

SECOND SAMUEL

Chapter 2

David Anointed King Of Judah

After this David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” And the LORD said to him, “Go up.” David said, “To which shall I go up?” And he said, “To Hebron.” 2 So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 3 And David brought up his men who were with him, everyone with his household, and they lived in the towns of Hebron. 4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. When they told David, “It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul,” 5 David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, “May you be blessed by the LORD, because you showed this loyalty to Saul your lord and buried him. 6 Now may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you. And I will do good to you because you have done this thing. 7 Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant, for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.”

2:1 Because Saul had died, David wondered whether he should seek a leadership role among the Israelites. (TLSB)

David inquired of the LORD. By means of the ephod through the priest Abiathar. (CSB)

into any of the cities of Judah. Even though Saul was dead and David had many friends and contacts among the people of his own tribe (see 1Sa 30:26–31), David did not presume to return from Philistine territory to assume the kingship promised to him without first seeking the Lord’s guidance. *Hebron.* An old and important city (see Ge 13:18; 23:2; Jos 15:13–15) centrally located in the tribe of Judah. (CSB)

2:3 *men who were with him.* The large group was probably more than the walled city of Hebron could hold, so they settled in unwalled villages in the area. (TLSB)

2:4 *anointed David king.* David had previously been anointed privately by Samuel in the presence of his own family. Here the anointing ceremony is repeated as a public recognition by his own tribe of his divine calling to be king. (CSB)

Marked as king. See note, 1Sm 10:1. David had been anointed by Samuel (1Sm 16:5–13). At first, David reigned only over the tribe of Judah (cf v 10). As a result, Israel was divided. (TLSB)

over the house of Judah. Very likely the tribe of Simeon was also involved (see Jos 19:1; Jdg 1:3), but the Judahites in every way dominated the area. (CSB)

2:5–7 Early in Saul’s reign, he rescued Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonite army. The citizens remembered his aid, and later they rescued the bodies of Saul and his sons from the walls of Beth-shan, burying the remains in their own city. David commended this courageous act. Their burial of Saul mirrored David’s own loyalty and respect for Saul and his family. Because David was known as Saul’s enemy, his promise to do good to them must also have comforted them. (TLSB)

2:7 *Saul your lord is dead...has anointed me.* David’s concluding statement to the men of Jabesh Gilead is a veiled invitation to them to recognize him as their king just as the tribe of Judah had done. This appeal for their support, however, was ignored (see 1Sa 2:8–9). (CSB)

2:1–7 David inquires of the Lord, moves to the area of Hebron, and is anointed by the men of Judah as their king. When told that the men of Jabesh-gilead have buried Saul, David blesses them and promises to treat them well. We, too, should inquire of the Lord in His Holy Word and seek reconciliation with our enemies. Through the reconciliation of Christ’s cross, God blesses us and shows us His steadfast love and faithfulness. • Lord, in Your Word, show me Your will for my life and Your reconciling love. Amen. (TLSB)

Ish-bosheth Made King of Israel

8 But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim, 9 and he made him king over Gilead and the Ashurites and Jezreel and Ephraim and Benjamin and all Israel. 10 Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. 11 And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

2:8 *Ish-Bosheth.* The name was originally Ish-(or Esh-)Baal (1Ch 8:33) but was changed by the author of Samuel to Ish-Bosheth, meaning “man of the shameful thing.” Evidently Baal (meaning “lord” or “master”) was at this time still used to refer to the Lord. Later this was discontinued because of confusion with the Canaanite god Baal, and the author of Samuel reflects the later sensitivity. (CSB)

brought him. Abner takes the initiative in the power vacuum created by Saul’s death, using the unassertive Ish-Bosheth as a pawn for his own ambitions. There is no evidence that Ish-Bosheth had strong support among the Israelites generally. (CSB)

Mahanaim. A Gileadite town in Transjordan and thus beyond the sphere of Philistine domination—a kind of refugee capital. (CSB)

Ish-bosheth’s capital city. (TLSB)

2:9 *He made him king.* As a nephew of Saul, Abner had both a family and a career interest in ensuring dynastic succession for Saul’s house. (CSB)

Gilead ... all Israel. This delineation of Ish-Bosheth’s realm suggests that his actual rule, while involving territory both east and west of the Jordan, was quite limited and that the last entry (“all Israel”) was more claim than reality. David ruled over Judah and Simeon, and the Philistines controlled large sections of the northern tribal regions. (CSB)

2:10–11 Ish-bosheth apparently did not fight in the battle at Mount Gilboa, perhaps in order to assure an heir to the throne in case disaster struck. He was murdered at the end of two years (4:7). David enjoyed a more stable rule, reigning over Judah at Hebron for 7½ years. The writer anticipates Ish-bosheth’s downfall. (TLSB)

2:11 *seven years and six months.* Cf. Ish-Bosheth’s two-year reign in Mahanaim (v. 10). Because it appears that David was made king over all Israel shortly after Ish-Bosheth’s death (5:1–5) and moved his capital to Jerusalem not long afterward (5:6–12), reconciling the lengths of David’s and Ish-Bosheth’s reigns is difficult. The difficulty is best resolved by assuming that it took Ish-Bosheth a number of years to be recognized as his father’s successor, and that the two years of his reign roughly correspond to the last two or three years of David’s reign in Hebron. (CSB)

2:8–11 Abner makes Saul’s son Ish-bosheth king over the northern tribes of Israel, while David reigns over Judah. David may want to reign over all Israel right away, but that is not to be. Sometimes, God’s promises call for patience. We have inherited the full kingdom of heaven through the innocent sufferings and death of Jesus, our Savior. We wait patiently to possess it. • Heavenly Father, give me patience as You fulfill Your promises in Your time. Amen. (TLSB)

The Battle of Gibeon

12 Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. **13** And Joab the son of Zeruiah and the servants of David went out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. And they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool. **14** And Abner said to Joab, “Let the young men arise and compete before us.” And Joab said, “Let them arise.” **15** Then they arose and passed over by number, twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. **16** And each caught his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent’s side, so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is at Gibeon. **17** And the battle was very fierce that day. And Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David. **18** And the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle. **19** And Asahel pursued Abner, and as he went, he turned neither to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner. **20** Then Abner looked behind him and said, “Is it you, Asahel?” And he answered, “It is I.” **21** Abner said to him, “Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and seize one of the young men and take his spoil.” But Asahel would not turn aside from following him. **22** And Abner said again to Asahel, “Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab?” **23** But he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the butt of his spear, so that the spear came out at his back. And he fell there and died where he was. And all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still. **24** But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. And as the sun was going down they came to the hill of Ammah, which lies before Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon. **25** And the people of Benjamin gathered themselves together behind Abner and became one group and took their stand on the top of a hill. **26** Then Abner called to Joab, “Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you tell your people to turn from the pursuit of their brothers?” **27** And Joab said, “As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely the men would not have given up the pursuit of their brothers until the morning.” **28** So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the men stopped and pursued Israel no more, nor did they fight anymore. **29** And Abner and his men went all that night through the Arabah. They crossed the Jordan, and marching the whole morning, they came to Mahanaim. **30** Joab returned from the pursuit of Abner. And when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing from David’s servants nineteen men besides Asahel. **31** But the servants of David had struck down of Benjamin 360 of Abner’s men. **32** And they took up Asahel and buried him in the tomb of his father, which was at Bethlehem. And Joab and his men marched all night, and the day broke upon them at Hebron.

2:12 Abner initiates an action to prevent David’s sphere of influence from spreading northward out of Judah. Gibeon was located in the tribal area of Benjamin, to which Saul and his family belonged, and which the Philistines had not occupied. (CSB)

2:13 *Joab son of Zeruiah.* Joab became a figure of major importance during David’s reign as a competent but ruthless military leader (see 10:7–14; 11:1; 12:26; 1Ki 11:15–16). At times David was unable to control him (3:39; 18:5, 14; 1Ki 2:5–6), and he was eventually executed for his wanton assassinations and his part in the conspiracy to place Adonijah rather than Solomon on David’s throne (1Ki 2:28–34). (CSB)

David's nephew and commander of his army. (TLSB)

pool. Natural place to meet. Archaeologists have found it to be c 36 ft in diameter and nearly as deep, carved from solid rock. Water would have pooled at the bottom of this deep, broad shaft. It was reached by a series of steps. (TLSB)

2:14 The standoff at the pool was delayed by Abner's suggestion that there be a competition. (TLSB)

young men. Nu 1:3 describes military service beginning at age 20, though conflicts may have brought adolescents into service. (TLSB)

2:15 *Benjamin.* At this time Ish-Bosheth seems to have been supported mainly by his own tribesmen. (CSB)

2:16 *down together.* May mean all 24 men died due to inexperience and zeal. (TLSB)

2:17 *each caught his opponent by the head.* Because the representative combat by 12 men from each side was indecisive, a full-scale battle ensued in which David's forces were victorious. The attempt to use representative combat to avoid the decimation of civil war failed (see 3:1). (CSB)

Rather than preventing further bloodshed, the contest caused a fierce battle from which Ish-bosheth's army retreated. (TLSB)

2:18 Three sons of David's sister Zeruiah wanted to eliminate Abner, making it possible for David to become king of all Israel. (TLSB)

2:19–23 *Asahel.* David's youngest nephew foolishly believed he could overtake and kill the commander of the enemy forces. (TLSB)

2:21–22 Aware of his own superiority in combat, Abner advised Asahel to be content with fighting a soldier of lesser rank. He likely realized that Asahel's death would make the feud worse. (TLSB)

2:21 *Turn aside.* Abner tried unsuccessfully to avoid the necessity of killing Asahel. (CSB)

2:22 *How could I look your brother Joab in the face?* Abner did not want the hostility between himself and Joab to be intensified by the practice of blood revenge. (CSB)

2:23 Apparently, Abner stopped quickly and pierced Asahel with a backward thrust of his spear. (TLSB)

stood still. From amazement. (TLSB)

2:24 *Joab and Abishai.* Asahel's brothers continued to pursue Abner. (TLSB)

hill of Ammah ... Giah. Location is difficult to identify. Apparently it was a short distance northwest of Gibeon. (TLSB)

2:25 *hill.* At Ammah, a defensible position. (TLSB)

2:26 *Must the sword devour forever?* Abner proposes an armistice as a means of avoiding the awful consequences of civil war. (CSB)

Abner requests peace, based on tribal kinship. Cf Jgs 21:16–24. (TLSB)

2:27 *as God lives.* An oath formula. (CSB)

2:28 *nor did they fight anymore.* For the present the open conflict ceased, but the hostility remained (see 3:1). (CSB)

2:29 Abner's forces withdrew by cover of darkness. (TLSB)

Arabah. Wilderness of the Great Rift Valley. (TLSB)

2:30 *nineteen.* Loss of c 3 percent, if David's army was still c 600 men (1Sm 27:2). (TLSB)

2:12–32 Competition at Gibeon leads to a fierce battle. The Benjaminites are defeated, but David's nephew Asahel is slain by Abner. Sadly, those fighting and killing one another are all members of God's people Israel. May God prevent us from quarreling unnecessarily with fellow Christians, especially those of our own congregation or family. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rm 5:1), so let us be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). • Lord Jesus, grant me peace with all people, especially those who confess the same faith. Amen. (TLSB)