

34: Joab Murders Abner

Notes for 19 Oct

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Read: [2 Samuel 3:22-38](#)

Last week we read that Abner, Saul's powerful military general and the man who put Ishbosheth on the throne, went over to David after a falling out with Ishbosheth over a dispute about one of Saul's concubines. Abner had promised to give all of Israel to David after he got affirmation from the Elders of Israel that this was what they wanted. David and Abner negotiated over a meal together and David sent Abner away in peace, his only requirement being that Abner bring Saul's daughter Michal, who Saul had promised to him, with him.

Note from Pam: My apologies for last week. I thought we were supposed to discuss the issues around Michal being taken away from her husband this week, but I did not read the passage properly. My apologies to Andrew; we should have discussed it last week. I found this part of the story somewhat cruel though.

This week we look at the circumstances of Abner's murder. Joab and his men return from a raid and is not happy to hear that Abner was there while he was away and nothing happened to him. He goes to David and accuses Abner of being a spy.

Joab acts without David's knowledge when he brings him to Sirah and there murders him in revenge for his brother Asahel. When David does hear of it, he is very unhappy with Joab and Abishai. David declares that the house of David is guiltless of Abner's blood and curses Joab and his descendants.

David then demands that Abner is properly respected through mourning and a proper funeral service. David even writes a lament for Abner. David shows his grief by refusing to eat among other things. The people are pleased by David's actions and understand he was not involved in Abner's murder.

The passage ends with David highlighting his powerlessness against the violence of the sons of Zeruah and asking the Lord to pay them back for what they have done.

I chose to focus on the main characters in this passage.

Joab

We know Joab had a grudge against Abner because of Asahel. This casts a different colour on his accusation that Abner was there to spy (verse 25). And yet he uses deception to get Abner alone where he can kill him (verses 26, 27).

1. What do you think of the way Joab spoke to David in verse 24? Compare to verse 39.
2. Why do you think Joab went behind David's back?
3. Do you think Joab was justified in killing Abner?

(cont)

Abner

Last week we discussed about how powerful Abner was in Israel. Abner appears to have acted in good faith when he was with David and when Joab called him back (verse 26).

4. Why do you think Abner went alone with Joab?
5. Was he too trusting or do you think he was arrogant, not thinking he was vulnerable?

David

In verses 22-23, David sends Abner away in peace: they had just made a good deal, so it makes sense to me to send Abner away in peace. David is not interested in any kind of vengeance. He does not imprison Abner or have him killed.

6. Do you think David was right to send Abner away in peace (given Joab's reaction)?

David's grief for Abner: In verse 31, David orders Joab and his men to tear their clothes and mourn for Abner.

7. Do you think Joab realised his mistake?

In 1 Samuel 17: 54-58, Abner was there the day that David killed Goliath and to Abner that David proudly declared he was the son of Jesse. These men have known each other for a long time.

8. Do you think David's grief for Abner was real?
9. Do you think David wished to restore his relationship with Abner? Why?
10. Why do you think it was important for David to declare he was guiltless of Abner's murder (verse 28).

David's cursing of Joab and his descendants (verse 29):

11. Was David justified in putting a curse on Joab's house?
12. Do you think this was as inspired as his psalms were?
13. What do you think of verse 39?

David's lament for Abner (verses 33-34): The lament implies that Abner did not expect Joab's vengeance.

14. What does the lament say about Abner and/or what David thought of Abner?

The People

The author made a note of the people being happy to see David grieve for and give Abner a proper funeral (verse 36-37).

15. Why do you think this was important?