



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

2 SAMUEL

Week 4

Sowing... and Reaping

2 Samuel 18:19-33

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you attended a funeral or memorial service recently? Was it for someone close to you?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Whom did Joab choose to carry the news of the victory over Absalom (vs. 19-22)? Joab knew that all that mattered to David was Absalom's welfare.

2. Who else wanted to run that day (vs. 22-23)?

3. These are some of the most poignant verses in the Bible. The scene is skillfully sketched—two runners, one anxious father, a watchman on the wall, a kingdom at stake. Who arrived first (vs. 24-27)? Do you blame Ahimaz for not telling David the full story (vs. 28-30)?

4. Finally the full message was revealed (vs. 31-32). How did David react (vs. 33)? God's judgment, foretold by Nathan, was falling on David's house (12:10).

LIVING
out the Word

1. Has your personal success or your business ever been jeopardized by favoritism shown to someone else?

2. Galatians 6:7 can be applied to this situation. Are there any other passages that seem to bear on the tragic story of David and Absalom?

WINDOW
on the Word

Son against father; father forced to battle against his own son. This is high tragedy. Perhaps only a parent who has had a somewhat similar experience can appreciate David's feelings of humiliation, betrayal and stubborn love for an erring son. Absalom's rebellion inspired one of David's lament-songs—
Psalm 3. *It opens, "Oh, Lord, how many are my foes!" There is political insight here. Absalom's rebellion revealed deep cracks and fissures underneath Israel's fragile unity. Absalom had been proclaimed king in **Hebron**, David's former capital deep in the territory of Judah. He also had extensive northern support (19:9-10). Foreigners and non-Israelites were prominent in David's support. Shimei the Benjamite's wild cursing of David showed that the old jealousies died hard, if at all. **The Succession Narrative** subtly underscores the fact that David's support is broad but not deep. The choice of a successor is an important issue throughout this part of 2 Samuel.*



“The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: ‘O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you— O Absalom, my son, my son!’” 2 Samuel 18:33

“With Charity to All”

2 Samuel 19:1-43

OPENING
up to the Word

After America’s bitter Civil War, President Lincoln was supposed to have said of the defeated southerners, “Let ‘em up easy!” Was this a wise approach?

DIGGING
into the Word

- 1.** What was Joab’s advice to David in light of the king’s public mourning for Absalom (vs. 1-8)?
- 2.** David had a throne to reclaim. Israel was divided into factions for and against him. How did he deal with this confusion (vs. 11-15)? Did his strategy work?
- 3.** What two trouble-makers came to David to beg for mercy (vs. 16-23)? What was David’s reaction? Did David make good any wrong he had done to Mephibosheth (vs. 24-30)?
- 4.** The faithful Barzillai the Gileadite showed up to escort David across the Jordan (vs. 31-39). Soon a dispute broke out between Israel’s northern tribes and Judah (vs. 40-43). What was the cause? Did this indicate that the wounds had not healed?

LIVING
out the Word

- 1.** Have you ever been involved in a family dispute? Is it still going on? What, if anything, could you do to effect reconciliation?
- 2.** Christians are called to a “ministry of reconciliation” (2Co 5:18). Proverbs 10:32 tells us that “the lips of the righteous know what is fitting.” Does David have anything to teach us here?

North Against South

DAY 24

2 Samuel 20:1-26

Have you ever worked in an environment where things seemed to be coming apart at the seams? How did you cope?

1. From which tribe did Sheba descend (v. 1)? The phrase “Every man to his tent, O Israel!” meant “Let’s all go home and from there we can resist the king.”

2. From which part of the nation did Sheba draw his support (v. 2)?

3. Once again David acted decisively in the face of near-disaster. What did he do (vs. 3-7)?

4. How did Joab settle some personal scores in the crisis and confusion (vs. 8-13)? Amasa had been appointed in Joab’s place as commander-in-chief of the army (19:13), no doubt, in part, to counter Joab’s strong influence.

5. For what was the town of Abel Beth Maacah famous (vs. 14-21)? How did Sheba meet his gruesome end (v. 22)? Did David see the need to reorganize the government again (vs. 23-26)?

David’s rule was now secure in Israel and Judah, but at the cost of much bloodshed. Does the final result always justify the means used to obtain it? Did it in this case?

***Sheba’s rebellion** brings to a conclusion the military turmoil in David’s lifetime. Yet Sheba’s strong support from the northern tribes revealed how much tension there was between the different parts of David’s kingdom. Saul came from Benjamin in the center of Israel; David came from Judah in the south. He had worked hard to end these divisions, but his success was only temporary.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

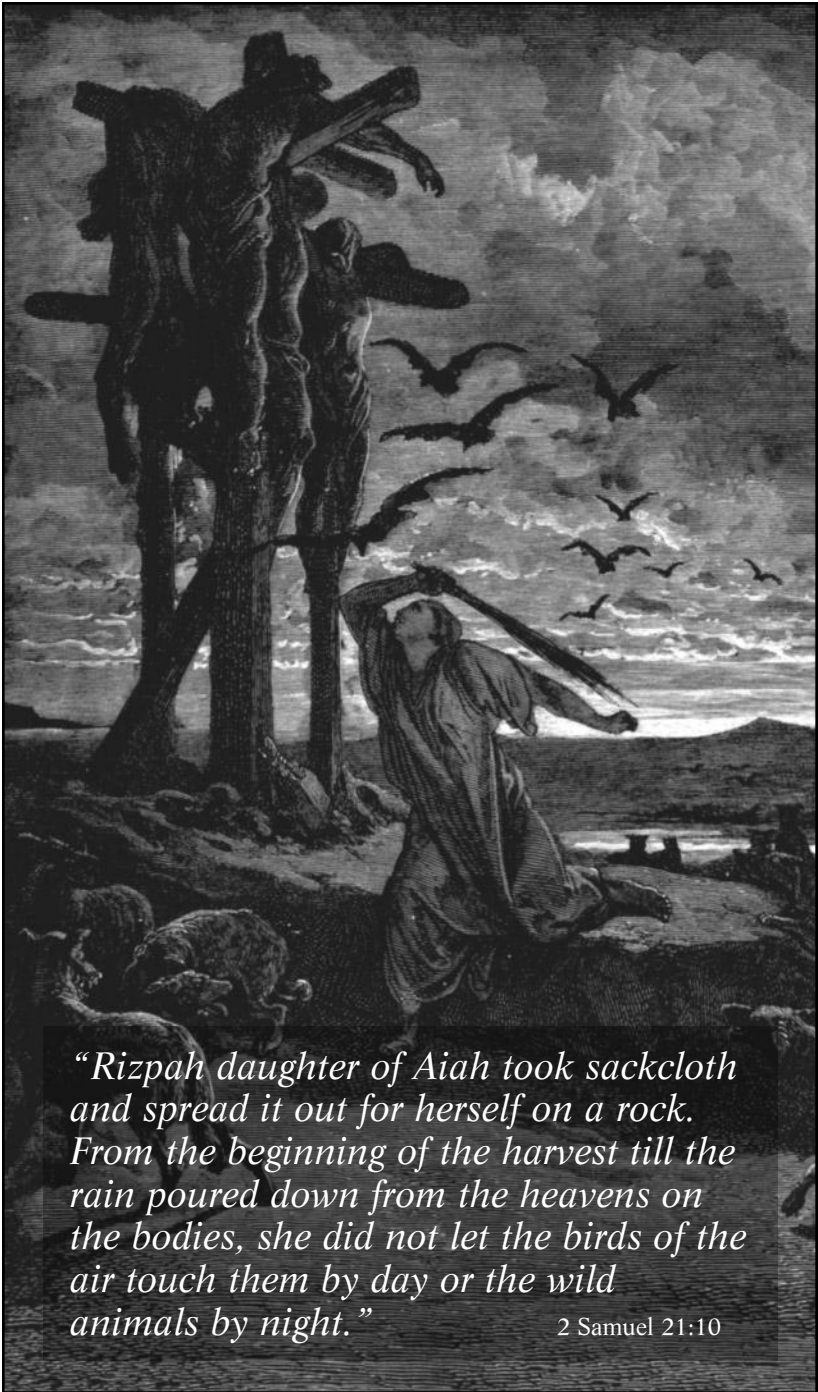
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



“Rizpah daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it out for herself on a rock. From the beginning of the harvest till the rain poured down from the heavens on the bodies, she did not let the birds of the air touch them by day or the wild animals by night.”

2 Samuel 21:10

Artwork by Gustav Doré

An Eye for an Eye

DAY 25

2 Samuel 21:1-14

Have you or anyone you know had to deal with legal damages from a case tracing back several years? Was it a hard issue to resolve?

1. Who were the Gibeonites (vs. 1-2)? What was the problem? What was the solution to which David agreed (vs. 3-6)?
2. How was the restitution carried out (vs. 7-9)?
3. What was an unexpected result (vs. 10)? What did David do then (vs. 11-13)?
4. Did this cruel and barbaric act result in any benefits to the country as a whole (vs. 14)?

Have you known people who seem vindictive in demanding their “pound of flesh?” How do you reason with such people—or can you?

*The principle of **restitution** was a basic premise undergirding the laws God laid down for Israel (Ex 22:1-6). Under Joshua, Israel had made a treaty of perpetual peace and protection with the **Gibeonites** (Jos 9:3-27). Yet apparently King Saul had attacked them in carrying out his wars against non-Israelites. A broken treaty was a serious crime under ancient codes and customs, but the Torah explicitly stated that no son should suffer for the mistakes of the father (Dt 24:16; 2Ki 14:6). Perhaps because the Gibeonites were non-Israelites they felt justified in making their grisly request, and David felt able to comply. There is no condemnation of David, in fact the land was healed. Perhaps the most important reason for recording this story is to show that David was not responsible for all the blood-guilt that was polluting the land, this in contrast to charges made against him by enemies such as Shimei the Benjamite (16:5-8).*

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An Army of Giant Killers

2 Samuel 21:15-22

OPENING
up to the Word

Do you save reminders of your successes and accomplishments? What about your failures?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What incident convinced the Israelites that David was getting too old for fighting at the front (vs. 15-17)?

2. Which Philistine city seemed to produce more than its share of giants and mighty warriors (vs. 18-22)?

3. Which city and family in Israel seemed to produce more than its share of mighty warriors (vs. 19, 21)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. It has been said, “Saul’s army had no giant killers; David’s had plenty.” What is the point of such a statement? Does it reflect David’s qualities of leadership or the circumstances of the time?

2. All Christians have giants to face—giant problems, giant trials, giant attitudes to be surmounted as victory is won by the grace of God. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 is a military analogy to inspire Christians. Can you think of other word-pictures the New Testament uses that resonate with the example of the wars of David?

WINDOW
on the Word

*This is a good time to pause and consider the superb **literary structure** of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Though chapters 21-24 are sometimes described as an appendix to the books of Samuel—hearkening back to events that may have occurred earlier—there is structure in the way the material is arranged to drive home basic themes. Hannah’s predicament and prayer in 1 Samuel 1:10-11 is mirrored by David’s predicament and prayer in 2 Samuel 24:10, 17. The note of divine deliverance in answer to prayer is struck in 1 Samuel 1:20 and again in 2 Samuel 24:25. Two psalms of praise in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and 2 Samuel 22 reemphasizes the lesson that all praise is due to God who alone is the nation’s true Warrior, Judge and Shepherd-King.*

Let My People Sing!

DAY 27

2 Samuel 22:1-51

Are you musical? Do you play an instrument? Do you enjoy listening to music?

1. This song of praise was included in the book of Psalms as Psalm 18. What eight analogies does David use to describe God (vs. 1-4)?

2. Verses 5-20 make up one of the most pictorial sections of Scripture. God is described as riding on cherubim (v. 11) with smoke issuing from his nostrils (v. 9) and lightning bolts flashing from him (v. 13). Isn't this song a superb illustration of the symbols and metaphors used throughout the Bible—and of the perils of understanding every word of the Bible “literally”?

3. David was a man of great ability and courage, but to whom does he ascribe his victories (vs. 28-37, 40-41, 47-51)?

1. Do you give God the credit for the great blessings and deliverances in your life? Is praise a consistent theme in the New Testament (Php 4:4-6)?

2. Does your place of worship consider praise to be of great value?

*Hebrew writing abounds in powerful word-pictures and striking verbal techniques to convey through language the sense of human beings in communication with God. **Hyperbole** or exaggeration for effect is common, such as when we say “It’s raining cats and dogs!” See Psalm 6:6. **Theophanies** are often used to better convey the excited reaction of someone receiving a revelation from God. In this chapter, verses 5-20 function as a theophany—a literary term for the manifestation or appearance of God to human beings. David, as a poet and musician, was familiar with these rich and powerful ways of expressing his sense of the special presence of God.*

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“Is not my house right with God? Has he not made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part? Will he not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire?”

2 Samuel 23:5



Artwork by Rembrandt Van Rijn

Famous Last Words

DAY 28

2 Samuel 23:1-7

Can you recall a time when the spoken word has impacted your life—perhaps someone’s last words or a famous speech? Can you quote a phrase or two?

1. How is David described (v. 1)?
2. To what Source does David ascribe the inspiration for his songs and praises (v. 2)?
3. What was David’s philosophy of leadership (vs. 3-4)? A good ruler cares for the prosperity of his people; his deeds effect all those with whom he comes in contact. What poetic phrases does David use to express this conviction? To what does he compare his evil enemies (vs. 6-7)?
4. What was uppermost on David’s mind just before he died (v. 5)? Was he thinking back to the special covenant God had made with him in 2 Samuel 7:12-16?

1. A person’s last words before dying can have great emotional impact. Have you been present when someone has spoken his or her last words?
2. Have you ever considered what others might write about you on your tombstone?

*There is much in David’s life that prophetically foreshadows events in the **life of Jesus**, the son of David. Psalm 22:1 for example, is a prophecy of Jesus’ dying words on the cross. Psalm 18 has been seen as a powerful word picture reaching beyond David’s life experiences to forecast the sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Ps 18:4-5, 16-19). Psalm 16:9-11 is seen in the New Testament as a clear prophecy of Christ’s resurrection (Ac 2:22-35). Note the direct tie-in with David. This is what biblical scholars mean when they say many of David’s experiences make him a “type” or “forerunner” of the expected Messiah. Christians believe that this expectation was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This is high praise indeed for the shepherd boy from Bethlehem.*

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David's Hall of Fame

2 Samuel 23:8-39

OPENING
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Have you visited a museum or gallery of famous people, artifacts or paintings? Did you learn anything?

DIGGING
into the Word

- 1.** Who were the three leaders among David's fighting men that received greater recognition (vs. 8-13)?
 - 2.** What action of David at Adullam endeared him to his warriors (vs. 13-17)?
 - 3.** What were the daring exploits of Abishai and Benaiah (vs. 18-22)?
 - 4.** Lists and genealogies tell a story. Who heads the list of the Thirty (v. 24)? He was killed early in David's reign (2:23). Who concludes the list (v. 39)?
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LIVING
out the Word

- 1.** Every family, it is said, has its secrets; every house its secret closets. Do you think there might be a reason why the writer placed Uriah last?
- 2.** Thirty-seven heroes are honored in this list. Some did less and some did more, but every service is carefully recorded. This list reminds us of the apostle Paul's list of honor in Romans 16. Can you think of others?

“These are the names of David’s mighty men: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the three....Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite....Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite.”

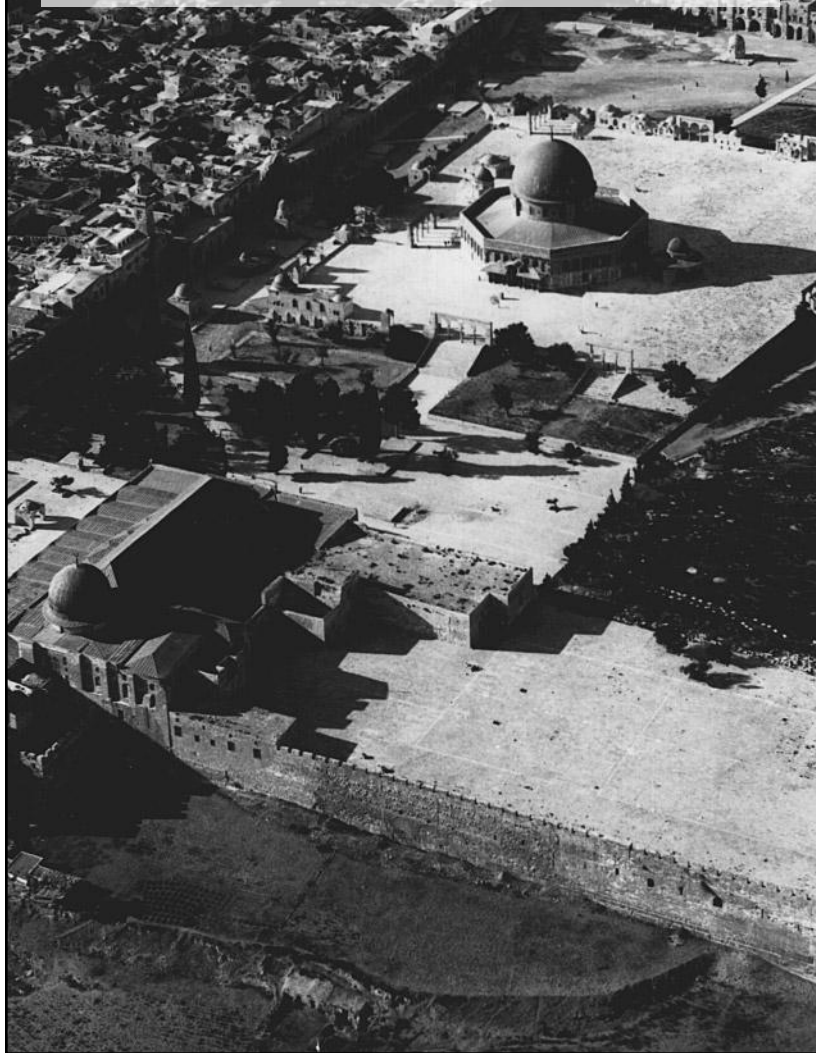
2 Samuel 23:8-11



Artwork by Ken Tunell

“On that day Gad went to David and said to him, ‘Go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.’ So David went up, as the Lord had commanded through Gad.”

2 Samuel 24:18-19



PTM photo of Temple Mount in Jerusalem, original site of threshing floor of Araunah

All's Well That Ends Well

DAY 30

2 Samuel 24:1-25

Have you ever puzzled over the balance between faith and works—when to trust God for resolution and when to act on your own?

1. David was moved to take a military census (vs. 1-2). 1 Chronicles 21:1 says it was Satan who inspired the action. Who tried to change David's mind (v. 3)? Was he successful (v. 4)?
2. What was the numerical total of David's armies (v. 9)?
3. How did David react to his latest mistake (v. 10)? The prophet Gad gave him three options (vs. 11-14). What were they? Which did he choose?
5. How did the punishment end (vs. 15-17)? David's motives and actions may have been questionable in taking the census, but his attitude remained teachable (v. 10) and even sacrificial (v. 17).
6. After David's repentance, what did Gad tell David to do next (v. 18)? Why did David insist on paying for the site of the altar (vs. 24)? What was the result of this act of genuine worship (vs. 25)?

1. Most commentators see pride as the main motive in David's numbering the armies of Israel—he is trusting in men, not God. Do you agree?
2. David would not build an altar on land that was not his fairly acquired property. When we give to God, do we make the sacrifice at our own expense, or do we sometimes "give" at the expense of others?

The **threshing floor of Araunah** is identified in 2 Chronicles 3:1 as Mount Moriah, traditional site of the hill where the patriarch Abraham had offered Isaac for sacrifice (Ge 22:2). Solomon would later build the temple on this same spot (1Ch 21:18–22:1). The biblical writer is showing that David's last actions were inspired by God. Israel's shepherd king helped secure his people's future unity and integrity—making way for a new center of worship—by reminding the people of God's relationship with Abraham, emphasizing God's continuity and faithfulness.

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