

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

June 6

MONDAY

After a time, David asked the Lord concerning what he should do. God told him to go up to Hebron. So David, and his two wives, and all his men and their families moved to Hebron. And there, his men anointed him king over the house of Judah.

READ: II Samuel 2:1-4

Aren't God's ways mysterious? Let's be honest: you and I would have quickly declared David to be Saul's replacement king over all twelve tribes of Israel. Samuel had anointed him to be that. But God's preparation of David is not completed yet. He will continue that work with David ruling over one of the twelve tribes. What is God preparing us to do? Because there has been no Samuel in our lives to announce it, we probably don't know the whole story. But God's work is sure. And He's preparing us. That's an exciting thought. You and I can say, "Today, God has me on a training mission! He's equipping me. And there's ministry ahead!"

TUESDAY

Word reached David about the men of Jabesh-Gilead rescuing the bodies of Saul and his sons, burning them, and then burying them. So David sent a message to them, praising them for their good work, and pronouncing a blessing upon them. He also told them that he had been anointed king over the people of Judah.

READ: II Samuel 2:4^b-7

No sooner had the men of Jabesh-Gilead buried the bodies of Saul and his sons that they began to worry. Would the new king of Israel be displeased by their action and construe it as disloyalty to himself? David sets their minds at ease immediately by praising them for their actions. And he promises that someday, he will repay them for their kindness. *I will requite you this thing* the King James says, which means *pay back*. And as king of Judah, David is in a position to do that. In other words, good wishes, even to the invoking of a blessing upon them, are good but when there is opportunity to do more, that is far better. What works of faith will my life produce today, I wonder? Perhaps a bit of requiting?

WEDNESDAY

At the same time David was declared king in Judah, Abner, one of Saul's generals, took Saul's forty-year-old son Ishbosheth to a place called Mahanaim, and declared him to be king over the people of that region, as well as all Israel. (except Judah, of course) Ishbosheth reigned for two years. David actually stayed where he was, in Hebron, as king of Judah for seven and a half years.

READ: II Samuel 2:8-11

Strange how Ishbosheth, who did not go onto the field of battle with his father and brothers at such a critical hour, is deemed worthy to be king! We see here primarily Abner's manipulating - perhaps an attempt to keep the job he had with Saul. We might also see here a comparison to God's kingdom against which *the heathen rage* and *the rulers take counsel*. But God's kingdom will prevail in the end! Why did so many choose to follow Ishbosheth, I wonder? Perhaps because they who had wanted a king over them to match all the nations around them which had kings, also wanted their king to be royalty - that is, the son of a king. They were more concerned with being like their neighbors than being true to their Lord.

THURSDAY

General Abner, who had put Ishbosheth on the throne, went to Gibeon to meet Joab, one of

David's key men. Their encounter started out like peace negotiations, then moved onto some sort of sporting event involving twelve men from each "team", and finally turned into a battle. It seems that others may have eventually joined in with the fighting. In the end, David's men won. The battle was remembered by giving the place a new name: Helkath-hazzurim, which means *field of rocky men*.

READ: II Samuel 2:12-17

This was really a foolish thing. Abner seems to have initiated it, but Joab certainly played along. Joab was David's man and we know (as Joab did) that David would never have permitted such a needless loss of life. What was Joab thinking? Probably proud thoughts - thoughts of not wanting to back down or seem soft. He probably thought it important to stand upon a point of honor. He thought too much about his own reputation and not nearly enough about God's. When believers act, it's God's reputation that is on the line. What direction will God's reputation take in your life today? Will we see to it that His name and honor are lifted up?

FRIDAY

As the battle wound down, Abner retreated, heading back to Mahanaim, across the Jordan River. Asahel, one of Joab's brothers, was noted as a track star. He pursued Abner and stayed hot on his trail. Abner, at one point when they were close enough to communicate, instructed him to pursue someone else or he would be forced to kill him. Asahel refused and to stop, and eventually, Abner did kill him. The place where that happened became a sort of memorial. When they heard the news of Asahel's death, Joab and another brother, Abishai, went after Abner.

READ: II Samuel 2:18-24

Asahel reminds me of those who want to do God's business, but do it in their own way. He wanted David on the throne and thought that killing Abner would permit that. But the swift man should not glory in his swiftness any more than the strong man should glory in his strength. Visions of glory seem to have clouded Asahel's judgment and he charged up behind Abner only to have *the hinder end of his spear smite him*. In other words, Abner used a sort of backward stroke with his spear - one which the speedy Asahel was not expecting. Zeal should run hand in hand with wisdom and never run alone. Amen?

SATURDAY

Joab and the fighting men from the tribe of Benjamin united in their pursuit of Abner, stopped on a hilltop, and confronted their enemy. Abner shouted out that there should be no more killing. He said that it wouldn't be long until all twelve tribes were united under one king, and that only a lingering bitterness will come out of further bloodshed that day. Joab blames Abner for the killing so far, saying that if he had not put forth the original challenge, none of this would have happened.

READ: II Samuel 2:25-28

What looked so good to Abner in the light, now looks far worse in the darkness of defeat. If he and his men had won the battle, we cannot imagine that he would be shouting out the miseries of war and the fruitlessness of fighting. That is true of sin. What looks harmless and escapable will become bitterness in the end. O that we would see that, as well! Then we would not play around with sin so freely.