did David just say.

David just said, I've never had to take vengeance into my own hands. God has always been the only Avenger that I have ever needed. And so that's a notification to them. I think David's going to be pretty upset with us actually.

Not happy. I don't think that promotion is coming. I don't think the gold coins are coming. I think David's a little irate and you know this by now David was a firm believer in Deuteronomy chapter 32 verse 35 you know that verse that the apostle Paul quotes in Romans 12 verse 19 that God requires his servants to let him handle every needed act of vengeance that takes place in your life.

You know, the verse says, vengeance is mine, says the Lord, I will repay. Don't you do it. Don't you take matters into your hands. You let me do that.

And we've seen this over and over that when David has had the opportunity to avenge himself against King Saul, he lets it pass. He doesn't go through with the act of vengeance himself. I mean, these were moments that would be very tempting, I think, for any of us if we were in David's position, it would seem at times like the Lord just did all of these miraculous things to deliver the head of Saul right to the guillotine, and all that David would have to do is pull the rope, but David never pulled that rope. Maybe that's a good line for you to get down in your notes on this, to sort of add to the lessons that we've had on vengeance.

So I'll give that to you in a statement, and this is of course spiritually speaking, that even when God delivers the heads of your enemies to the guillotine, don't pull the rope. Don't pull the rope. You let God make the decision on whether He pulls the rope or not, because God did all the rest of the work to deliver your enemy to the guillotine, so if God wants to take your enemy out, then he'll pull the rope. You're never going to have to pull that rope.

In fact, you never should. And the truth is, you need to let God decide to either finish that as an act of vengeance or to bring a peaceful resolution to that situation because only God can exact perfect judgment. That's why I say it that way, exacting perfect judgment. We can't exact perfect judgment.

We can attempt judgment, and they're going to be failed attempts at perfect judgment. But God doesn't attempt perfect judgment. He exacts perfect judgment. He's the only one that can be trusted to do so.

And the truth is that a lot of those times when the Lord delivers up the heads of your enemies in the guillotine for you and then hands you the rope, it's not really meant for you to pull the rope. meant to test you, right? It's always a test. Those were tests for David, you know, having the opportunity to kill Saul, primo opportunity two times, one in the cave when Saul had to go to the bathroom and he picked the wrong cave to do it in.

David had him dead to rights. He could have killed him then sleeping in the middle of their encampment and David sneaking in to the middle of that encampment and standing over the sleeping body of Saul. They're just perfect opportunity to attempt vengeance, but we're always best to let God exact vengeance. And don't be surprised if you get those opportunities and you find out indeed, just as in David's case, those were tests, and you need to pass that test and let the Lord do what He chooses to do.

He may take that moment to give you vengeance from your enemies, but more likely than not, what he's going to do is take that opportunity to bring peace to all the parties involved in that situation. What would you expect? Christ is the Prince of Peace. So he's likely to take those opportunities and once you pass the test and drop the The rope, he's more than likely to restore the friendship, the relationship that was there.

And again, what would you expect? Because Christ is the restorer of broken relationships. He died on the cross so that our broken relationship with the Father could be restored. Verse 10, when one told me, this is still David speaking, of course, when one told me behold Saul is dead and thought he was bringing good news I seized him and killed him at Ziklag which was the reward quote-unquote that I gave him for his quote-unquote news now we've referenced this the verse before as well when we were in chapter 1 verses 1 through 16 you know this is all about some oblivious Amalekite that found out he came upon Saul who lay dying on the battlefield but wasn't quite dead yet and he brings the news back to David that Saul was dead and Saul's three sons he's the one that delivered that news and in the process of delivering that news he informs David that he was actually the one that killed Saul that put Saul down for good and of course it was at the request of Saul but nonetheless he's delivering that news to David David Saul asked me to so I ran the sword through him I I killed him.

I put him to death. And this is the verse where we find out what his intentions were and that his intentions were not to, you know, in delivering this news to David to please David, which would have been bad enough, but his intentions were actually completely selfish. So that made it even worse. Again, just as the two guys we are studying about in this chapter with that oblivious Amalekai, what was his deal?

He was hoping to get a massive reward from David. He was hoping to get some kind of good position within the kingdom or some financial gain from it. Maybe house and land, maybe a position within David's administration, maybe a Walmart gift card something, right? Surely David's going to reward me if I give him the news that I put Saul down.

But once again, David wasn't pleased just as in this story. And so David ordered that oblivious Amalekite's execution. I know verse 10 makes this sound like he did it himself. That's a king's right.

When you've ordered someone else to do something, you can claim it. You know, that's a king's right to do that. Yeah, I did that. I defeated that nation.

I made that decision. So King's right. He says, I did this, but really he ordered someone else to kill that Amalekite. And so that's what happened.

And David is now fixing to do the same thing to the oblivious. No, pardon me, not the oblivious Amalekite. He He already did that to these two Stooges that we're reading about in 2 Samuel chapter 4, verse 11. How much more, that's what I did in the previous situation that's very similar to this one, how much more when wicked men have killed a righteous man in his own house, not on the battlefield, in his own house on his bed shall I not now require his blood at your hand and destroy you from the earth, verse 12, and David commanded his young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet and hang them beside the pole at Hebron, but they took the head of Ishmael Sheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner at Hebron.

Now I think they went a little bit overboard, but that's just me. David had done what David had done, and probably when he told this story in the future, he would say, I did that. I killed the guys that killed Ishmael Sheth. So you have to ask the question, right?

Isn't that attempting vengeance then? Like by killing these guys for vengeance, aren't you doing the same thing? Aren't you now taking vengeance into your own hands by executing them? The answer is no.

Very far from it. You You know, really think about this. It's the same situation that we had last week. The two Stooges killed in cold blood here.

This was not a battlefield. This was not a justified situation. They killed in a premeditated manner with no good legal reason. They did so in cold blood and that makes them cold blooded murderers.

So now it becomes a legal issue because the law of Moses tells you what to do with cold blooded murderers, and that is execute them. So by having these two stuges killed, David is not taking vengeance into his own hands. In fact, he is properly administrating the law of Moses, the law according to Moses given by the Lord in the book of Exodus. So okay, that is the end of chapter 4.

So a half hour in, this is where we would move on to chapter 5 now. We would have plenty of time for it, except that I made a promise to you all last week because you sat through an hour long Wednesday night teaching. I promised you this week would be shorter. I also mentioned something about ice cream cones, and I'm going to deliver on both of those promises.

I mean, granted, the second one I really didn't promise, but I'm considering it a promise. So what we're going to do is we're going to pray and dismiss, and we're going to go downstairs to the Anchored Fellowship Dining Hall for some ice cream cones. We'll call this the Biden basement buffet or something like that, because this is where we shirk the responsibility of what we should be doing and go do something that we definitely should not be doing, like eating ice cream in the basement. I was joking by the way when I put on the title screen chapters 4 through 7.

You all got trolled tonight. If you actually believed that I was going to do, yeah, you got trolled pretty bad. You know something's up any time I put that we're going to attempt more than two chapters. You just know something's wrong here, this isn't happening.

So no, that was definitely a joke. I do have one more announcement before we dismiss and go have some ice cream and that is the next Wednesday night is not going to be a normal Bible study. going to be a prayer and worship night. I want to try to have at least one of those each year.

So when you come next Wednesday, expect that to be somewhere around an hour long service of prayer and worship. Tammy is going to be here on Wednesday night. I booked her. She's not even charging us.

She's going to be here to lead. I'll be doing something probably playing a guitar or something to that effect. So yeah, plan for that and invite some folks, bring them with you. And it's going to be, I believe, a very rich and rewarding evening together next Wednesday night.

Alright? For those of you on a carnivore diet, I'm sorry about the ice cream. I mean, I can't eat ice cream with you all tonight. I am sorry about that too.

Believe me. But I do have some barbecue pork rinds down there. If you're on the carnivore diet, I know. We're just pitiful.

We're just sad. We're very limited. That's about the only snacking we can do. So we'll have to live vicariously through you ice cream eaters tonight.

Let's stand. Let's pray.