

# The Hatfields and the McCoys!

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[ 0 : 00 ] Tonight, I want you to take your Bibles and open them to 2 Samuel as we kind of work our way through this book.

1 and 2 Samuel. And as I've mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, there is no break. Just one Samuel. But we have it broken into two, and so we're moving our way through that story. And tonight, I want to begin reading with verse 8.

And I debated whether I would do this. Of course, you're going to actually hear, I think, most of this chapter twice by the time we're done.

But I want to read the entire thing so that we can kind of have it all together in our minds. And it's really a very interesting passage, interesting text. Some interesting things happen in this passage.

[ 1 : 13 ] I think most of us are familiar with this part of the story. But let me go ahead and start reading with verse 8. So effectively, king over Israel.

Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was 40 years old when he began to reign over Israel. And he reigned two years, just two years.

Only the house of Judah followed David, as we saw last week. They anointed him king, made him king. And the time that David was king over Hebron, over the house of Judah, Hebron being his capital city, was seven years and six months.

Now Abner, son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

And Joab, the son of Zeruah, and the servants of David, went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon.

[ 2 : 54 ] So they sat down, one on one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool. So you can kind of picture this. Then Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise and compete before us.

And Joab said, Let them arise. So they arose and went over by number, twelve from Benjamin, followers of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, and twelve from the servants of David.

And each one grasped his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent's side so they fell down together simultaneously.

Therefore that place was called the Field of Sharp Swords, which is in Gibeon, real creative name. So there was a very fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

Now the three sons of Zeruah were there. They were there. Joab and Abishai and Asahel.

[ 4 : 02 ] And Asahel was as fleet of foot as a wild gazelle. So Asahel pursued Abner, and in going, he did not turn to the right hand or to the left from following Abner.

Then Abner looked behind him and said, Are you Asahel? And he answered, I am he. I am. And Abner said to him, Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and lay hold on one of the young men, and take his armor for yourself.

But Asahel would not turn aside from following him. So Abner said again to Asahel, Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I face your brother Joab?

However, he refused to turn aside. Therefore, Abner struck him in the stomach with the blunt of the spear, so that the spear came out of his back, and he fell down there and died on the spot.

So it was that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still. They stood still in honor of him. Joab and Abishai also pursued Abner, and the sun was going down when they came to the hill of Amah, which is before Gaia, by the road of the wilderness of Gibeon.

[ 5 : 22 ] Now the children of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became a unit and took their stand on top of a hill. Then Abner called to Joab and said, Shall the sword devour forever?

Do you not know that it will be better in the latter end? How long will it be then until you tell the people to return from pursuing their brethren? And Joab said, That as God lives, unless you have spoken, surely then by morning all the people would have given up pursuing their brethren.

So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still and did not pursue Israel anymore, at least that day. Nor did they fight anymore. Then Abner and his men went on all that night through the plain, crossing over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

So Joab returned from pursuing Abner, and when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing of David's servants 19 men and Asahel.

But the servants of David had struck down of Benjamin and Abner's men 360 men who died. Then they took up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb, which was in Bethlehem.

[ 6 : 40 ] And Joab and his men went all night. They came to Hebron on daybreak, at daybreak.

Now we'll go on into verse 1. Now there was a young war, a long war, between the house of Saul and the house of David.

But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker. All right, so we'll stop right there. Interesting stories.

Really are. You know, a little gruesome in their description, and the description is just enough for us to kind of imagine some of these things in our minds.

And as gruesome as some of them are, we, I don't know about you, maybe I'm the only one, but some of them is a little comic. I mean, it's not comic, it's, you know, kind of funny that things could happen this way.

We can visualize it this way, and I guess maybe I've just seen too many movies. But it's still very interesting. And yet I would say to you, as a preacher and as an expositor, it's a difficult passage to preach as a unit, any coherent unit, and especially to try to place it, you know, to give it significance in the overall story.

[ 8 : 07 ] I mean, why is this here? And that's what I am compelled to ask as I study the passage. Why did the writer include these events in the story?

I mean, they're a bit strange, but not just because they're strange, but what does it, what do these things really have to do with anything ultimately?

I mean, David is not really part of the story at this point. We find David here other than his connection to these men. And so he's not there.

I guess perhaps we could, you know, see him in the wings, watching this, seeing how it's going to unfold and what is going to be the conclusion of all of this and whether he's going to benefit from it.

I guess we might be thinking that. But David's not in the story here. And so what we really have here is, of course, a rivalry, right?

[ 9 : 05 ] I mean, there's a rivalry here. But notice it's not really between two would-be kings. I mean, I'm sure Ish-bosheth wanted to be king, but there's nothing here, at least in this part of the story, that gives him any kind of, you know, part in this.

He's almost a puppet in a sense, and I think really he was. So I'm not talking about a rivalry between two would-be kings, you know, Ish-bosheth, of course, on one side, David on the other.

But rather this is a rivalry between two generals. Two generals. Who would they be? Well, Abner on the one side and Joab on the other.

Abner, of course, he's on the side of Saul's family. And, of course, David, or Joab, rather, is on the side of David.

And there are family connections on both sides, Abner being the cousin of Saul and then Joab being the nephew of David.

[ 10 : 17 ] So this is a family kind of thing. And so, but getting back to Abner and Joab, this is where the rivalry really is, where the conflict really centers upon these two men.

And, of course, in their respective thoughts, their self-centered thinking, each one's prosperity and power depends somewhat upon who, in the end, becomes the king of Israel.

All right? So it's not so much, perhaps, their desire to see one or the other as king. It's really what's in it for me. I mean, it's not a scenario that's strange to us.

I mean, this kind of stuff happens all the time. And so Abner, again, Saul's cousin, is working for the house of Saul, putting Ish-bosheth in as king. And then Joab, Daniel's nephew, David's nephew, rather, is working for the house of David.

And David will be his king. All right, now, my question is, what do Abner and Joab have to do with God's plan for his people Israel?

[ 11 : 28 ] I don't know if I'm explaining this well enough, communicating this well enough, to have you think about how this chapter really doesn't seem to be all that important.

What do these two men have to do with David? I mean, they're the ones at the kind of pushing the fight. They're the ones who are, you know, what's happening here is really due to their efforts, these two men, and the rivalry between these two men, and so forth.

Someone has said that this story is like two bald men fighting over a comb. It's pointless. You had to think about that for a minute, didn't you? Pointless.

David, according to God's plan, will be the king of Israel. He will be. We know that. Not just because we've read the rest of the story, but hopefully because we know what God said in the past and actions that were taken through Samuel the prophet and the anointing of David.

He's already been anointed for the position. By the way, everybody knows that. It's not a secret. Everyone knows that. And so, and these, both these men surely knew that.

[ 12 : 47 ] They just need to get out of the way. That's kind of my reaction to the events of this chapter. You know, if I were there, I would want to say, hey guys, just get out of the way.

Quit this silliness. David's king. Let's make him king. Let's get on with it. In fact, I think it, you know, quite natural to, you know, to go from 1 Samuel and the death of Saul as a reader and go from 1 Samuel to 2 Samuel and expect David to be king from then on and not all this other stuff.

Well, he does become king, but just king of Judah initially. All right, so, you know, a couple of bald guys fighting over comb. It's just pointless. But really, I'd rather liken this story to the legend of the Hatfields and the McCoys.

You're familiar with that story, aren't you? That legend. And that's why I've entitled my message The Hatfields and the McCoys. All right? Hatfields and the McCoys.

And you're familiar with that famous family feud, a long-time feud between two families who lived on the opposite side of a river, opposite side of the big sandy river that formed the border between West Virginia and Kentucky.

[ 14 : 14 ] and you may not know all about it, but all someone has to do is mention the Hatfields and the McCoys, and we understand what that is. It's a family feud. And just what started the feud is somewhat sketchy.

You know, it could have been something just as ridiculous and insignificant as the theft of a pig. Seriously. As you read some of his stories, they think that's probably what started the whole thing. You know, I don't remember which family stole the pig, who owned the pig, but just the theft of a pig. Now, most would say that it was the murder of one of the McCoy boys.

That's what started it. So you can see how I kind of liken it to the story that we have here in the Bible. And so they say, you know, it was the murder of Asa Herman McCoy.

Have you ever heard that guy's name? See, we don't even know what is the source of this famous family feud. All right, the murder of one of the sons. And so you have the patriarch for the McCoys, whose nickname is old Rannell McCoy.

[ 15 : 32 ] And he's accusing the patriarch of the Hatfields, one William Anderson Hatfield, nicknamed Devil Ants, which really means the hand of the devil.

How would you like to have that kind of a moniker? And so he's accusing him of being responsible for the killing of his son. And so the feud, if started that way or started by something like the theft of a pig, whatever was the beginning of it, it lasted for almost 30 years.

Famous feud. And so I think we have in this chapter something somewhat familiar. This is a family, two families feuding, led by Joab on one side, Abner on the other side, and they are on the opposite sides of the future rule of Israel, and they are bitter rivals, and both of these guys are power hungry. And if you read a little bit about these men, and the Bible tells us quite a bit about both of these guys, especially Abner, we can discover quite a bit about these two guys.

They were both, of course, military men, men of war. They were generals, and they were very brutal, as even some of what we read here tonight reveals.

[ 16 : 53 ] And Joab's brother, of course, Asahel, is killed by Abner. Killed by him, though I think we can gather from the story he really didn't want to do that.

But he did. And by the way, eventually later on in the story, not this chapter, but a little bit later in 2 Samuel, we're going to discover that Joab has his revenge.

he avenges his brother, Asahel, and he kills Abner. So it's kind of a family feud. Now, ultimately, David will be king of Israel.

He's going to be. We know that. That's going to happen. Nothing is going to stop the will of God in that. Not anything. So what, then, is the point of this struggle for power between Abner and Joab? What is the point of this rivalry, this feud, this conflict that results, of course, in needless bloodshed and quite a lot of it?

[ 17 : 58 ] And the point of this, I think, is God's providence. It's the bigger picture that we really must see.

And what I mean is that God is bringing about his purpose. It doesn't make God the author of murder. I'm not suggesting that or the author of bloodshed and these things.

But God is allowing these things to unfold for his ultimate purpose. I mean, he allows Abner to put Ish-bosheth on the throne, albeit temporarily. He allows, then, Joab to be against that and fight against that.

And then he allows Asahel, Joab's brother, to pursue after Abner. And he allows Abner to kill Asahel. And he allows Joab to seek revenge, to avenge his brother's death.

And then he allows Joab to kill Abner. He allows all these things to happen to get Abner out of the way who is effectively the only one standing in the way of David becoming king.

[ 19 : 07 ] just as God had planned. So, God allows all of this kind of drama to take place as a part of his purposes.

So, this chapter is how God uses the petty and pointless conflicts between men to accomplish his divine purposes. And God does that all the time.

He doesn't make people behave badly, but he allows them to behave badly in order to accomplish his purposes. And so, this is the story of a providential feud between two men, Abner and Joab, that God uses to bring David to the throne.

All right, so let's kind of bring ourselves up to speed, get the whole story in our minds, kind of see how this is unfolding. Some of this will be reviewed. David, first of all, you remember from last week, seeks divine guidance concerning his next move.

This is what we see in verse 1. Saul is dead. The path to the throne is now open to him, seemingly. And so, what do I do next?

[ 20 : 18 ] David is praying. What do I do next? What do I go from here? And David is divinely instructed by God to go up to the city of Hebron, the principal city of his tribe, the land of his tribe, Judah.

And shortly after, David and his whole family arrive in Hebron, and the men of Judah, the leadership of Judah, they anoint David as king, as their king, and so David is now officially king, but not fully king.

I mean, he's king of Judah only. And David, then you remember last week, reaches out to, outside of Judah, outside of his tribe to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, those who were sympathetic towards Saul, and remember, they even risked death, perhaps, even, to get Saul and his son's mutilated bodies away from the Philistines so that they could have a proper burial and be honored in the proper way.

And so, David reaches out to Jabesh-Gilead, the people of Jabesh-Gilead, trying to woo them to his side. These are people outside of the tribe of Judah. And that would, that they would perhaps make David their king as well.

And that's kind of what all that's about. And by the way, it seems from chapter 3, we're not going to go look at it right now, we'll get to it later. It seems from chapter 3, verses 17 and 19, that the people of Jabesh-Gilead not only know that David has been anointed by Samuel to replace Saul as king, but it also indicates that they wanted that.

[ 22 : 05 ] They wanted him to be king, their king. But for now, Abner stands in the way. So, we've got to get Abner out of the way. And that's what this whole story is about.

And then, of course, as we just read a moment ago, Abner, Saul's cousin and general over his armies, opposes David's reign in Saul's place. And so, he orchestrates the crowning of Ish-bosheth, the surviving son of Saul, apparently the only surviving son, if he was truly a son.

And there's some question about that. And so, he orchestrates that, props him up, makes him king of Israel, which delays David's crown over Israel for seven years.

For seven years. So, it didn't happen real quick, did it? No smooth transition, as I said last week. And then finally, verses 12 through verse 32, this is our text for the night.

Record the strife that arose between, well, you might think between Judah and Israel as a whole, but really, specifically, it was a struggle of Abner, the general of Saul's army, and Joab, the general of David's army, a family feud, more than a national civil war.

[ 23 : 29 ] Though it is a civil war in a sense. And so, this is what I want us to see this morning, tonight, three things. That led to, all this led to civil war taking place.

Not on some grand scale, not on some nationwide scale in all of Israel. We really don't have that here, but basically, between two families and their kind of immediate armies.

All right, so here's the first thing I want you to notice. Actually, I think I have four things, not three. There is, first of all, the standard prerequisite. We discover one of the standard prerequisites for civil war.

And what is it? It is rivalry for the throne. Standard prerequisite for civil wars that have taken place in the history of man, all throughout our history.

Rivalry, rather, for the throne. Power struggles. And that's what we have here in verses 8 through 11. Let's walk through that again. But, Abner, I mentioned this last week, that conjunction is very important.

[ 24 : 44 ] Because it looks like everything's looking good here. As we start with verse 1, David's inquiring of the Lord, so he's getting, you know, he's back in right relationship with him and so forth.

And things are beginning to happen. But then verse 9, but, but, here's the bad news, Abner, the son of Ner, by the way, Ner was Saul's uncle.

If you go all the way back to when, early on, when Saul lost his, his donkeys. And, and so he goes out and he, of course, the story, you know, unfolds, he finds him and so forth, brings him home and, and, and it mentions Ner here, his uncle.

This is Ner and his son is Abner. So Abner is the cousin of Saul. He's the commander of Saul's army. You can go back to when David fought Goliath.

And, remember, the Philistines sent out their champion, Goliath, you know, and who will fight me? We'll decide the battle right out here. So send your champion out here to, to, to fight with me.

[ 25 : 52 ] And, of course, I've mentioned this before, back when we were studying that passage, the logical person physically to go out against Goliath would have been Saul himself.

He was a head and shoulders above every other man. He was a big guy. And, he would have been the logical choice. But he didn't go. And, and the Bible mentions in that story Abner also was there. And if not Saul, then Abner should have gone out there to be the man to, you know, to go out there and fight for Israel. But he didn't do that. And so he was the commander, the general of Saul's army. And so what did he do? He took Ish-bosheth. And this really, this guy kind of comes out of nowhere. Ish-bosheth. And the Bible says here the son of Saul.

And he brought him over to Mahanaim. All right, so that's where he's going to make him king.

Ish-bosheth. Interesting name. In fact, Ish-bosheth means son of shame in the Hebrew.

[ 27 : 03 ] All kinds of speculation about Ish-bosheth. We were led to assume that Saul's sons, all of his sons were killed in battle.

Remember when Saul was killed in battle against the Philistines and his three sons? No mention of Ish-bosheth. And the Bible does tell us here that he was 40 years old, so why was he not out there, you know, in the battle?

So it just causes a lot of speculation. We know that Saul had wives, but he also had concubines. Some have speculated that this was the son through a concubine. Maybe he was an illegitimate son.

In fact, many have come to that conclusion based upon the meaning of the name, son of shame, that this son was illegitimate.

And so he just kind of comes out of nowhere, and it's almost as if, and I think we can come to this conclusion that Abner is so intent on keeping the house of Saul, his dynasty, in place, and therefore keeping David off the throne.

[ 28 : 10 ] That way, Abner can still continue in his place of honor, and prestige, and power, and influence. And so he goes out and finds this son of shame, one of Saul's son of shame.

Maybe he had others. And he makes him king. I mean, Abner is pretty much in charge. In fact, effectively, in Israel's eyes, he is the king for now until the replacement for Saul is anointed and

crowned.

And so he has a lot of influence, a lot of power. And so he gets Ish-basheth, his son of shame, and he brings him over to Mahanaim, and he made him king over Gilead, and so forth there in verse 9. Essentially saying, king over all of Israel. Anything, by the way, in that passage that suggests that Abner sought the Lord's direction in this?

Anything in that passage there that suggests that God had selected Ish-basheth, that God had anointed him, had called him, and placed him there as king. Anything in the passage at all about God in the selection of a king, none whatsoever.

[ 29 : 31 ] All right, so we know that this is, you know, just coming out of left field here. I mean, this is not God's will. Of course, we don't even have to have that passage to know that because we know who the next king will be.

We know who God has chosen and led Samuel to anoint. So, but nothing said, there about that. So, he props up this king. In fact, we don't have any words of Ish-basheth.

Now, we're going to hear from Ish-basheth in the next chapter. And, you know, I don't think Ish-basheth was necessarily a coward. But he didn't really have, apparently, he didn't really have any right to the throne.

And this is all Abner's doing. And we go on in verse 10, Ish-basheth Saul's son was 40 years old when he began to reign over Israel and he reigned two years, just two years.

In fact, we'll find out later that he was murdered. Only the house of Judah followed David. All right? So, just Judah has anointed David as king.

[ 30 : 40 ] He's king of Judah. And the time that David was king in Hebron, that's the capital, his capital city, over the house of Judah, was seven years and six months. All right, so here is the makings for civil war.

All of it orchestrated by a power-hungry man by the name of Abner, who wants to continue his place of prestige and influence.

So, a rivalry for the throne. I don't know why I can't say rivalry. There, I said it. You say that, you know, a dozen times real fast, see what happens.

All right, now second, the strange, very strange prelude to civil war. Very strange. And it's a battle of champions.

We have here, a really strange story. Battle of champions. Very much like, and I think really we can connect this with what happened with David and Goliath.

[ 31 : 50 ] And if this was not a custom or something normal for Israel to be engaged in, apparently it's not because we don't find this anywhere else in scripture where Israel took the initiative to do such a thing.

The only example of it I think is when we have the battle between the Philistines and Israel and they send out their champions. So the idea being, you know, instead of all this bloodshed and this long battle, we'll send our champion, you send your champion, and it'll be a battle to the death and whoever wins, then that will win the battle.

Decide which side wins the battle. So this is a battle of champions. That's kind of what this is. No, the outcome of it is quite strange.

Look again at verse 12. Now Abner, the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, basically saying his army, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

That is, he came prepared for war. That's what we need to understand. he's going out prepared for war. And on the other side here we're now introduced to Joab, and Joab, the son of Zuriyah, and the servants of David, went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon, which by the way was a really kind of a reservoir, a cistern, and it still exists today.

[ 33 : 23 ] It was carved out of rock by hand, and it's huge. It was, they say it was kind of 30 foot square, and 82 feet deep, this big square kind of reservoir.

And so here are the two sides, they come, one on one side, one on the other, and so perhaps I think the suggestion is that they were equally matched.

There's Abner, and kind of the personal army, his own personal army, the servants of Ish-bosheth, they're really servants of Abner, and on the other side, Joab and the servants of David are his own little army.

Not a little one, several hundred here. So there's kind of this stalemate, this impasse, I mean, who's going to make the first move, and so, you know, nobody can decide what they're going to do, so

they just kind of sit down, wait for a while, see what we're going to do here.

And so what happens? Well, then Abner said to Joab, I've got an idea, let's try this.

[ 34 : 33 ] He says, let the young men now rise and compete before us. Kind of like some of us older people saying, let's let the young people work this out. He's really talking about champions.

Let the best among your young men and the best among my young men. Let's just have, and I like the word that is used here, let's see, where is it?

Let's compete. Like they're going to have some little sporting event. You send out your champions, we'll send out ours, and we'll let them meet together here and just compete.

It's anything but that, isn't it? And so what did Joab say? He said, okay, I'll go for that. And again, the whole idea, and this is kind of a, by the way, if not normal for Israel, and again, nothing in scripture tells us that this was some kind of, you know, standard procedure, you know, a prelude for the real battle, kind of the entertainment before we get down to business.

You know, but it was a very customary thing for many civilizations in that day. It would actually be a prelude to all-out battle. And it could be, and quite often, is agreed that, you know, I'll send my champions, you send yours, maybe it's one, maybe it's a dozen, in this case it's a dozen on each side, and whoever wins the battle, then that'll decide things.

[ 36 : 18 ] And maybe Abner is thinking, in his idea, and Joab probably agreeing, whoever wins this, wins the day, and wins the throne. So, then, you know, Ish-bosheth will remove himself, relinquish his right to the throne, and David can be king.

Perhaps that's part of the understanding here. And so, Joab says, okay, we'll do that. Well, how'd it turn out? They arose and went over by number, twelve from Benjamin, followers of Ish-bosheth, son of Saul, and twelve from the servants of David.

And each one, can you visualize this? Each one, I can imagine that they're paired up, you know, there's twelve, twelve, one side, twelve, and the other, you know, kind of like drills I had when I was in, when I played football in high school.

We'd line up and I'd line up across one and we'd go after it and do things and compete. But here they are, they're paired up facing each other and they each have, actually the word sword is really the word dagger.

So this is close quarter fighting, hand to hand, all you got is a dagger. Nothing about a shield, nothing about armor, nothing about spears.

[ 37 : 41 ] again in the English version here says sword but it is the word that probably means dagger. So they're paired up facing one another and perhaps there's someone who gives the signal to go and simultaneously each one grabs the neck of the other and they come together and in the other hand they both have daggers and they all fall down dead simultaneously.

You couldn't make this happen. I mean this was incredible and if they had any idea that this was going to decide the day then they had another thing coming and because this is all, you know, God's providence here.

Things are going to begin to unfold because the key objective is to get Abner out of the way so that David can become king of Israel. And so this little challenge doesn't work does it?

But it's supposed to be a prelude to war or in the best scenario be the battle itself and decide the day. And it didn't turn out that way.

So from there on the place was called the field of sharp swords or daggers which is in Gibeon. So, you know, they like to name places for great events in history and so that's what they named it.

[ 39 : 14 ] So the prelude. There's the prerequisite for the civil war and that is this rivalry for the throne. And then this strange kind of prelude for war, civil war, this battle of the champions and that didn't work, didn't decide the day and so next we have all out battle.

And so third, the sorrowful product of civil war. You know, civil war always means, it did in our own country, always means this, everywhere it has taken place, civil war always means friend against friend, brother against brother, countrymen against fellow countrymen in battle and both sides lose in that way, losing friends, losing family, we're face to face with people we know, people we love, people who are connected to us in family and so forth.

And that's what happens here. So verse 17, so there was a very fierce battle that day. The battle of champions didn't work and so, in fact, really I think it suggests that these twelve from each side, they came out with blood in their eyes.

They had every intention of fighting that day, all right? So that's why immediately you know, they go after one another and so that just triggered an all-out war, fierce battle that day and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David, which was God's providence of course. Now, verse 18, look at it. Now, the three sons of Zeruiah were there. That's Joab, Abishai, and Asahel.

[ 41 : 12 ] Right? We know who Joab was in his relationship to David. Joab was his cousin. But more significantly, he was his general, commander of his armies.

and he had two brothers. And the second one there, Abishai, we have seen him before already, a couple of times actually, but most notably perhaps was when David and Abishai snuck into the camp of Saul and God gave them all kind of a divine slumber and they're all sleeping there.

Saul asleep and Abishai, he volunteers to take the sword that is sticking in the ground right beside Saul's head. I just take that sword and run it through his head right now.

He's ready to do it. Remember, this is Abishai. We're going to see Abishai again. Abishai was the commander of David's mighty men and on one occasion Abishai with just a sword killed 300 men. So he was a pretty tough guy. And so Joab, his brother Abishai and then Asahel who really doesn't get to live much longer to make history so we don't know a whole lot about him other than what is said about him.

[ 42 : 29 ] He was fleet at foot, fleet of foot as a wild gazelle. What a way to describe a guy who was really fast. And he was. So Asahel pursued Abner.

So they're in this battle, this fierce battle and they're fighting and of course the commanders are kind of behind the front lines. I mean you wouldn't expect them to be on the very front line and that would be Joab's place.

He's the commander of his armies and his brothers are with him and so they're watching the battle and Asahel notices that Abner is making a break for him.

So he's fast. I can just catch that guy. So he runs after him to try to catch him and obviously to kill him. To kill him and so this is what happens.

He pursues him. And in going he did not turn to the right hand or to the left from following Abner. There was a straight course. Nothing's going to divert him.

[ 43 : 30 ] Nothing's going to slow him down and he's fast. And so Abner looked behind him and he sees him. I'm sure Abner knew a lot about Asahel. He was a fast guy.

And this guy's going to catch me. So he sees him coming. But he also notices by the way and we understand this from what is said next that Asahel doesn't really have any weaponry with him.

Or armor. Or anything. He's just coming for him. And so what does he say to Asahel? Well first he says are you Asahel?

And he answered I am. He made sure about his identity. And Abner said to him turn aside. Stop a minute and to your right hand or to your left whichever way and get a hold of some armor.

Some sword or a spear or something so that I don't have to take advantage of you. I mean he says something about the character of Abner but Asahel would not do it.

[ 44 : 32 ] I mean he is there's nothing going to stop him. And Abner said to him turn aside to your right hand or your left. Lay hold but Asahel would not. So Abner said again Asahel turn aside from following me.

Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I face your brother? Joab. So there's a relationship here between these guys and this is always true of civil war.

They're bitter enemies, bitter rivals, no doubt about that. But yet there is some camaraderie, there's some connection, some relationship and Joab rather Abner could not face Joab and especially if he killed his son.

And actually he's worried about what actually does happen because he does kill Asahel. But he refused to turn aside therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the blunt end of the spear so that the spear came out of his back and he fell down there and died on the spot.

Now other translations or really the original language really kind of pictures Abner stopping and getting ready to face Asahel but he takes his spear and sticks the sharp end in the ground right there beside him.

[ 45 : 59 ] Perhaps a gesture to Asahel to show him that he is not going to take arms against him an unarmed man.

And so he just sticks it in the ground and either Asahel didn't see it or he's just so determined there's nothing nothing could happen to stop him. He keeps coming. And so the idea is that Abner thought well I'll just wound him stop him at least protect myself and so he just bends the sword over the blunt end toward Asahel but he didn't realize what would happen.

I mean Asahel is coming so fast that the blunt end of the sword actually pierces all the way through his body. The idea being through his heart came out through his back.

And so Asahel is dead. Died on the spot. Not wounded. You know I guess mortally wounded. Died right there. Instantaneous death. And so as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died it stood still.

[ 47 : 14 ] And I honored him. And so you know this is sorrowful. I mean it's terrible. It's tragic. You know friend against friend brother against brother family against family countrymen against countrymen this is a civil war.

war. The ugliness of civil war. The sorrow of it. It always produces this. And it did here. And we can read on there even after Asahel meets his end.

You know Joab and Abishai they pursue after Abner. Abner is fleeing his armies and what's left of them.

and they find the high ground and so forth. So it kind of effectively for a time brings this battle to an end for now.

But in the end David's armies prevailed losing 19 people I think it said counting Asahel and yet on Abner's side over 300 360 some were killed in battle.

[ 48 : 31 ] That's quite a decisive victory. But again these are relatives fighting one another. These are countrymen.

These are people of Israel who are fighting one another in battle and it's a family feud more than it is anything else.

And then one last thing as we get into chapter 3 verse 1 and I'll be finished here tonight. But notice what it says there in verse 1. Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David but but what?

But David grew stronger and stronger and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker and so this is the final point the sovereign providence of Israel's civil war.

Part of God's providence. Now though part of the sovereign part of this is the sovereign providence of God that part's true. The civil war was not two nations at war with each other or two factions of a nation at war.

[ 49 : 53 ] You know we might read this and come to the conclusion because all of these various tribes are mentioned and it's mentioned that Ish-bosheth is king over Israel and David over Judah that we really have Judah the entire nation of Judah or tribe of Judah fighting the civil war with all the other tribes of Israel but it's really not about that.

It really is a civil war fundamentally between two families two families vying for undisputed control over the throne of Israel that's what we have here and God is going to use this to bring about his plan to bring David to the throne over all of Israel but this is two families it's the Hatfields and the McCoys back in Old Testament times.