

Title: The Growing Kingdom

Scripture: 2 Samuel 3

Series: The Promise of the Messianic Kingdom

1. Introduction:

- a. This chapter tells of the death of the most powerful person left in the house of Saul. It is a continuation of the slow process by which David becomes king over all Israel.

2. Verses 1-5: God's kingdom always wins: There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. And David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker. (2) And sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam of Jezreel; (3) and his second, Chileab, of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; (4) and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; (5) and the sixth, Ithream, of Eglah, David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

- a. The main idea of this passage of Scripture is simply this, David's kingdom (God's kingdom), once initiated on earth, became stronger and stronger while the kingdom of Ishbosheth (man's kingdom) progressively became weaker and weaker. In other words, there is only room for one true king!
 - i. Beloved, we immediately run into an incredible truth. As was with David, it is with his greatest

Son, Jesus Christ. The kingdom of our Christ began humbly, from a mustard seed, at his first coming and has been progressively growing (a myriad of saints have been saved and will be saved). The kingdom of our Lord will continue to gather strength, and this world system will continue to weaken with sin and decay until the second coming of King Jesus and the final establishment of His eternal throne.

- ii. Beloved, all of history comes down to this central truth; King Jesus wins, and because we are His people, we win with Him!
- b. Our passage also tells us that David took multiple wives. This practice agreed with the culture of the day, but it violated the biblical command.
 - i. Speaking of the rules regulating the kingship, God warned the kings specifically in **Deuteronomy 17:17** And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.
 - ii. David clearly broke this command and sinned in this regard, and that sin would lead to dire consequences.
- c. However, the sons given to David were a source of strength. Children are always a blessing from the Lord, even if the manner of their conception is sinful.

3. Verses 6-11: Man's kingdom is always corrupt: While there was war between the house of Saul and the house of

David, Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul. (7) Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. And Ish-bosheth said to Abner, “Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?” (8) Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, “Am I a dog's head of Judah? To this day I keep showing steadfast love to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not given you into the hand of David. And yet you charge me today with a fault concerning a woman. (9) God do so to Abner and more also, if I do not accomplish for David what the LORD has sworn to him, (10) to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba.” (11) And Ish-bosheth could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.

- a. We find here that Abner, too, was making himself strong in the house of Saul, claiming one of Saul's harem as his own. In the day's culture, the man who took over the harem of the deceased king asserted his claim to succession to the throne.
 - i. Abner viewed himself more and more as the real heir of Saul's kingdom. He saw himself as the real king and Ishbosheth as a puppet to control.
 - ii. Ishbosheth may have been a puppet and a weakling, but he was not dumb; he understood what Abner was doing and the potential cost of Abner's actions. So Ishbosheth confronted Abner. He would not allow the treason to continue. He would not allow Abner to become the pseudo-king.

- iii. Our passage tells us that Abner became very angry when he was confronted. He could not stand being second to Ishbosheth but Abner hid his anger and treason in the cloak of patriotism:
 - 1. **To this day I keep showing steadfast love to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and his friends, and have not given you into the hand of David. And yet you charge me today with a fault concerning a woman.**
 - a. Many people have a tendency to hide their evil under a cloak of feigning righteousness.
- iv. Then Abner threatened Ishbosheth:
 - 1. **God do so to Abner and more also, if I do not accomplish for David what the LORD has sworn to him, (10) to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba.”**
- v. There was nothing that Ishbosheth could do. Abner was too popular among the soldiers and too powerful within the northern tribes. Ishbosheth allows him to live.
- b. Abner's words about fulfilling the Word of the Lord, although consistent with God's decree that Israel would be ruled by David, were not driven by correct theology but by the politics of self-love. Abner was not seeking to expand David's kingship because he felt the authority of God's word but because he sought his own advantage. If he could not rule in an inferior

kingdom, he would have a high position in the divine kingdom.

- i. In other words, If Ishbosheth was not going to roll over and play dead, then the next best option for Abner was to swing his support to David and use his influence over the northern tribes as a bargaining chip with David, thereby assuring himself a powerful position in David's kingdom.
 - ii. So Abner only quoted Scripture when it suited him.
- c. Beloved, Abner's sin is still very present in the church of God today. We all have a tendency to don the robes of religiosity in order to hide our desire for self-promotion or self-justification.
- i. **Luke 22:24** A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.
 - ii. **2 Corinthians 13:5** Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!
 1. Beloved, we must constantly examine our motives.
 - iii. **1 Corinthians 10:31** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

4. Verses 12-15: A matter of Righteousness: And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, “To whom does

the land belong? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring over all Israel to you.” (13) And he said, “Good; I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you; that is, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face.” (14) Then David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, “Give me my wife Michal, for whom I paid the bridal price of a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.” (15) And Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish. (16) But her husband went with her, weeping after her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go, return.” And he returned.

a. So Abner contacts David. He promises David to unify the kingdom under the Davidic rule if only David would “**make a covenant with him.**”

i. Abner, not so subtly, asks David for an honored position.

b. Beloved, what follows has been a source of great controversy and wrong thinking within Christianity. Before speaking to Abner, David demands that his wife, Michal be restored to him.

i. We learned in our studies of 1 Samuel that David had legally paid the bridal price and had never divorced Michal his wife. Saul, her father, had violated the law and, while she was legitimately married to David, gave her to another man as a wife. This he did under the cover that David abandoned her, even though it had been his open persecution that had caused David to flee in the first place. So even though Michal was remarried

(illegitimately), she was still legally David's wife. David demands that his wife be returned to him. Her restoration would have the following consequences:

1. The restoration of David's wife to him would correct a grave wrong committed against both David and Michal.
 2. The restoration of David's wife to him would strengthen David's position with the northern tribes.
 3. Ishbosheth's involvement would mean that even he recognized David's connection with the house of Saul. As David had paid the bride price and was stronger than Ishbosheth, Ishbosheth could not refuse to return David's wife to him.
- c. Beloved, note that there is no violation of the law in what David demands. The law in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 forbids the former husband of a woman from remarrying that same woman after she had been married in the meantime to another man. David had never divorced Michal. Michal had been wrongly taken from David.
- d. However, the scene that unfolds is loaded with great sadness as we watch Paltiel, heartbroken, helpless, and with many tears, follow Michal as she is set to be given to David. Eventually, he must return home without his wife, the mother of his children. Apparently, during the years together, both Palteil and Michal had grown to love each other very much. They had built a life together. What seems to make

the matter worse is that Michal goes from a monogamous committed relationship to being one of the wives of David. It is this precise last point that causes the reader's apprehension.

- i. Beloved, sin causes terrible situations that are painful to unravel. Situations that, if the scripture had been obeyed in the first place, would never have happened. Yes, Paltiel loved Michal and yes, they had children together. But the original sin of the illegitimate marriage, which was forbidden by the Scriptures, nullified whatever they might have built together. We cannot blame Scripture when our sins put us in impossible and heartbreaking situations. That is what sin does. Beloved, it is our tendency to disobey Scripture that causes heartache in the first place. To fix situations like these is painful and should be painful. Sin comes at an incredible price.
- ii. David's demands only rectify an abhorrent sin committed against him, Michael, and even Paltiel.

5. Verses 17-19: Truth in the mouths of a liar: And Abner conferred with the elders of Israel, saying, "For some time past you have been seeking David as king over you. (18) Now then bring it about, for the LORD has promised David, saying, 'By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and from the hand of all their enemies.'" (19) Abner also spoke to Benjamin. And then Abner went to tell David at

Hebron all that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin thought good to do.

- a. The Israelites, even the members of Saul's own tribe of Benjamin, seemed to understand that Ishbosheth's kingdom was a failure.
- b. So Abner evangelizes the men into David's kingdom. He speaks of God's will and God's promises in what appear to be earnest and loving terms. But Abner's sincerity is false.
 - i. Unrighteous Abner, by God's grace, becomes a minister of righteousness, even when he does not believe a word of what he says. Paul had a similar experience:
 1. **Philippians 1:14-18** And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (15) Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. (16) The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. (17) The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. (18) What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,
 2. God can use anyone and anything to accomplish his will and He does so here.

6. Verses 20-27: Joab's betrayal: When Abner came with twenty men to David at Hebron, David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. (21) And Abner said to David, "I will arise and go and will gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace. (22) Just then the servants of David arrived with Joab from a raid, bringing much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David at Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. (23) When Joab and all the army that was with him came, it was told Joab, "Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has let him go, and he has gone in peace." (24) Then Joab went to the king and said, "What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you. Why is it that you have sent him away, so that he is gone? (25) You know that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you and to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing." (26) When Joab came out from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern of Sirah. But David did not know about it. (27) And when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the midst of the gate to speak with him privately, and there he struck him in the stomach, so that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

- a. David had granted safe passage to Abner. This is emphasized in vv. 22 and 23.
 - i. This is why Abner did not suspect Joab of betrayal when Joab called him back.

- b. So acting independently, Joab murders Abner. The immediate reason is given in verses 27 and 30: he and Abishai were avenging Asahel's death. Abner had killed Asahel; now Joab kills Abner.
 - i. However, Abner killed Asahel in the midst of battle and only after graciously warning Asahel to leave him alone.
 - ii. Had the death of Asahel been murder, then Joab would have been justified in his actions but it wasn't murder.
 - iii. Joab was a selfish and vengeful man.

7. Verses 28-39: The unfairness of man's vengeance:

Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, "I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the LORD for the blood of Abner the son of Ner. (29) May it fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house, and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge or who is leprous or who holds a spindle or who falls by the sword or who lacks bread!" (30) So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon. (31) Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth and mourn before Abner." And King David followed the bier. (32) They buried Abner at Hebron. And the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. (33) And the king lamented for Abner, saying, "Should Abner die as a fool dies? (34) Your hands were not bound; your feet were not fettered; as one falls before the wicked

you have fallen.” And all the people wept again over him. (35) Then all the people came to persuade David to eat bread while it was yet day. But David swore, saying, “God do so to me and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!” (36) And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them, as everything that the king did pleased all the people. (37) So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's will to put to death Abner the son of Ner. (38) And the king said to his servants, “Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? (39) And I was gentle today, though anointed king. These men, the sons of Zeruiah, are more severe than I. The LORD repay the evildoer according to his wickedness!”

- a. David goes out of his way to demonstrate that Joab acted independently. Joab’s actions could have had dire consequences on David’s new kingdom.
 - i. David asserted his innocence publicly
 - ii. Cursed Joab and his father’s house
 - iii. Ordered Joab and the troops to participate in the public mourning of Abner
 - iv. David walked behind the corpse and wept openly and audibly, and unabashedly at the grave
 - v. David wrote a lament commemorating the tragedy
 - vi. David fasted until sundown
 1. All of this convinced the people that David was guiltless of Abner’s death.
 2. And therefore, what Satan meant for evil, God used for good.

- a. Abner's death further weakens Ishbosheth and strengthens David.
 - b. Beloved, behold the sovereignty of God. How infinitely greater than our understanding is the secret counsel of our God.
 - i. **Psalm 75:7** but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.
 - c. So, although Joab is guilty of murder and will be held responsible by God, his actions serve to further the kingdom of God's anointed
- b. So what can we learn from this episode? We learn that the spirit of Joab can easily be present in any of us. We are too often concerned with our rights and our hurt. We can easily carry a grudge and be prone to murder.
- i. **Ephesians 4:31-32** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. (32) Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

8. Implications:

- a. We marvel that with all this resistance, God's kingdom not only continued to grow in David's time but eventually fill Israel.
 - i. Beloved, there is nothing man can do, God's kingdom will be established.

- b. Sometimes nothing looks so unlikely and remote to us as the day when the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ (Revelation 11:15). But it will come, for God has decreed it to Jesus (Psalm 2:8-9), and no Abner or Joab or greater conspirator will be able to stop it.
9. **Benediction:**
- a. **Revelation 11:15** Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

Public Reading of Scripture
Revelation 22:12-17