

Ishbosheth is Murdered

Call to Worship: Psalm 75

1st Scripture: 2 Samuel 3:22-39

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 4:1-12

Hymn Insert- *Here I am to Worship*

Hymn Insert- *Blessed Be Your Name*

Hymn Insert- *By Faith*

Introduction:

Abner had covenanted with David, to bring all of Israel under David's reign. However, Joab, apart from David's consent and knowledge, in seeking to avenge the death of his brother Asahel, murdered Abner, in cold blood. When David had found out about what Joab had done, he cursed Joab's house, and greatly mourned for Abner. The people of Israel, hearing of the severity and sincerity of David's mourning, knew that David was innocent of Abner's murder, and they were well pleased with David, who was soon to become their king.

However, before this great event takes place, something happens to Ishbosheth, Saul's son (and Israel's present king), which David neither planned nor expected. This morning, we will fix our attention on the murder of Ishbosheth, and how David handles the matter.

I. Ishbosheth is Murdered

"When Saul's son heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost heart, and all Israel was troubled" (vs. 1). Obviously, Abner was the one who held things together; he was the backbone of Israel, as it were, and Ishbosheth was a puppet king (as we have said in the past). And so, when Ishbosheth had first heard about Abner's death, he lost heart, because he knew that the strength of Israel, which he had hid behind, was now gone. He was vulnerable, and without the protection of Abner. Israel, at first, was troubled as well, because they had sent Abner off to meet with David, on peaceful terms, seeking to make David king. And if David had done this to Abner, what then could they expect regarding the covenant they wanted to make with David? Would David now come in, and take the land by force, harming the people, who had originally followed and supported Ishbosheth? And so, naturally, they were troubled. They sent Abner there on peaceful terms, and now he was dead.

However, as we saw last time, once the mourning of David (over Abner) was pointed out to Israel, their fears were alleviated. They knew then that David had no part in the murder of

Abner. In chapter 3:37, we were told, "For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's intent to kill Abner the son of Ner."

That said, verse one of chapter four, shortly precedes the end of chapter 3, showing that, at first, Israel did not know that David had no part (or intent) in the murder of Abner. And it is probably this fact, that helped motivate the events that follow, in verses two and following, in chapter four. In other words, brethren, more than likely, Ishbosheth's betrayers and murderers, thinking that David had ordered the murder of Abner, had formulated a plan to kill Ishbosheth, thinking that David would not only spare them (and approve of their act of murder), but furthermore, he would reward them. And so, their loyalty to Ishbosheth, went right out the window, when a so-called, "personal golden opportunity" had arisen, now that Abner was dead.

"Now Saul's son had two men who were captains of troops. The name of one was Baanah and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin. (For Beeroth also was part of Benjamin, because the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been sojourners there until this day.)."

Clearly, the author, here, as he has just done in the case of Abner's murder, wants to ensure that his audience knows for certain, that David had nothing to do with any of these murders. In the first case, Joab, though commander of David's army, murdered Abner without the knowledge and consent of David, as a means of avenging the death of Asahel. And now, in the present case, these two brothers, were themselves, from among the Benjamites. They were entrusted captains in Ishbosheth's army. What is about to transpire then, is an inside job, and not a conspiracy, organized by David, in any respect at all. And David's handling of the matter will, in fact, further confirm this.

Following the introduction of these men, we are given somewhat of an odd insert into the text, at least at first glance. It almost seems out of place, but there is, at least, one good explanation, for the seeming intrusion: "Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was lame in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel; and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth" (vs. 4).

Here, we are introduced to Jonathan's son Mephibosheth, and we are told how he became lame. Later on, David will exercise great kindness and grace toward Mephibosheth, but why are we told about Mephibosheth here, of all places? It would seem to be the case that Mephibosheth

is mentioned here, as a means of explaining why no one would have attempted to make him king, following the death of Ishbosheth. He would be the only viable possibility, at this point, but his permanent malady, would have prevented him from being an option. And so, it is as if the author is saying, "Even when Israel had first thought that David was behind Abner's murder, following what happens to Ishbosheth, Mephibosheth was the only person left who could have potentially been elevated to the throne. But his lameness would have prevented the people from doing this." And furthermore, this would have helped motivate Ishbosheth's murderers to go forward with their plans without any fear of recourse, because the avenger of death, and the only remaining threat to their lives (from Saul's household) would have been a cripple. And so, they had little to fear from Saul's house, and everything to gain from David's..at least, so they thought.

"Then the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out and came at about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, who was lying on his bed at noon. And they came there, all the way into the house, as though to get wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. For when they came into the house, he was lying on his bed in his bedroom; then they struck him and killed him, beheaded him and took his head, and were all night escaping through the plain" (vs. 5-7).

And so, these two men; brothers, who were entrusted with a great responsibility in Ishbosheth's army, had gone into Ishbosheth's house, in broad daylight, so as to kill Ishbosheth. They pretended to be getting wheat, and found Ishbosheth lying in his bed (probably faint of heart, over all that he had heard happened to Abner). And there, we are told, they stabbed him in the stomach, and cut off his head, and escaped with his head, with the intention of carrying it to David, as evidence that they had killed him, so that they might be finely rewarded. Interestingly enough, in a very real sense, this murderous act was not unlike what Joab had done to Abner. It was a cold-blooded act of murder. Only, in the case of these two men, it was a treasonous, cold-blooded act of murder. Had they considered, even for a moment, that such an act of disloyalty and treason, toward their present king (who trusted them enough to promote them to their present military posts), might not settle well with the new king, whom they were trying to please? And so, off they went, escaping through the plain, with the king's head, looking forward to some great promotion and reward from David.

"And they brought the head of Ishbosheth to David at Hebron, and said to the king, 'Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul your enemy, who sought your life; and the Lord has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul and his descendants'" (vs. 8).

And so, after rolling Ishbosheth's pale, bloody head, across the table, as it were, the two brothers gasp a sigh of relief, having made it safely to David, and say, "My lord, the king, great news! Here is Ishbosheth, Saul's son's, head! Remember how Saul, your enemy, sought your life? Well, this day, conveniently through our hands, the Lord God has avenged you of Saul and his servants! And hmmm...oh, we take cash!" Little did these men know that they had just jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire! Consider David's response:

"But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, 'As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life from all adversity [*"Didn't need you; God has been taking care of things all along"*], when someone told me, saying, 'Look, Saul is dead,' thinking to have brought good news, I arrested him and had him executed in Ziklag--the one who thought I would give him a reward for his news" (vs. 8-10).

Here, David, referring to the Amalekite messenger, who had claimed to have performed a "mercy killing" on Saul, confirms what we had said, when we worked through that passage, namely, that the Amalekite was really looking for a reward, and David saw right through him. And he likens that event to the present one, in saying this. And then he adds:

"How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous person in his own house on his bed? Therefore, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and remove you from the earth?" (vs. 11)

"If, in the case of King Saul, I had arrested and executed a man for seeking to exploit Saul's death unto his own gain, how much more will you be executed, for unrighteously murdering a man, who has done no wrong, and that, in his own home and bed!?"

"So David commanded his young men, and they executed them, cut off their hands and feet, and hanged them by the pool in Hebron" (12a).

David has them immediately executed, and then strung up, with their hands and feet cut off, so as to disgrace them, while setting them up as an example, for all others to see. These men were cursed, being hung on a tree and mutilated, for their terrible and unjust crime. And here, David would set a mark; a sign, as it were, showing what will happen to those who attempt like atrocities. And so, their vile and shameful death, would also serve as a deterrent, during David's

reign. David had very literal respect for betrayal and disloyalty, and though he had proven himself consistently loyal to Saul (even when he was trying to kill David), David, will yet, experience such a horrible betrayal, even from one of his own sons, and a very close friend and counselor, in due time.

"But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner in Hebron" (vs. 12b). They honored Ishbosheth, in so far as they could, by burying his head in Abner's tomb. And so ends this final and tragic event, preceding David's ascension to the throne of all Israel.

II. Concluding Thoughts and Applications

Having walked through the text, brethren, let us then close with a few relevant thoughts and applications:

1) As a general principle, recognize that an individual, who is willing to harm someone else, in order to impress you (or seek your favor), will, more than likely, be willing to harm you, in order to impress (or seek the favor of) someone else. In the case of David, even aside from the sheer evil of murdering a man in cold blood, the sons of Rimmon had exposed their own utter untrustworthiness to David, simply by the fact that they violated their entrusted loyalty to Ishbosheth. How could David ever turn his back on these men, knowing what they had done to their former king, when it was to their own supposed advantage?

Now, we might be tempted to say, "Ok, that makes sense with David, but how in the world can this ever apply to us? We are not kings or queens, and when will someone murder or steal or commit some other crime, attempting to win our favor?" Well brethren, here is where this comes into play, especially with us. Consider the horrible and ungodly vice of gossip, which all of us have stumbled into and upon, at one time or another. If you know someone, who is fond of sharing negative information with you, about other people, who are not present, rest assured, they will not think twice about doing the same thing to you, if they think it can esteem them in the eyes of others. Let us be cautious and careful with how we handle information, especially personal information, in the church. Let us be prepared to call the gossip out, and to lovingly correct them, for the sake of Christ, and the unity, which He calls for, in the church. If we allow it to go unchecked; if we allow the virus to incubate on our watch, don't be surprised when it infects you. Gossip is the fruit of a heart that is not right with God, and so it will ultimately spare no one, when it is regularly practiced. Again, regarding the issue of loyalty in general, let

us be very cautious of ever forming an alliance with those who have proven disloyalty to others, and especially for our supposed sake. Such people are ultimately out for their own good, and more than likely, if the benefits are tempting enough, they will break loyalty with you, and whatever data they have gained in their friendship with you, will be spilled out, in the presence of others. David, not only dealt with a great injustice, on the part of the sons of Rimmon, he further nipped in the bud, a potential problem that could backfire on him later, when he is most vulnerable, perhaps laying in his bed, in his own home, as well.

2) Notice again, friends, the utter foolishness of living as if God does not exist. We have seen this, over and over again, in Scripture. And we will continue to see it in the times ahead. And you will always see it, all throughout Scripture. One of the recurring themes of Scripture, in fact, is, "recognizing the foolishness of living life as if God does not exist." Friends, these are living examples given to us, so that we can learn from them, and avoid the paths they chose, as we walk through the same brief corridor of life.

Friends, there is a sovereign God, who looks upon all that we do and say and think, and He is determined to bring about justice. He doesn't shout aloud every time we violate His Law. He is patient. He waits and waits and waits, until the appointed time of His justice is met, and then He deals with us accordingly. Abner set up Ishbosheth to be king, contrary to the revealed will of God, who had anointed David to reign, after Saul. And where are they now? Where are Abner and Ishbosheth, who have organized this rebellion. They both met the knife, quite suddenly and unexpectedly; one near the gate, and the other on his own bed. The sons of Rimmon murdered Ishbosheth, in order to win David's favor. And they escaped and they made it to David. They could taste the reward, as they exposed the head of David's opponent, to David. And they thought they were safe...but God was watching, wasn't He...the whole time. And blood was on their hands. With their hands, they shed blood, and with their feet they escaped, but in the end, they hung from a tree, without hands or feet, a curse and a sign for the time, and for all future generations.

Will you continue to live life as if God does not exist; as if your judgment is not impending and even long overdue, from a legal standpoint? Don't test God's patience. Don't take His visible silence as a sign of His indifference over the matter. If you are not His (in Christ), then He is angry with you every day; indeed, He must be, and His wrath presently abides on you. And, in less than a moments time, He can sweep you away with the breath of His

mouth; with a mere thought, and with no effort at all, on His part. Will you tamper with a Holy, infinite and eternal God, for even a moment longer? Oh friend, if I told you to put down a thousand dollars on a flipped coin, letting you choose heads or tails in a gamble, you would shutter, and say, "No, I will not risk the loss of a thousand dollars, even at the odds of 50%!" But why then do you gamble with your life for another day; why do you delay a sincere pursuit of Christ, for another moment; why do you spin the loaded barrel, yet another day, when eternity hangs in the balance? The richest person in hell, if he could come back, would give everything (everything!) he had, to live his life over, as a worm, scuttling through the puddles for an entire lifetime, if he could avoid the terrible misery of his present station. Oh friend, repent of your sins today! Acknowledge your sins before the God, who sees, and flee for refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only God given remedy for sinners!

3) Take special note of Davids words in verse 9, "As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life from all adversity..." What was David saying, by this statement? "I refuse to strive to prosper my cause by the arm of the flesh. My faith and trust are in my God, and in His perfect timing, He will accomplish all of His will for me!" The sons of Rimmon had taken it upon themselves, for selfish motives, to remove Ishbosheth, and that in an unjust and unrighteous way. David did not want, desire or require that kind of help. He wasn't looking for the short cut, especially if the short cut was to be accessed through any door of wickedness. And so, these men did no favor for David, in any respect. His confidence and his hope were set upon the God, who has redeemed him already, on several occasions, from all adversity! Brethren, let us strive to emulate, develop and cultivate such a faith within our own hearts. Our God is real. Our God is Omnipotent and He is sovereign! And He will act on our behalf, but we must be ready to wait upon Him, in accordance with His time table. We must be prepared for the long haul, treasuring His fellowship, and the simple joy of knowing and pleasing Him, above any and every other desire that we might have, which is secured within the four walls of this short life span!

AMEN!!!

The Lord's Supper!!!