SHEBA REBELS AGAINST DAVID

2 SAMUEL 20:1-26
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Text:

2 Samuel 20:1-26,

1. Now a troublemaker named Sheba son of Bicri, a Benjamite, happened to be there. He sounded the trumpet and shouted, "We have no share in David, no part in Jesse's son! Every man to his tent, O Israel!"

2. So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bicri. But the men of Judah stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

3. When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines he had left to take care of the palace and put them in a house under guard. He provided for them, but did not lie with them. They were kept in confinement till the day of their death, living as widows.

4. Then the king said to Amasa, "Summon the men of Judah to come to me within three days, and be here yourself."

5. But when Amasa went to summon Judah, he took longer than the time the king had set for him.

6. David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba son of Bicri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your master's men and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities and escape from us."

7. So Joab's men and the Kerethites and Pelethites and all the mighty warriors went out under the command of Abishai. They marched out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bicri.

8. While they were at the great rock in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Joab was wearing his military tunic, and strapped over it at his waist was a belt with a dagger in its sheath. As he stepped forward, it dropped out of its sheath.
9. Joab said to Amasa, "How are you, my brother?" Then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.
10. Amasa was not on his guard against the dagger in Joab's hand, and Joab plunged it into his belly, and his intestines spilled out on the ground. Without being stabbed again, Amasa died. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bicri.
11. One of Joab's men stood beside Amasa and said, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab!"
12. Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the middle of the road, and the man saw that all the troops came to a halt there. When he realized that everyone who came up to Amasa stopped, he dragged him from the road into a field and threw a garment over him.
13. After Amasa had been removed from the road, all the men went on with Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bicri.
14. Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel Beth Maacah and through the entire region of the Berites, who gathered together and followed him.
15. All the troops with Joab came and besieged Sheba in Abel Beth Maacah. They built a siege ramp up to the city, and it stood against the outer fortifications. While they were battering the wall to bring it down,
16. a wise woman called from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come here so I can speak to him."
17. He went toward her, and she asked, "Are you Joab?" "I am," he answered. She said, "Listen to what your servant has to say." "I'm listening," he said.
18. She continued, "Long ago they used to say, 'Get your answer at Abel,' and that settled it.
19. We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the LORD's inheritance?"
20. "Far be it from me!" Joab replied, "Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy!
21. That is not the case. A man named Sheba son of Bicri, from the hill country of Ephraim, has lifted up his hand against the king, against David. Hand over this one man, and I'll withdraw from the city." The woman said to Joab, "His head will be thrown to you from the wall."
22. Then the woman went to all the people with her wise advice, and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bicri and threw it to Joab. So he sounded the trumpet, and his men dispersed from the city, each returning to his home. And Joab went back to the king in Jerusalem.
23. Joab was over Israel's entire army; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites;
24. Adoniram was in charge of forced labor; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder;
25. Sheva was secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were priests;
26. and Ira the Jairite was David's priest. (NIV)

Introduction:

I. Smith wrote, “The tribal argument at Gilgal abruptly concluded when a Benjamite named Sheba blew a trumpet and announced that the northern tribes had disowned David as their king.”

A. “The men of Judah, however, remained with their king from the Jordan to Jerusalem,” Smith further noted.

II. “David’s homecoming to Jerusalem was saddened by:

A. Sheba’s rebellion.

B. Having to deal with providing for his ten concubines raped by Absalom. (See Coffman.)

III. The Pulpit Commentary well states, “The fierce words of the men of Judah led to evil results. It was a time when all wise and
thoughtful persons would have labored for peace, and tried to soothe and appease the angry passions fomented by the late war. Instead of this, the men of Judah irritated the Israelites with insult and contumely, and the day, intended as one of rejoicing and of the restoration of David to his throne by common consent, saw the rebellion break forth afresh.”

Commentary:

2 Samuel 20:1, Now a troublemaker named Sheba son of Bicri, a Benjamite, happened to be there. He sounded the trumpet and shouted, "We have no share in David, no part in Jesse's son! Every man to his tent, O Israel!" (NIV)

I. “Now a troublemaker (a man of Belial; that is, a worthless fellow) named Sheba son of Bicri, (Bichri) a Benjamite, happened to be there.

A. Essentially all that is known of Sheba is in connection with his rebellion against David.

1. Bromiley suggested that Sheba was able to get the Northern Tribes to join his rebellion because they thought David favored Judah and may have been contemplating an attack on the Northern tribes.

2. Sheba had been present at Gilgal when David came back toward Jerusalem and witnessed the quarreling among the tribes. (Smith)

B. Bicri was the father of Sheba; that is, of the clan of Bicrites, a clan tracing its descent from Becher, the second son of Benjamin. (Smith)

C. Benjamin and Joseph were the sons of Jacob and his favorite wife, Rachel.

1. Joseph’s sons from whom two (2) tribes descended were Ephraim and Manasseh.

D. This “rebellion was the direct result of the bitter words exchanged in the quarrel mentioned” (Coffman) in 2 Samuel 19:41-43.

1. 2 Samuel 19:41-43, Soon all the men of Israel were coming to the king and saying to him, "Why did our brothers, the men of Judah, steal the king away and bring him and his household across the Jordan, together with all his men?" All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "We did this because the king is closely related to us. Why are you angry about it? Have we eaten any of the king's provisions? Have we taken anything for ourselves?" Then the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, "We have ten shares in the king; and besides, we have a greater claim on David than you have. So why do you treat us with contempt? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?" But the men of Judah responded even more harshly than the men of Israel. (NIV)

II. “He sounded the trumpet and shouted, ‘We have no share in David, no part in Jesse’s son! Every man to his tent, O Israel!’ ”
A. The trumpet and shouting gained the attention of the multitude and were intended, according to Coffman, to raise an army.

B. Smith wrote that Sheba was calling more for a secession than for an armed uprising.

C. His reference to “Jesse’s son” was a contemptuous statement, Smith wrote.

E. Sheba raised this war-cry, and all the men of Israel followed him.

1. Clarke wrote, “. . .he (Sheba) seems to have had considerable influence in Israel which enabled to raise such an insurrection.”

2. “We of Israel, we of the ten tribes, are under no obligation to the house of David. Leave him, and let every man fall into the ranks under his own leader,” Sheba as understood by Clarke was saying.

3. “Every man to his tent” (home) indicates that those who departed rejected David’s reign and government.” (See The Pulpit Commentary.)

a. 2 Samuel 18:17, They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap of rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes. (NIV)

b. 1 Kings 12:16, When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: "What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, O
Israel! Look after your own house, O David!"
So the Israelites went home. (NIV)

2 Samuel 20:2, So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bicri. But the men of Judah stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem. (NIV)

I. “So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bicri.”

A. “Sheba’s hostility was directed particularly against the house of David; but unlike Absalom’s rebellion, it had nothing directly to do with the succession to the throne,” Smith wrote.

B. Coffman stated “all the men of Israel” probably referred to the representatives of the northern tribes.

1. Sheba soon learned that “all Israel” did not follow him.

C. Israel had come to the Jordan to make David king, but tribal jealousies and contentions caused the national division to continue. “Israel was a confused mass of discordant elements.” (See The Pulpit Commentary.)

1. David’s high hopes of returning to the throne in Jerusalem with the full support of all Israel were dashed. (See The Pulpit Commentary.)

2. David must have been deeply grieved by these developments.

II. “But the men of Judah stayed by (clung to) their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem.”
A. The tribe of Judah, previously complicit in Absalom’s rebellion, was now “fiercely loyal” to David. (See Smith.)

B. Israel had joined Absalom’s rebellion last and was the first to propose reunification with David.

C. Seeing their position supplanted by Judah, Israel joined Sheba in rebelling against David.

D. From the Jordan to Jerusalem is a distance of about fifteen (15) miles, mostly uphill all the way, Smith wrote.

E. “David arrived home (Jerusalem) with only his Judean escort,” Coffman wrote, while “all the rest of Israel was apparently in open rebellion.”

2 Samuel 20:3, When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines he had left to take care of the palace and put them in a house under guard. He provided for them, but did not lie with them. They were kept in confinement till the day of their death, living as widows. (NIV)

I. “When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines he had left to take care of the palace and put them in a house under guard.”

A. Absalom had engaged in sexual intercourse with David’s ten concubines in public view after entering Jerusalem. (See Smith.)

1. 2 Samuel 16:22, So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he lay with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. (NIV)
2. Upon his return to Jerusalem, David immediately dealt with the problem relating to these concubines.

B. What Absalom did was not the concubines’ fault.

1. Even though they were well provided for, they were under house arrest as long as they lived.

2. Coffman wrote, “This writer finds no way to justify this tragic treatment of ten faithful concubines who had committed no crime, who were guilty of no unfaithfulness, and who presumably had taken good care of things during David’s absence.”

II. “He provided for them, but did not lie with them.”

A. David provided security and sustenance for these ten concubines, but David never again had sexual relations with them.

III. “They were kept in confinement till the day of their death, living as widows.”

A. In effect, they were under house arrest.

1. Coffman calls this king David’s “contemptible act.”

B. Clarke wrote, “He could not well divorce them; he could not punish them, as they were not in the transgression; he could no more be familiar with them, because they had been defiled by his son; and to have married them to other men might have been dangerous to the state: therefore he shut them up and fed them – made them quite comfortable, and they continued as widows to their death.”
2 Samuel 20:4, Then the king said to Amasa, "Summon the men of Judah to come to me within three days, and be here yourself. (NIV)

I. “Then the king said to Amasa, . . .”

A. Amasa was David’s nephew, the son of Jether and Abigail, and a cousin of Joab, Abishai and Asahel, whom Absalom appointed commander of his army. After Absalom was defeated, David appointed Amasa as his military commander. (Youngblood)

1. Amasa was David’s nephew, the son of Abigail, David’s sister. Amasa’s father was an Ishmaelite.

   a. 1 Chronicles 2:13-17, Jesse was the father of Eliab his firstborn; the second son was Abinadab, the third Shimea, the fourth Nethanel, the fifth Raddai, the sixth Ozem and the seventh David. Their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail. Zeruiah's three sons were Abishai, Joab and Asahel. Abigail was the mother of Amasa, whose father was Jether the Ishmaelite. Caleb Son of Hezron (NIV)

B. The next thing with which David had to deal was Sheba’s rebellion.

1. Amasa was ordered as military commander to reassemble the forces from Judah and to meet with David in Jerusalem within three days.
a. This should have been an easy assignment for Amasa since he had been commander of Absalom’s army.

b. This had to be done with haste to prevent Sheba from mustering a large fighting force.

2. Amasa was not even successful in recruiting a fighting force within the stipulated time!

II. “Summon the men of Judah to come to me within three days, and be there yourself.”

A. Amasa and his assembled army were to report back to David within three (3) days for their orders.

B. Amasa was now military commander replacing Joab who had killed Absalom.

1. 2 Samuel 19:13, And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my own flesh and blood? May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if from now on you are not the commander of my army in place of Joab.' " (NIV)

2. The Pulpit Commentary firmly states, as do other commentators, that replacing Joab with Amasa was a huge mistake.

3. The Pulpit Commentary also considers David’s handling of the cases of Ziba and Mephibosheth as another major miscarriage of justice.

2 Samuel 20:5, But when Amasa went to summon Judah, he took longer than the time the king had set for him. (NIV)
I. “But when Amasa went to summon Judah, he took longer than the time the king had set for him.”

A. This is another clear indication that Amasa was inept and unqualified to command David’s army.

B. Action had to be taken quickly against Sheba to keep him from enlarging his troops and becoming a greater threat than Absalom had been.

C. Coffman quoting Willis said Amasa may have delayed because: . . .

1. he did not see a need to hurry, . . .

2. he did not know how to summon the troops, and/or . . .

3. the men had lost confidence in him, (. . .and refused to follow him. See The Pulpit Commentary.)

4. Coffman added, “Amasa may have been considering joining forces with Sheba.”

2 Samuel 20:6, David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba son of Bicri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your master's men and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities and escape from us." (NIV)

I. “David said to Abishai, ‘Now Sheba son of Bicri will do us more harm than Absalom did.’”

A. Abishai, brother of Joab and Ashel and David’s nephew, was one of David’s mighty men and military commanders. (Youngblood)
B. Abishai was ordered to take the lead against Sheba because of the failure of inept Amasa.

1. Joab was with his brother Abishai ready to pursue Sheba.

C. This fear as expressed by David was not realized because Sheba was not successful in marshalling Israel to join his rebellion.

II. “Take your master’s men and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities and escape from us.”

A. Speed in dealing with Sheba was urgent.

B. The best troops were assigned to Abishai.

C. Smith observed that this left David unprotected in Jerusalem which indicates how serious David considered Sheba’s rebellion.

D. In this way David insulted Joab whom he had not forgiven for murdering Absalom. (See Coffman.)

E. Coffman was of the opinion that “your master’s men” refers to “David’s personal bodyguard” while The Pulpit Commentary understands “your master’s men” to refer to Joab’s warriors.

2 Samuel 20:7, So Joab's men and the Kerethites and Pelethites and all the mighty warriors went out under the command of Abishai. They marched out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bicri. (NIV)
I. “So Joab’s men and the Kerethites (Cherethites) and Pelethites and all the mighty warriors went out under the command of Abishai.

   A. The Kerethites and Pelethites were a select company of soldiers that formed David’s bodyguard. (Youngblood)

   B. “Your master’s men” evidently were troops previously under Joab’s command. (See Smith.)

   C. These were David’s elite troops.

   1. 2 Samuel 8:18, Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; and David's sons were royal advisers. (NIV)

   2. 2 Samuel 10:7, On hearing this, David sent Joab out with the entire army of fighting men. (NIV)

   D. It is to Joab’s credit that he continued to faithfully serve David under the command of Abishai, his brother. (See Coffman.)

      1. Joab and Abishai were always very loyal as brothers to each other.

II. “They marched out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bicri.”

   A. This was a severe crisis comparable to Absalom’s rebellion as to seriousness.

      1. It is clearly evident that David’s handling of the Sheba crisis was far more decisive than his handling of the Absalom crisis.
2 Samuel 20:8, While they were at the great rock in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Joab was wearing his military tunic, and strapped over it at his waist was a belt with a dagger in its sheath. As he stepped forward, it dropped out of its sheath. (NIV)

I. “While they were at the great rock in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them.”

1. Gibeon was a city in the territory of Benjamin about six (6) miles northwest of Jerusalem. (Youngblood)

B. Amasa finally caught up to the army of which he was supposed to have been the commander at the great rock of Gibeon, a well known landmark.

C. Joab was more than ready for this meeting.

II. “Joab was wearing his military tunic, and strapped over it at his waist was a belt with a dagger in its sheath.”

A. Joab, relieved of his command, was still loyal to David and was among the troops.

B. Smith wrote, “The description of Joab’s dress is intended to explain how he contrived to stab Amasa without his purpose being suspected. In the girdle which he wore over his military dress he carried a dagger. He . . . let this dagger fall out of its sheath. This would cause Amasa to let down his guard. Apparently Joab picked up the dagger with his left hand,” his non-fighting hand.
C. Clarke expressed the opinion that Joab’s garment does not appear to have been a military uniform and that he was armed with only a short sword while The Pulpit Commentary states, “Joab was girded with his military coat as his garment, and over it was the strap of his sword in its sheath.”

III. “As he stepped forward, it dropped (fell) out of its sheath.”

A. This would have led Amasa to think he was in no danger from Joab.

B. “Some believe that Joab murdered Amasa with the sword that fell out of the sheath; but others suppose that he used a second weapon concealed in the sleeve of his left hand,” Coffman wrote.

C. Coffman quoting Tatum wrote, “Joab tricked Amasa by letting one sword fall from his belt; and then, pretending to greet Amasa as a brother; and when he came close, he drew out a hidden sword and thrust it into his abdomen.” (Coffman favored Tatum’s view.)

2 Samuel 20:9, Joab said to Amasa, "How are you, my brother?" Then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. (NIV)

I. “Joab said to Amasa, “How are you, my brother?”

A. Joab addressed Amasa as his “brother” indicating friendly relations and calling attention to the fact that they were blood relatives. (See Smith.)

II. “Then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.”
A. Smith observed that this “kissing of the beard was a token of warm greeting and a mark of respect.” (Also see Jamieson.)

B. Amasa had no idea doom was imminent.

1. Amasa should not have let his guard down! That is for sure.

2. Some of those who appear to be our friends may well be our enemies.

3. Friends today may be enemies tomorrow.

4. Be careful whom you trust.

C. Clarke wrote, “. . . in the Eastern country, it is the beard, not the man, which is usually kissed.”

2 Samuel 20:10, Amasa was not on his guard against the dagger in Joab's hand, and Joab plunged it into his belly, and his intestines spilled out on the ground. Without being stabbed again, Amasa died. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bicri. (NIV)

I. “Amasa was not on his guard against the dagger in Joab’s hand, and Joab plunged it into his belly, and his intestines spilled out on the ground.”

A. 2 Samuel 2:23, But Asahel refused to give up the pursuit; so Abner thrust the butt of his spear into Asahel's stomach, and the spear came out through his back. He fell there and died on the spot. And every man stopped when he came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died. (NIV)
B. Smith noted that Joab delivered only one blow, but clearly it would have been more merciful to have delivered more. The intention was that Amasa suffer a horrible, painful and humiliating death.

II. “Without being stabbed again, Amasa died.”

A. Joab was expert in the use of a dagger and not the least hesitant to use it!

B. Amasa was mortally wounded, but did not die instantly.

1. Joab left him to suffer!

III. “Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bicri.”

A. Joab and Abishai, physical brothers and brothers in arms, were back on the job!

B. Notice that Joab is mentioned first indicating he was once again in command of the troops.

2 Samuel 20:11, One of Joab's men stood beside Amasa and said, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab!" (NIV)

I. “One of Joab’s men stood beside Amasa and said, ‘Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab!’”

A. This reliable and experienced guard was stationed by Amasa’s body for the purpose of urging the troops to follow Joab without delay. (See Coffman.)
1. Joab sought to speed the soldiers’ march in pursuit of Sheba.

2. Amasa’s body was not to become a distraction for the soldiers.

B. Joab was back in charge and both the soldiers and Abishai were happy about this development.

2 Samuel 20:12, Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the middle of the road, and the man saw that all the troops came to a halt there. When he realized that everyone who came up to Amasa stopped, he dragged him from the road into a field and threw a garment over him. (NIV)

I. “Amasa lay wallowing (writhing) in his blood in the middle of the road, and the man (guard) saw that all the troops came to a halt there in view of this gruesome scene.”

A. Amasa lay dying in the middle of the road over which the troops were marching.

1. Evidently Amasa did not immediately die. (See Clarke.)

B. The troops, when they saw Amasa, were shocked by what they encountered, and would not walk over or around Amasa, Smith wrote.

1. Anderson expressed the view that the soldiers who paused at the site/sight of Amasa’s suffering must have been the Judean militia who had followed Amasa and would be confused and hesitant at the sight of their mortally wounded commander.
II. “When he realized that everyone who came up to Amasa stopped, he dragged him from the road into a field and threw a garment over him.”

A. The soldier, one of Joab’s men, when he saw that Amasa had become a distraction, dragged Amasa off into a field and covered him with a garment and the troops marched on.

1. 1 Samuel 19:13, Then Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed, covering it with a garment and putting some goats' hair at the head. (NIV)

2 Samuel 20:13, After Amasa had been removed from the road, all the men went on with Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bicri. (NIV)

I. “After Amasa had been removed from the road, all the men went on with Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bicri.”

A. Joab was a very popular military commander and Abishai was probably glad his older brother was back in charge. (See Smith.)

2 Samuel 20:14, Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel Beth Maacah and through the entire region of the Berites, who gathered together and followed him. (NIV)

I. “Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel Beth Maacah and through the entire region of the Berites, who gathered together and followed him.”

A. Abel Beth Maacah was a fortified town four (4) miles west of the town of Dan in the area of the tribe of Naphtali (Youngblood), “at the northern boundary of Israel.” (Coffman)
1. Abel is thought to be the district called Abilene in the New Testament. (Clarke)

   a. Luke 3:1, Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, (NIV)

2. 1 Kings 15:20, Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. He conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maacah and all Kinnereth in addition to Naphtali. (NIV)

3. 2 Kings 15:29, In the time of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh and Hazor. He took Gilead and Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria. (NIV)

4. 2 Chronicles 16:4, Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. They conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim and all the store cities of Naphtali. (NIV)

B. “Barites” was the family name of Beriah, the son of Asher. (Youngblood)

1. Numbers 26:44, The descendants of Asher by their clans were: through Imnah, the Imnite clan; through Ishvi, the Ishvite clan; through Beriah, the Beriite clan; (NIV)
2. Smith said the Berites were a people otherwise unknown.

C. As Sheba moved north he attempted to raise additional troops, but with little or no success. (See Coffman.)

1. The only thing left for Sheba to do was to enter a fortified city and try to hold out there against David. (See Coffman.)

2 Samuel 20:15, All the troops with Joab came and besieged Sheba in Abel Beth Maacah. They built a siege ramp up to the city, and it stood against the outer fortifications. While they were battering the wall to bring it down, (NIV)

I. “All the troops with Joab came and besieged Sheba in Abel Beth Maacah.”

A. Joab appears to have had no difficulty finding Sheba.

II. “They built a siege ramp up to the city, and it stood against the outer fortifications.”

A. Smith wrote, “They built a siege ramp which would give them a platform level with the top of the city’s walls from which to fight those who defended the city.

B. The Pulpit Commentary reads, “The usual way of capturing cities in ancient times was to cast up a bank or mound of earth against them.”

1. Isaiah 29:3, will encamp against you all around; I will encircle you with towers and set up my siege works against you. (NIV)
2. Isaiah 37:33, "Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: "He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. (NIV)

3. Jeremiah 6:6, This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Cut down the trees and build siege ramps against Jerusalem. This city must be punished; it is filled with oppression. (NIV)

III. “While they were battering the wall to bring it down, . . .”

A. This may have continued for some time, the purpose being to breach the walls and allow attacking troops to rush into the city.

B. “Joab’s forces were seeking to destroy the wall to make it fall,” The Pulpit Commentary reads.

   1. They evidently undermined the wall, digging pits under the wall, to weaken it.

   2. “. . .all of Joab’s people were devising (contriving) means to throw down the wall,” The Pulpit Commentary states.

2 Samuel 20:16, a wise woman called from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come here so I can speak to him." (NIV)

I. “a wise woman called from the city, . . .”

A. This wise woman saved the city.
1. “She acted,” Anderson wrote, “as a spokesperson of the people of the beleaguered city.”

II. “Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come here so I can speak to him.”

A. The wise woman asked for a conference with Joab.

2 Samuel 20:17, He went toward her, and she asked, "Are you Joab?" "I am," he answered. She said, "Listen to what your servant has to say." "I'm listening," he said. (NIV)

I. “He went toward her, and she asked, “Are you Joab?” “I am,” he answered.”

A. Joab was prudent and availed himself of help from inside the city walls.

II. “She said, ‘Listen to what your servant has to say.’ ‘I’m listening,’ he said.’”

A. The woman said she had something he should hear.

B. Joab was wise enough to listen!

2 Samuel 20:18, She continued, "Long ago they used to say, 'Get your answer at Abel,' and that settled it. (NIV)

I. “She continued, ‘Long ago they used to say, ‘Get your answer at Abel,’ and that settled it.’”

A. Abel had long been known as the place to obtain wise counsel which would settle problems.
B. The “wise woman” was evidently saying, “Before you began tearing down the walls of our city, you should have asked me for my advice, a better way.”

C. The Law of Moses had specified that a city be given the opportunity to resolve conflicts peacefully before being attacked.

1. Deuteronomy 20:10, When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. (NIV)

   2. Joab had failed to comply with this law of the LORD perhaps assuming all the people of the city were Sheba’s allies. (See The Pulpit Commentary.)

2 Samuel 20:19, We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the LORD's inheritance?" (NIV)

I. “We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel.”

   A. This city is peaceful and faithful in its relationship with David, not a contentious or rebellious city deserving of destruction. (See Smith.)

      1. Speaking for the city, the wise woman told Joab that they were peaceful and faithful people, not supporters of the rebellious Sheba.

II. “You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel.”

   A. Abel was a mother; that is, a metropolis, the major city of that district, a significant part of God’s heritage.
B. There is no need to destroy such a notable city when you can achieve your goal, the woman told Joab, by a much better, simpler way that does not endanger the city nor the lives of its people.

III. “Why do you want to swallow up the LORD’s inheritance?”

A. There is no reason to violently destroy an innocent town to achieve your goal.

B. The wise woman had a better plan with which the citizens of Abel would gladly co-operate.

2 Samuel 20:20, "Far be it from me!" Joab replied, "Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy!

I. “Far be it from me!” Joab replied, “Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy!”

A. Smith wrote, “In his private disputes Joab was ruthless; in his public business he was usually conciliatory.”

1. 2 Samuel 2:27-28, Joab answered, "As surely as God lives, if you had not spoken, the men would have continued the pursuit of their brothers until morning." So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the men came to a halt; they no longer pursued Israel, nor did they fight anymore. (NIV)

2. 2 Samuel 18:16, Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped pursuing Israel, for Joab halted them. (NIV)

2 Samuel 20:21, That is not the case. A man named Sheba son of Bicri, from the hill country of Ephraim, has lifted up his
hand against the king, against David. Hand over this one man, and I'll withdraw from the city." The woman said to Joab, "His head will be thrown to you from the wall." (NIV)

I. “That is not the case.”

A. The people of Abel may not have understood why Joab was attacking their city. (See Smith.)

B. Joab here states that he did not want to injure innocent, peaceful people nor to destroy a city Israel had inherited from God.

II. “A man named Sheba son of Bicri, from the hill country of Ephraim, has lifted up his hand against the king, against David.”

A. Joab stated his objective: capture Sheba and squash his rebellion against king David.

B. “. . .the hills of Ephraim extended into the territory of Benjamin and retained their name. Sheba was a Benjamite.” (See The Pulpit Commentary.)

1. 1 Samuel 1:1, There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. (NIV)

III. “Hand over this one man, and I’ll withdraw from the city.”

A. Joab said he only wanted Sheba delivered to him.

B. Joab promised to withdraw when he had been given custody of Sheba.
IV. “The woman said to Joab, “His head will be thrown to you from the wall.”

A. The wise woman, clearly having the support of the town’s people, said she would do better than Joab asked.

1. She said Sheba’s head would be thrown over the wall to Joab.

2 Samuel 20:22, Then the woman went to all the people with her wise advice, and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bicri and threw it to Joab. So he sounded the trumpet, and his men dispersed from the city, each returning to his home. And Joab went back to the king in Jerusalem. (NIV)

I. “Then the woman went to all the people with her wise advice, . . .”

A. This “wise woman” gave her fellow-citizens a good way to avoid destruction of the city and solve the problem: deliver Sheba to Joab.

B. This was obviously a very good plan and was forthwith executed.

1. Ecclesiastes 9:13-15, I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siegeworks against it. Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. (NIV)
II. “and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bicri and threw it to Joab.”

   A. Evidently Sheba did not have many supporters in Abel, Smith concluded.

   B. “Thus the war came to a satisfactory end with a minimum of casualties, thanks to the intervention of a wise woman,” Smith concluded.

III. “So he (Joab) sounded the trumpet, and his men dispersed from the city, each returning to his home.

   A. The uprising was over!

       1. The trumpet signaled the cessation of hostilities. (See Coffman.)

IV. “And Joab went back to the king in Jerusalem.”

   A. Joab was restored to his office as commander of the entire army, Smith wrote, and, for the moment, escaped unscathed because he had crushed Sheba’s rebellion.

       1. However, Joab’s murders were not forgiven nor forgotten.

           a. 1 Kings 2:5, 28-35, "Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me—what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet. When the news reached Joab, who had
conspired with Adonijah though not with Absalom, he fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar. King Solomon was told that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD and was beside the altar. Then Solomon ordered Benaiah son of Jehoiada, "Go, strike him down!" So Benaiah entered the tent of the LORD and said to Joab, "The king says, 'Come out!' " But he answered, "No, I will die here." Benaiah reported to the king, "This is how Joab answered me." Then the king commanded Benaiah, "Do as he says. Strike him down and bury him, and so clear me and my father's house of the guilt of the innocent blood that Joab shed. The LORD will repay him for the blood he shed, because without the knowledge of my father David he attacked two men and killed them with the sword. Both of them—Abner son of Ner, commander of Israel's army, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of Judah's army—were better men and more upright than he. May the guilt of their blood rest on the head of Joab and his descendants forever. But on David and his descendants, his house and his throne, may there be the LORD's peace forever." So Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up and struck down Joab and killed him, and he was buried on his own land in the desert. The king put Benaiah son of Jehoiada over the army in Joab's position and replaced Abiathar with Zadok the priest. (NIV)

2. “Still, evil as Joab surely was, he was the principal military architect of building and sustaining the throne
of David, a fact David never seemed to recognize, Coffman wrote.”

Note: “With this list of David’s chief officers, the narrator closes the history of David’s reign. The remaining four chapters of 2 Samuel form a kind of appendix,” Coffman explained.

3. To fail to restore Joab to command of the military may have, Clarke thought, precipitated another civil war, popular uprising.

2 Samuel 20:23, Joab was over Israel's entire army; Benaiyah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; (NIV)

I. “Joab was over Israel’s entire army: . . .”

A. Joab got his old job back! . . . commander of the armed forces.

B. David did not dispute Joab’s right to resume his post of commander-in-chief of the armed forces. (See Coffman.)

1. David knew what kind of man Joab was, but he needed him.

2. With Joab’s success in regard to Amasa and his popularity with the people and the army, David had little choice other than to re-appoint Joab as commanding general of the army.

II. “Benaiyah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; . . .”

A. The commander of the Kerethites and Pelethites, David’s mighty men, was Benaiyah, a Levite who remained loyal to
David during Absalom’s rebellion. He was also loyal to Solomon and became commander-in-chief, over the army under Solomon.

1. 2 Samuel 8:18, Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; and David's sons were royal advisers. (NIV)

B. Clark wrote that “Benaiah was over the archers and slingers.”

1. 2 Samuel 8:18, Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; and David's sons were royal advisers. (NIV)

2 Samuel 20:24, Adoniram was in charge of forced labor; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; (NIV)

I. “Adoniram (Adoram, Hadoram) was in charge of forced labor; . . .”

A. “Adoniram was the son of Abda and an officer under kings David, Solomon, and Rehoboam. David placed Adoniram in charge of forced labor and Solomon appointed him “over the labor force” – a group sent to work in his enforced labor crews in Lebanon.” (Youngblood)

1. David forced certain people to work for the government without pay. (See Smith.)

2. David introduced forced labor in Israel.

B. Clarke stated that Adoram was over the tribute; that is, the chief receiver of the taxes, but The Pulpit Commentary disagreed with this opinion.
C. Solomon greatly increased forced labor among the Israelites.

II. “Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; . . .”

A. Ahilud was the father of Jehoshaphat who was “recorder” for David and Solomon. (Youngblood)

B. Clarke described his position as registrar of public events.

2 Samuel 20:25, Sheva was secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; (NIV)

I. “Sheva (Seraiah, Shavsha, Seriah, Shisha) was secretary; . . .”

A. Sheva was a scribe in king David’s administration; that is, the king’s secretary.

II. “Zadok and Abiathar were priests; . . .”

A. Zadok was a high priest in the time of David, a son of Ahitub and descendant of Aaron through Eleazar. (Youngblood)

B. Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech of the priestly clan of Eli.

C. Abiathar and Zadok were loyal to David and were appointed priests in David’s royal court.

2 Samuel 20:26, and Ira the Jairite was David's priest. (NIV)

I. “and Ira the Jairite was David’s priest (seer).”
A. Ira was a “chief minister” or “priest” under David, (Youngblood) called by Smith “a personal advisor to the king, a civil and not an ecclesiastical minister.”

B. “Jair” was the name of a group of villagers of Manasseh in Gilead, Smith wrote.

C. King’s were known to have seers.

1. 2 Samuel 24:11, Before David got up the next morning, the word of the LORD had come to Gad the prophet, David's seer: (NIV)  

2. 2 Chronicles 35:15, The musicians, the descendants of Asaph, were in the places prescribed by David, Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun the king's seer. The gatekeepers at each gate did not need to leave their posts, because their fellow Levites made the preparations for them. (NIV)  

3. 2 Samuel 8:18, Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; and David's sons were royal advisers. (NIV)  

Conclusion:

I. Anderson concluded this chapter by writing, “This chapter closes with the ignominious death of Sheba and the return of Joab to the king in Jerusalem. Although Absalom and Sheba are now dead, the whole Absalom story points beyond itself.”

A. There is continuing political unrest among the tribes which will, at the beginning of Rehoboam’s reign, result in a permanent national division, north and south.
B. The northern tribes would be conquered by Assyria while the southern tribes would be taken into Babylonian captivity.

C. But, more about that in due time.
Questions

2 Samuel 20:1-26

(Questions based on NIV text.)

1. How did the tribal arguments at Gilgal abruptly end? __________

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

2. What saddened David’s Jerusalem’s homecoming? __________

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

3. How could Sheba’s rebellion have been prevented? What caused this rebellion? __________

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

4. Who was Sheba? What kind of person was he? For what is he remembered? __________

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
5. Who was Bicri? __________________________________________________________

6. ___________________ had come to the _______________________
   to make ____________________________________________,
   but __________________________ and ____________________________
   caused the _____________________________ to ___________________.
   ____________________________ was a ____________________________
   of__________________________ _______________________.

7. ___________________’s _________________________
   of ______________________ to the ____________________________
   in ______________________ with the _____________________________
   ___________________________ of all __________________________ were
   ___________________________. __________________________ must
   have been ___________________________ ______________________________
   by these __________________________.  

8. The ______________________ of ________________________,
   previously complicit in ___________________’s ______________________,
   was now “________________________” to ___________________.
   ___________________ had joined ________________________’s
   __________________________  ________________________ and was the
   __________________________ to propose ______________________
   with ______________________. Seeing their position supplanted by
   ________________________, __________________________ joined _________
   in __________________________ against ________________________.
9. When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, what was his first order of business? Was justice done in this case? Why or why not? ____________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

10. What order did David give Amasa? How well did Amasa perform this duty? What accounted for Amasa’s difficulty in mustering a fighting force? ____________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

11. How did Amasa come to be in command of David’s army? What political considerations led to Amasa’s appointment as David’s top general? ____________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

12. Why did David believe Sheba would cause him more harm than Absalom? Absalom’s threat to David was horrendous! _____
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
13. Who was Abishai? What order did David give Abishai? Why was Abishai given these duties? ___________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

14. Who were Joab’s men, the Kerethites and Pelethites? Describe their abilities as warriors? ___________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

15. Why was speed in pursuing Sheba so urgent? ______________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

16. Why did Joab continue to serve faithfully in David’s army following his demotion? Why didn’t he just retire? ____________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

17. It is _________________________ __________________ that ___________________’s handling of the _____________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

than his handling of the ________________ ______________.
Why do you think this was the case? ________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

18. Where did Amasa rejoin the army? Exactly where was this
place? ________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

19. What was Joab wearing when he met Amasa? What weapon(s)
did he have with him? ________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

20. Was Joab a good actor? Was Amasa “street smart?” Explain
your answer. ________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

21. Exactly how was Amasa killed? ________________

______________________________________________________
22. Was Amasa’s death justified homicide? Did Joab benefit by Amasa’s death? Give reasons for your answer. _______________

23. ___________________ and his _________________________ ________________ pursued _______________________ son of ______________. ____________________________ was again commanding the troops.

24. Describe the sight upon which soldiers came as they marched north. What did the guard tell them. What did the guard do to speed the troops onward in support of Joab? ________________

25. Sheba continued marching north recruiting soldiers. Give as much information as possible about Abel Beth Maacah and the Berites. ________________________________
26. Sheba took refuge in Abel Beth Maacah. How did Joab address this problem? ______________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

27. What advice did “a wise woman” give Joab? On what principles was her advice based? __________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

28. How was “the Sheba problem” resolved? Did Joab act wisely to bring about its resolution? If so, how? _________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

29. Name and give biographical information about the departmental heads in David’s government. See 2 Samuel 20:23-26. ______________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
30. By way of conclusion, describe the political climate as 2 Samuel 20 comes to a close. Speak to the future effects of this political climate. ______________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________