

Unstable as Water

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[0 : 00] 2 Samuel chapter 20, beginning in verse 1.

! Now there happened to be there a worthless man whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite, and he blew the trumpet and said, We have no portion in David, and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to his tents, O Israel. So all the men of Israel withdrew from David and followed Sheba, the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah followed their king steadfastly from the Jordan to Jerusalem. And David came to his house at Jerusalem, and the king took the ten concubines whom he had left to care for the house and put them in a house under guard and provided for them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood. Then the king said to Amasa, Call the men of Judah together to me within three days and be here yourself. So Amasa went to summon Judah, but he delayed beyond the set time that had been appointed him. And David said to Abishai, Now Sheba, the son of Bichri, will do us harm, do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord's servants and pursue him, lest he get himself to fortified cities and escape from us. And there went out after him Joab's men and the Cherethites and the Pelethites and all the mighty men. They went out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba, the son of Bichri. When they were at the great stone that is Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was wearing a soldier's garment, and over it was a belt with a sword and its sheath fastened on his thigh. And as he went forward, it fell out. And Joab said to Amasa, Is it well with you, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. But Amasa did not observe the sword that was in Joab's hand.

So Joab struck him with it in the stomach and spilled his entrails to the ground without striking a second blow, and he died. Then Joab and Abishai, his brother, pursued Sheba, the son of Bichri. And one of Joab's men took his stand by Amasa and said, Whoever favors Joab and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab. And Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the highway, and anyone who came by seeing him stopped. And when the men saw that all the people stopped, he carried Amasa out of the highway into the field and threw a garment over him. When he was taken out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba, the son of Bichri. And Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel, Abel of Beth-ma-aka, and all the Bichrites assembled and followed him in. And all the men who were with Joab and besieged him in Abel of Beth-ma-aka, they cast up a mound against the city, and it stood against the rampart, and they were battering the wall to throw it down. Then a wise woman called from the city, Listen, listen, tell Joab, come here, that I may speak to you. And he came near her, and the woman said, Are you Joab? He answered, I am. Then she said to him, Listen to the words of your servant. And he answered, I am listening. Then she said, They used to say in former times, Let them but ask counsel at Abel, and so they settled a matter. I am one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why will you swallow up the heritage of the Lord? Joab answered, Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy. That is not true. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, called Sheba, the son of Bichri, has lifted up his hand against King David. Give up him alone, and I will withdraw from the city.

And the woman said to Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall. Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom, and they cut off the head of Sheba, the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they dispersed from the city, every man to his home. And Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king. Now Joab was in command of all the army of Israel, and Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, was in command of the Cherethites and the Pelethites. And Adarim was in charge of the forced labor. And Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahulad, was the recorder. And Sheba was secretary, and Zadok and Abiathar were priests. And Ira, the Jerite, was also David's priest. So if you remember from last week, David returned as king. Absalom had been

killed by Joab, and he was mourning and grieving over that.

And the people were coming back to the kingdom, and they were coming back victorious, but they didn't feel like they had any victory because of David's reaction to the whole situation. And so Joab, if you remember, confronts David and basically says, you know, quit crying, get up, go out, dry your eye, right? The people need to see you. If you don't go out there and act like a king now, then things will be worse for you later on than they are today. And so David goes out, and then we see David tries to bring some stability to the kingdom, tries to heal some of the wounds. One of the things he does is removes Joab from his place as commander, and he puts Amasa in his place. And if you remember, Amasa was Absalom's commander. So, you know, it's kind of a tricky situation there. And so we left things with the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribe of Judah kind of in disagreement, and there's some instability. And we see that that instability only continues throughout the 20th chapter of 2 Samuel. But I want to begin by talking about, you know, human organizations and structures and human creations and how many times they seem like they're unshakable and they'll be here forever.

[6 : 27] Like the Titanic, you know, was the ship that couldn't be sunk, and then lo and behold, it sunk. I thought of Blockbuster. Remember Blockbuster Video? That was a powerhouse company. And there was no match for them, really. And you thought that that was the kind of company like Coca-Cola or some of the others in America that would just go on forever. But there is no more Blockbusters anymore.

And what's interesting is some people don't know that in 2000, Netflix, who then became their competitor and then actually surpassed them. Netflix went to Blockbuster. The CEOs met and Netflix offered to sell themselves to Blockbuster for \$30 million. And Blockbuster at the time, the CEO just thought it was just a small niche market. He never thought Netflix would be what it ended up being. And now Netflix is worth a reported \$70 billion. And Blockbuster no longer exists. It's funny, because now you can kind of drive through a community and you see, oh, that must have been where the Blockbuster used to be. So no company is unable to be affected by human error and poor decision-making and choices. And we see that even in government. And we think about the Roman Empire and how powerful the Roman Empire was and how long it lasted and how far-reaching it was.

And I don't think anybody during the time of the height of the Roman Empire would have thought that it would one day cease to be. And now you go back to Rome and it's a bunch of ruins. And so even in government, we see that as powerful as a nation may seem, it's not invulnerable to human sinfulness and its effects. And even in our own nation with the U.S. economy, we've seen how powerful it has been and how fragile things can be with our last recession.

Human greed can cause the failure of an economic system despite how sound the theory of it on which it was built. Human hatred can lead to violence and war and can leave nations that were once strong in shambles. Human carelessness can result in the collapse of a building despite the existence of building codes. The Bible tells us that it is not how life is meant to be, that God is stable. We are unstable, but God is stable. In 2 Samuel 22, David sings about that. He says, The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my Savior. You save me from violence. And so we know that though we live in an unstable world as it is, that God is not unstable, that God is the one who is stable and provides stability for us in this life and in the one to come. And David knew that God was, again, never unstable and that he will never let us down or fail us and that he will also deliver on all the promises that he's made to us in his word. Through his word, God has promised to establish a kingdom forever through his son, Jesus Christ. And he's promised that those who have received the gospel of Jesus Christ have already been brought into that kingdom by receiving its king. That's great news in our unstable times. As you've been following the Bible's account of David's kingdom, 1,000 years before Christ, you have probably noticed two aspects that characterize his kingdom, David's kingdom. And the first is this, that God chose David and he made him king of Israel and that God promised to establish his kingdom forever. And that God promised that the king in God's kingdom would be the son of David.

And that David's kingdom displayed something we saw of the character of God's promise of that kingdom, at least early on. In chapter 8, verse 15, it says, David reigned over all Israel and he did justice and righteousness for all his people. So at its best, we see that David's kingdom was astonishing and that it provided a small glimpse at the time. And as we read his word of what it will

be like to live in the kingdom of God forever. And then second aspect we see is that David's kingdom was not the promised kingdom. David was deeply flawed as a man. He was deeply flawed just like you and I are.

[11 : 12] His failings brought instability to his kingdom and his kingdom eventually displayed the weaknesses that affected him, that affect all human communities as a matter of fact. So we come to the end of the story of David's kingdom in the book of Samuel and we will see this second aspect of his kingdom displayed, of how instable it became. At the end of the story, what we see in David's restored kingdom is first, more rebellion, not less. Secondly, more sadness, not less. And thirdly, a futile search for stability and then finally, an unstable kingdom we will see as a result of all that has happened.

So first we see in verses 1 through 2 that there is more rebellion. They've just had a major rebellion, they've had a civil war and there's not less rebellion, but there's more. It only continues.

Now it says there happened to be a worthless man whose name was Sheba. He was a Benjamite. He blew the trumpet and he said, we have no portion in David. We have no inheritance in Jesse. And so basically, he rallies the men who are there from the northern tribes and he says, let's get out of here.

Follow me. And we're not going to follow this guy. We're not happy with the way things are going. So here they're still in Gilgal. David is still on his way to return and he has encountered various men. If you remember the different guys that he encountered last week. And now Sheba was attempting to make this last ditch effort to incite another rebellion and to keep things from reconciling. And so he, again, he led the discontented people of the northern tribes of Israel and he challenged them to join him and succeeding once again, or seceding, excuse me, from David. And so there we see the fragility of David's kingdom in, uh, in its initial response to Sheba's call is that it was successful. People got up with Sheba and they left with him. David returned to Jerusalem with only a small part of his kingdom intact. And the conflict with Absalom was over, but the kingdom was far from being back to what it was. It was facing some instability. So there's more rebellion. We also see that there's more sadness. And it says there in verse three that David came to his house and he took his 10 concubines who he had left for the house and he basically put them away. He took care of them, you know, and all of their, the needs that they needed for shelter and clothing and food and all those things. But he severed all relationships that he had with them. Um, and I think it's important that we stop here and talk a little bit about concubines. I know that you guys probably did earlier on, but you know, some people wonder, well, what, what was going on with these guys? Why did they have so many concubines? Well, we'll do a little history, a little research here. A concubine was a female who voluntarily enslaves and sells herself to a man primarily for his sexual pleasure. Concubines in the, uh, patriarchal age and beyond did not have equal status with a wife.

A concubine could not marry her master because of her slave status. Although for her, the relationship was exclusive and ongoing. Sometimes concubines were used to bear children for men whose wives were barren. Concubines in Israel possessed many of the same rights as legitimate wives, just without the same respect. Although it's true, the Bible nowhere explicitly condemns concubinage. A condemnation can be found implicitly, implicitly, excuse me, from the beginning of time. Again, we see how God planned things. Adam, Eve, right? He didn't say, you know, here's Adam, here's Eve and Eva and I don't know. Sharon, and they're your wives. No, it was Adam, you know, you need a companion and your companion is a female and it's one. It's Eve. And so that's the way that God had intended it to be. But men and women, human beings behave and act sinfully. And so at this point in time, we see that, uh, David and, and, uh, saw before him that they were behaving as sinful men. They were looking at the world. They were seeing other kings and other kings had concubines and multiple wives and whatnot. And so they were following suit instead of following God's example. And it caused problems.

[15 : 48] The Bible never explains why God allowed these men to have concubines. Again, he, he allowed divorce and polygamy. Uh, well, I want to take that back. He didn't allow those things, but again, it's men who, who were behaving sinfully and not, uh, listening to what God had said. Um, and so they were, it was wrong. David's motivation for doing this was to protect them. So why did he do this? Well, he still felt like he had a responsibility to them. And so he was trying to protect them rather to imprison them.

And so he provided for their welfare, but stopped having intimate relationships with them. So again, the Bible is filled with examples of messy people who make a mess of their lives.

And again, we see over and over the grace of God who is able to take our messes and do, uh, clean them up and do good things despite how vile and filthy and nasty we as human beings can be. And the things that we decide to do and the things that we say are okay, that obviously are not okay with God.

But these women are sad. Uh, they were shut up for the rest of their lives. They're basically treated as if they were widows. And so we see that there's more sadness, not less. These sad women represent something important about David, David's kingdom. Now it was a kingdom that suffered consequences of sinful men. David himself was responsible for the sadness of these women. And so was Absalom. David was not the king capable of wiping, wiping away the tears of his people. The good news is that Jesus Christ is the king who will wipe every tear from every eye. So we see that there's more rebellion.

We see that there's more sadness, not less. And then third, we see that there is a futile search for stability. And that, uh, comes from verses four through 22. David's trying. And so in verses four and five, he calls his nephew Amasa, the man Absalom again, had appointed as overall commander of the army whom David had promised to keep in his place instead of Joab. David's, uh, unstated intention was to take action against Sheba. And so he was sending Amasa out to get him and to end this second rebellion.

[18:04] And Amasa obeyed David's command, but did not manage to meet David's timetable. If you, if you remember, as we read, David was calling in three days, we need to do this before Sheba gets to a fortified city.

We want to crush this rebellion now before he can hole up somewhere and this drags out. And so for whatever reason, Amasa is not able to do it in that timeframe. And so we see more instability. Then we see another attempt with Abishai, uh, David's relationship with Joab, must have been frosty because again, he replaced Joab with Amasa and be, and again, because Joab killed his son who he asked not to kill, but instead of returning to him for this mission, he instead seeks the help of Joab's brother, Abishai. Sheba's rebellion was in David's mind, a sequel to Absalom's.

And so there's urgency here on David's part. He wants to end this. He's eager. You can tell to bring restoration. He wants things to get back to the way that they used to be.

And Sheba is a problem and he's a problem that must be dealt with immediately, but things are going a lot more slowly than, uh, than he was, uh, intending or wanting them to be. And so he saw a small problem with potential to become a much worse situation and he was ready to be over with it. Uh, Abishai's task was to pursue him to prevent such an escape, seeing the possibility of further trouble from Sheba in the future. Again, David sends them out and he wants to do this quickly.

[19:40] Abishai goes out with his troops that included a contingent, contingent of Joab's men. In a minute, we'll see that Joab, true to his character, had no intention of allowing himself to be sidelined even by his king who was in a higher ranking, a higher place of authority than him.

He wasn't going to listen. Somewhere along the line, Abishai allowed his brother to take the lead. And it is fair to guess that the involvement of Joab and his men was Joab's idea. And it was unknown to David at this time that Joab is going out. David didn't want him to go out with them, but Joab found a way to go out there. And it's kind of his plan that once they get out of town, I'm guessing, that he's going to jump right back into his old spot and he's going to take care of business himself the way that he's used to taking care of it. And so we see in verses 8 through 22 that that's exactly what happened, that Joab, as always, had his way. He felt that things should be done. He had his way for securing David's kingdom, and that was often through force.

And he did it his way even when David said to him, or, you know, gave him instructions otherwise. Joab had a way of doing things, and he was going to do things the way that he wanted them to be done. Have you seen this before? Even in our history, how you get a general who's successful at fighting wars and winning battles, and they kind of, it gets to their head a little bit, but they're so successful, and oftentimes they know what they're doing.

And they've been on the battlefield, and they know the enemy, and they know what will work, and they know what won't work, but then they have orders from someone who's in a higher position than they are, and they struggle with obedience because, you know, in their mind they think, you know, you do your job back there, but let me do my job here and don't get in the way. And sometimes, you know, people do get in the way, and it ends poorly, and sometimes those generals, it gets to their

head, and they need to be obedient. I think of George Patton, you know, General Patton was very good at what he did, and he didn't like it when anybody else tried to tell him to do it another way. Douglas MacArthur is another example, Stanley McChrystal, men who were good at their job, and they were determined to, you know, say, just get out of my way and let me do what I want to do. And Joab is somebody who I would compare to them. He had, if you remember, he had executed Abner when David wanted to make peace with him. He killed Absalom when David wanted him to be spared, and he had no patience for David's grief when his son died. And that's just the character of Joab. And Joab's means of securing David's kingdom meant that it meant being aggressive, and it meant that you didn't show mercy. That was the type of man that he was. But unknown to David, it was Joab who went out with Abishai and the troops to do more than just find Sheba. Joab's got a plan, and we see that part of Joab's plan is to remove anybody who was in his way, and Amasa was in his way.

Again, Amasa was the man who replaced Joab. David made that call. Joab didn't like it, and so Joab's going to take matters into his own hands. And the thing that we don't know is if this meeting was prearranged or if it was accidental or if it was, you know, deliberately intercepted from one party or the other. The crucial thing to know is who was there. And so for the first time, the narrator tells us explicitly that Joab was there and provides an unusually detailed description of his uniform. That's important. In verse 8, it says, Now Joab was wearing a soldier's garment, and over it was a belt with a sword, and its sheath fastened to his side. As he went forward, it fell out. And so we're talking about Joab's sword, and this was probably maybe something more like a short sword, something that would have been easily disguisable, easy to slip into his hand unbeknownst to Amasa. And so we see that he's got a premeditated plan here for what he's going to do to this man. He pretended that he was going to be friendly toward this man who was his cousin.

[24 : 03] As Joab's right hand feigned an expression of love, its real work was to distract Amasa from what his other hand was doing. And so I don't know if you've seen like a magician or something. They have kind of those things up their sleeve and slips out or something like that. I mean, whatever's going on here. Joab, you've got to understand, was a skilled warrior, and he was good at killing people.

And so he knew how he could be shifty, how he could distract Amasa from his true intentions. And so whatever it meant that his sword was fastened to his thigh, and when he went forward, it fell out. It's not like it fell out on the ground clumsily. He knew what he was doing. It fell out into his hand, and he had a plan for how he was going to get rid of this man. And then in verse 10, it says, But Amasa did not observe the sword that was in Joab's hand, so Joab struck him with it in the stomach and spilled his entrails to the ground without striking a second blow, and he died.

So again, we see this guy's character. He's acting like he's going to be a friend. You know, we think kind of like a mafia hitman here. We'll bring him in. You know, we'll invite him over to, we'll have, we'll meet in some kind of mutual location, and we'll clear out the area. And you know, when nobody's looking, we'll think, he'll think that we came to negotiate peace, and we'll put a bullet in his head. And that's basically how Joab is acting in just that manner.

And he was, again, he was an effective killer. He killed Abner, Uriah, if you remember, he was a co-conspirator in that, Absalom, and now Amasa is another who he adds to his list.

And for the second time, he had taken out the commander of Israel's armies who had made peace with David. The acts were not forgotten by David, who will later instruct Solomon to ensure that peace is taken from Joab for these two acts, and Joab will get what's coming to him.

[26 : 01] The brutal killing of Amasa, though, stunned everyone who was there. This was not what anybody thought was going to happen. The king's goodwill toward Amasa was no secret. Everybody knew that this was one of David's ways of trying to bring everybody together by taking the enemy's commander and making him the commander over all of Israel. This was a way he tried to extend the olive branch to those northern tribes and to bring everybody back together. And so everybody knew that this was not something that David would have wanted to have happen. And anyhow, so we see that the troops were shocked and they were in disbelief about the insubordination of Joab towards King David. In verse 11, it said, And one of Joab's young men took his stand by Amasa and said, whoever favors Joab and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab. And so again, we see the plan unfolding. Joab's plan, I'm going to kill him.

Somebody needs to stand up and say, basically, you're either with us or against us. And, you know, what I am doing is on behalf of King David. And so, you know, this was necessary and you're either

going to fight for us or you're going to be against us. This time, though, it was not so easy to persuade the troops because the sight of Amasa's bleeding body stopped them in their tracks. It says in verse 12 that he was, Amasa was laying, wallowing in his blood in the highway. And anyone who came by seeing him stopped because it must have been just such a gruesome sight. And so the solution was by Joab, well, pick him up, take him off the highway, get him out of the sight, right? Clear the blood and the body off the street, cover it up with a garment and let everybody go on their way. And so again, we see his character. He's just a gruesome kind of a person. But it worked. And so they went on in pursuit of Sheba. And then in verses 14 through 22, we see that Joab defeated Sheba.

Sheba was not a very successful rebel. By the time he made it to this city, he was not as well supported as when he began. And we see that it was really just basically him and his clan, his family, who made it to Abel. And then in verse 16, we see that things unfolded differently than at first Job's attempt, which was to lay siege on the city. So Sheba gets into a city that's fortified and he holds up there. And Joab's reaction is, I got to get this guy and I'm willing to take out everybody else. I will lay waste to this entire city if it means that I'll get him. And so when I was thinking about that, I was thinking of old Looney Tunes commercials, or not commercials, cartoons, and Elmer Fudd, and he's after Bugs Bunny, and he basically, he just blows up the entire forest trying to kill one little rabbit. And so we see, that's a strange illustration, but you know, Joab is acting kind of like Elmer Fudd here. That helps you to get a picture in your mind. But he was persistent.

He was going to get his man. And so then we see that there was a wise woman in the city who spoke with Joab to seek to change his mind. And so there in verse 16, it says, then a wise woman called from the city, listen, listen, tell Joab, come here that I may speak with you. And so this negotiation begins, and she's probably standing on top of the city walls, and she's getting attention of Joab's man and basically saying, bring him here. We need to have a conversation. We need to have a negotiation. So here is a woman who is wise, and she sees a hot-headed man, and so she's gonna be the voice of reason for everyone. And so she calls him, and they talk. It says that he came near to her, and the woman said to him, are you Joab? And he answered, I am. Then she said to him, listen to the words of your servant. And he answered, I am listening. So she got his attention. She was careful, and she was respectful of him. And as a result of that, she was able to gain his audience. So if you have somebody in your life who is behaving difficultly, difficultly towards you, or at work, or church, whatever the case may be, your best bet to get a audience with them and to resolve the issue is to go to them and speak to them face-to-face, right? Isn't this what Jesus lays out for us in Matthew 18? If you got a problem with your brother and sister, go talk to somebody else about it. No. He says, go to that person. Speak to them directly, face-to-face, one-on-one, and try to win your brother back. And so we see that this woman is wise because that's what she's doing. She's going directly to the source. She's going to talk to Joab face-to-face, and she's going to try and solve this issue. So she says, okay, so she was careful. She was respectful. And then she represented her case to him. First of all, she pointed out that the city had a great reputation as being helpful in the nation. So why would you want to destroy a place who God has used as a help to so many? Secondly, she went on. She said, I am one of those who are peaceful and faithful in Israel. I there is emphatic, but she was speaking as a representative of all the people of the city who inhabited that place. And she was basically saying, listen, we're not troublemakers. We're not, we're not the types of people who go out and make war, right?

We're not trying to join this rebellion. We're, we are with you. We're peaceful people. We are faithful to the nation. Third, in contrast, she said, you seek to destroy a city that is a mother, or do you, she says, seek to see, to destroy a city that is mother in Israel. And there the you is emphatic.

[32 : 03] She's basically saying, how could it be right for you to destroy a city that is faced, faithful to the Lord and bring death to citizens who have been faithful to this great nation? And so she's winning his trust and his understanding. And then fourthly, she says, why will you swallow up the heritage of the Lord? And so what she's implying there is that Joab was attacking a city that belonged to the Lord.

And his attack on that city was as if he was attacking the Lord himself. And so her speech found its mark. Joab listened to her and he backed down from assaulting the city, but he still, you know, was going to make it clear that he was after someone and that his job was to get that person and that if they would deliver that person, Sheba, to them, that they would, they would go on their way.

So still, Joab saw himself as serving the interests of David. And it's ironic because Joab says there, basically, he tries to paint a good picture of himself, right? And he's basically saying, I'm not this type of person either. You know, I'm just, I just want my man. You know, I'm not really into destroying things and doing things out of bounds, but clearly that's not the case. And so it's ironic because he tries to present himself as this type of person who's peaceful as well when clearly he is not. And so there in verse 22, we see that Joab got his man, that Sheba was beheaded and that his head was brought to Joab, whether it was through over the gates or not, I don't know.

But again, we see just gruesomeness. We see instability, people turning on one another. Not to say that what Sheba did was right, but you know, the way that, that problems were solved at this point in time were with the sword and with bloodshed. Joab won. He prevailed against, again, by force of personality and by his military might. So he blew the trumpet in verse 22, and they dispersed from the city, every man to his home. And then Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king. So King David's kingdom was, it seemed maybe secure again, but only in a manner of speaking, as far as rebellions that were crushed. It was secure, but it had come at Joab's, on Joab's terms and not on David's. Against the king's will, Absalom and Amasa were now dead. Contrary to David's declared intention, Joab was in command of his army. If David's kingdom depended on Joab's ways, then how secure could it truly be? And we see in verses 23 and 26 that, in fact, it's not as stable as it once was, and that it's very unstable, as a matter of fact. The chapter in the account of the restoration of the kingdom concludes with a list of officer, of office bearers in David's kingdom there in verses 23 through 26. And this paragraph is very similar to chapter 8 verses 15 through 18, but there are differences, and those differences are striking. And so I want us to pay attention to that. So turn first to chapter 8, 2 Samuel chapter 8 verses 15 through 18.

And we're going to compare these two lists and see the differences. Chapter 8 verses 15 through 18.

[35 : 45] So David reigned over all Israel, and David administered justice and equity to all his people. Joab, the son of Zeruah, was over the army, and Jehoshaphat, the son of Iud, was recorder, and Zadok, the son of Ahitub, and Heimelech, the son of Abiathar, were priests, and Saraiah was secretary, and Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, was over the Cherethites and Pelethites, and David's sons were priests. So now let's go back to chapter 20 and read the comparison.

In verse 23 and on. Now Joab was in command of all the armies of Israel, and Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, was in command of the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and Adarim was in charge of the forced labor, and Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, was the recorder, and Sheba was secretary, and Zadok and Abiathar were priests, and Ira the Jerite was also David's priest.

And so we see first that there's a major difference in that being how each of these lists begin. We saw that it says that all Israel, in chapter 8, that all Israel was experiencing justice and equality under King David.

And then we see in chapter 20 that that verse, there's nothing, there's no comparison there. So we see that there's a lack of justice, there's a lack of equality that they once had in chapter 8.

Also we see, secondly, that Joab is still over the army of Israel. That may have seemed right in 2 Samuel 8, but now it was a sign of compromise of David's kingdom.

[37 : 36] Joab was the commander, despite the fact that its king didn't want him to be in that place. So we see that we have a king who's unstable as well. Thirdly, David now had someone named Adarim in charge of forced labor, which we didn't see there either.

This was a new development and not a positive one. The forced labor was some kind of slavery, probably working on building projects. And in due course, forced labor included Israelites and contributed to the eventual division of the kingdom.

The list of the officials in chapter 8 had been a testimony to order, justice, and righteousness during David's kingdom at that time. And chapter 20 reveals that David's kingdom is no longer the remarkable kingdom that it once had been.

The consequences of David's sin meant that his kingdom became unstable and would never recover to what it had once been. So that's bad news for them.

And we see, again, that no nation is invulnerable to falling apart, especially when it turns away from God and from his word and when its leaders are not obedient to God and to his word.

[38 : 51] It's just a matter of time. Things fall apart. Here's the good news is that we have a king who is without sin, who is perfect, and who will have a kingdom, has established a kingdom, and will have a kingdom that will go on forever that will be completely stable.

And we don't have to worry about any of these things happening to us and having to endure them again. So that's the great news. And so what does this mean for us? Well, I think that first of all, again, it's important that we be people of the word, that we people be people who are obedient, that we challenge and encourage each other to do that as well, that we hold our leaders to a high standard, and that we support our leaders as well.

Again, sin ruins things. Sin breaks things apart. Sin provides instability. So then you think about your own life, you know, and again, kind of relating back to this morning about Jonah and about running from God.

Do you feel unstable? Do you feel depressed? Do you feel anxious and stressed and worried? And if that's the case, it's probably because there's instability in your relationship with God.

And I'm telling you that it's not God's fault, but yours. And I've felt that as way. If you're not praying, if you're not in the word, if you're not a part of the fellowship of the church, then you are making yourself vulnerable to Satan and his attacks, and you're not as stable as you would be otherwise.

[40 : 25] So that's an encouragement for us all, is that you want to be stable in this life? Then walk closely with our Lord.