SECOND SAMUEL

Chapter 4

*Ish-Bosheth Murdered*

**When Ish-Bosheth son of Saul heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel became alarmed. 2 Now Saul’s son had two men who were leaders of raiding bands. One was named Baanah and the other Recab; they were sons of Rimmon the Beerothite from the tribe of Benjamin—Beeroth is considered part of Benjamin, 3 because the people of Beeroth fled to Gittaim and have lived there as aliens to this day. 4 (Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in both feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled. His name was Mephibosheth.) 5 Now Recab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, set out for the house of Ish-Bosheth, and they arrived there in the heat of the day while he was taking his noonday rest. 6 They went into the inner part of the house as if to get some wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Recab and his brother Baanah slipped away. 7 They had gone into the house while he was lying on the bed in his bedroom. After they stabbed and killed him, they cut off his head. Taking it with them, they traveled all night by way of the Arabah. 8 They brought the head of Ish-Bosheth to David at Hebron and said to the king, “Here is the head of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, your enemy, who tried to take your life. This day the Lord has avenged my lord the king against Saul and his offspring.” 9 David answered Recab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, “As surely as the Lord lives, who has delivered me out of all trouble, 10 when a man told me, ‘Saul is dead,’ and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and put him to death in Ziklag. That was the reward I gave him for his news! 11 How much more—when wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed—should I not now demand his blood from your hand and rid the earth of you!” 12 So David gave an order to his men, and they killed them. They cut off their hands and feet and hung the bodies by the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-Bosheth and buried it in Abner’s tomb at Hebron.**

**4:1** *he lost courage.* Ish-Bosheth was very much aware of his dependence on Abner (see note on 2:8). (CSB)

Lit, “his hands became feeble.” (TLSB)

*dismayed*. Lit, “trembled inwardly.” (TLSB)

*all Israel became alarmed.* Civil strife threatened, and the northern tribes were now without a strong leader. (CSB)

**4:2** *raiding bands*. They probably plundered non-Israelite communities for Ish-bosheth, much as Joab’s band had done for David (3:22). (TLSB)

*Beeroth.* One of the Gibeonite cities (Jos 9:17) assigned to Benjamin (Jos 18:25). (CSB)

**4:3** *Gittaim.* Its location is not known (but see Ne 11:33), so it is possible that the “because” at the beginning of the verse is unwarranted. (CSB)

Lit, “two winepresses.” (TLSB)

**4:4** Anticipates ch 9. (TLSB)

*Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in both feet.* The writer emphasizes that with the death of Ish-Bosheth (see v. 6) there was no other viable claimant to the throne from the house of Saul. (CSB)

*news about Saul and Jonathan.* See 1:4; 1Sa 31:2–4. (CSB)

*Jezreel*. Region where Saul and Jonathan died (on Mount Gilboa). (TLSB)

*Mephibosheth.* See 9:1–13; 16:1–4; 19:24–30; 21:7–8. The name was originally Merib-Baal (apparently meaning “opponent of Baal”; see 1Ch 8:34), perhaps to be spelled “Meri-Baal” (meaning “loved by Baal”), but was changed by the author of Samuel to Mephibosheth (meaning “from the mouth of the shameful thing”). See note on 2:8. (CSB)

Member of Saul’s family; sole potential heir to Saul’s throne, apart from Ish-bosheth. (TLSB)

**4:7** Explains v 6. (TLSB)

*they*. Rechab and Baanah. (TLSB)

*Arabah.* See note on Dt 1:1. (CSB)

**4:8** *This day the Lord has avenged my lord the king against Saul.* Recab and Baanah depict their assassination of Ish-Bosheth in pious terms, expecting David to commend them for their act—a serious miscalculation. (CSB)

They believed they had God’s approval for the murder of Ish-bosheth and hoped David would reward them. (TLSB)

**4:9** *As surely as the Lord lives.* An oath formula (see note on 1Sa 14:39). (CSB)

*redeemed my life*. David relied not on murderous conspirators but on the Lord. (TLSB)\_

**4:10** *one told me*. Amalekite who claimed to have killed Saul (1:14–16). (TLSB)

**4:11** *a righteous man*. Ish-bosheth had done nothing to deserve death. (TLSB)

*demand his blood from your hand.* An expression for the death penalty (see Ge 9:5–6). David here does what he was unable to do with Joab (see note on 3:29). (CSB)

**4:12** *their hands and feet.* The hands that had assassinated Ish-Bosheth and the feet that had run with the news. (CSB)

*hanged them*. To show they had died under a divine curse (Dt 21:22–23). (TLSB)

*head* … *buried it*. To show respect. (TLSB)

**Ch 4** Two of Ish-bosheth’s soldiers murder him and bring his head to David, hoping to receive a reward. Instead, David sentences them to death, but honors his enemy Ish-bosheth. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rm 12:21). Through the Son of David, God has mercy on us, who were once His enemies. • Lord Jesus, Son of David, give me Your Spirit, that I may love my enemies and do good to those who hate me. Amen. (TLSB)