

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#5 Abner

King David's words upon hearing of the death of Abner: II Sam. 3:33, 38

Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?

And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?

1. Abner, a prominent figure in I and II Samuel, was the cousin of Israel's first king, Saul, and the commander of Saul's army [I Sam. 14:50].
2. He was respected by the king and was granted a place next to Saul at meals [I Sam. 20:25].
3. Goliath taunted God's people and remained unchallenged for 40 days. Young David defeated the giant through God's power.
4. Abner was at King Saul's side when Goliath fell, and Saul asked him who David's father was. Abner did not know since David was not part of his army. So Abner brought young David, who was still holding Goliath's head, and introduced him to the court of Saul. [I Sam. 17:55-58].
5. Abner aided Saul in his pursuit to kill David for 10 years.
6. One night, David went to the place where Saul's army was camped and sneaked down to where Saul and Abner were sleeping. Rather than killing God's chosen king, David stole a spear and water jug from beside Saul's head. David then woke the army and taunted Abner for failing to guard the king.
7. When Saul and three of his sons were killed in a battle with the Philistines, David took the throne of Judah and reigned in Hebron for 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ years.
8. Instead of swearing allegiance to God's anointed, Abner took Saul's son Ish-Bosheth across the Jordan River and proclaimed him as king of all Israel. [II Sam. 2:8]
 - Took him to Mahanaim, a Levitical city of refuge, where he would be safe.
 - I Sam. 13:11-14 Saul & Abner both knew God had torn the dynasty away from Saul.
 - This was actually a declaration of war on David.

Note: David had to wait on God's timing while patiently enduring the consequences of the selfish ambitions and reckless actions of leaders who were motivated by pride and hatred.

Note: Abner gets what he wanted, but within a few years, he will lose it all.

Scene 1: Abner Challenges David's Army. II Sam. 2:12-17

1. All tribes are united under Abner except Judah. He can easily defeat David in battle and take over the entire kingdom.
2. Abner calls for a contest between the 2 armies to be held at the great cistern about 23 miles north of Gibeon. He is actually rebelling against God because David is God's anointed.
3. Joab, David's nephew, leads the forces of Judah.
4. 12 soldiers from Benjamin and 12 from Judah meet and all 24 are killed. Joab and Abner gathered their respective troops in battle formation. The "battle was very fierce" and Abner was severely defeated.

5. NONE of this fighting would have occurred if Abner had surrendered the kingdom to David instead of crowning Ish-bosheth over Israel. [II Sam. 2:8-11]

Scene 2: Abner Kills David's Nephew II Sam. 2:18-23

1. Joab, Abishai and Asahel were nephews of David.
2. Asahel began to pursue Abner after the defeat. Scripture makes it clear that Abner had no desire to harm or kill him, but Asahel was very persistent. Abner warned Asahel that if he killed him, it would create a "blood feud" that could cause trouble for years.
3. When Asahel refused to give up the chase, the clever Abner killed him by using one of the oldest tricks of the battlefield. He stopped suddenly and allowed Asahel to propel himself right into the end of the spear. Asahel fell to the ground and died. He died in the course of battle.

Scene 3: Abner Calls For A Truce II Sam. 2:25-32

1. Joab and Abishai pursued Abner, but Abner's troops rescued him.
 2. Realizing he was defeated, he called for a truce.
 3. Joab knew David wanted peace and unity so he blew a trumpet and called off the pursuit.
 4. Abner and his men walked all night to return to Mahanaim.
- Joab and his men returned to Hebron.

Scene 4: Abner the Negotiator II Sam. 3:1-11

1. Scripture indicates a long war between house of Saul and house of David.
2. David is waiting for God's timing and his government in Hebron is going from strength to strength while the alliance of tribes under Abner is getting weaker.

Wordsworth: "Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul, but God strengthened David, whom Abner knew to have been designed for the kingdom by God."

3. Abner continued to support Ish-Bosheth as king until Ish-Bosheth berated Abner, accusing him of treachery due to the fact that Abner had slept with Saul's concubine Rizpah. Incensed that his loyalty was being questioned, Abner defected to David's side and vowed to bring all of Israel under David's control. [II Sam. 3:8-12]

4. His basic principle: Always join the winning side.
He decided to switch loyalties and guarantee his own security.

Side Note: "Throne of David" is used in verse 10 for the 1st time in Scripture.

Scene 5: Abner Negotiates For David: II Sam. 3:12-21

1. Abner sent messengers to David offering to bring all Israel under his rule.
2. David sent messengers to Abner accepting his offer, provided Abner first sent Michal to Him. [David's wife and sister of Ish-bosheth]
3. Abner told Ish-bosheth to honor David's request.
David sent him a message asking that Michal be sent to Hebron.
4. Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and then the leaders of Benjamin.

5. Abner and 20 representatives from the tribes came to Hebron and brought Michal. They took her away from her husband Phaltiel, who followed behind her crying the whole way to Bahurim. Abner told him to go home and he left.
6. When he brought Michal to Hebron, it was a public announcement he had broken with the house of Saul and was now allied with house of David.
7. Abner and David agreed on how to transfer the kingdom, shared a feast and made a covenant.
8. David was determined to unite the tribes as quickly as possible and with the least amount of bloodshed. He had waited over 7 years. It was time!

Scene 6: Joab Reproaches David II Sam. 3:22-25

1. Verse 21-23 tells us that Abner had "come and gone in peace."

Three times we are told Abner left "in peace."

2. Joab returns to Hebron and discovers what has taken place between David and Abner. His anger erupted. Joab had been waiting until he could avenge his brother's death.
3. Joab believed Abner was a spy whose intention was to report David's movements to Ish-bosheth.

II Sam. 3:25 Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest. [Abner is a spy.]

4. David wasn't promoting "peace at any price" because he was a man of integrity.
5. He didn't want his impetuous general to conduct a personal vendetta in the name of the king.
6. Joab cannot kill Abner legally. It is not a time of war. [I Kings 2:5]. Now it would be murder.

Scene 7: Joab Deceives Abner & Kills Him II Sam. 3:26-27

1. Joab left David and sent messengers after Abner to return to Hebron. David is unaware.
2. Joab met Abner at the gate of the city and pulled him aside under the pretext of a private conversation.
3. When in private, Joab stabbed Abner under the 5th rib and killed him.

Scene 8: David's Grief, His Curse, His Tribute II Sam. 3:28-29, 31-39

1. I and my kingdom are guiltless before the LORD for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner: Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house;
2. David ordered Joab & everyone to mourn for and honor Abner with the traditional customs of rending their clothes and wearing sackcloth
3. David mourned Abner publicly, fasting all day, writing a dirge in Abner's honor and lauding him as a great military leader. [v. 31-37]
4. King David's words: "A commander and a great man has fallen in Israel this day."

II Sam. 3:33-34 And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?

³⁴ Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.

Do you believe Jesus is on every page of His Word? Recall when Jesus was walking on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection with the two disciples, and He began to expound to them the Word of God.

Luke 24:27 "He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself"

The Scriptures at that time were the Old Testament.

John 5:39 Search the Scriptures; for... they are they which testify of me.

Joshua 20:1-3 The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying,

² Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: ³ That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.

Special cities were set up to be the Cities Of Refuge.

Question: Why would you need a city of refuge - a city to flee into?

1. They did not have complicated court systems and law enforcement as we have.
2. To guard against a miscarriage of justice, Cities of Refuge were appointed where the accused could flee so that his case could be considered properly away from the emotions that death brings.
3. Frequently, a man might unknowingly or carelessly put someone to death.
 - a. Farming accidents: tree falls on someone, etc.
4. The custom: A person called the gaal, "an avenger of blood" [close relative] would seek out the person who had done the killing and put him to death.
5. If you didn't mean to kill the deceased, you needed to seek a place for sanctuary, for safety, for refuge, until the matter could be settled fairly.
 - a. These cities were designed to provide Divine protection for the manslayer.

The Nearness Of These Cities

God arranged for these cities to be spread out through the land in a definite, geographical pattern.

1. Three of the cities were placed on either side of the river Jordan.

2. The west side had one in the north, the middle and the south.

The east side had one in the north, the middle and the south.

Why this beautiful, geographical pattern? So a city might be near to everyone.

- a. These cities were on mountains where they could be seen.
- b. There were broad roads clearly marked leading to these cities.
- c. The roads were marked, and according to Levitical law, had to be kept in good repair.

These Cities of Refuge speak prophetically and are a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Names of the Cities of Refuge

Joshua 20:7-8 And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and

Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.

⁸ And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.

Recall: Names in the Bible usually have a definite significance.

These 6 cities' names reveal attributes of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A. Kedesh = A Place of Holiness

1. Jesus Christ my Savior is my holiness.

Heb. 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

- a. Could any of us put our sinful lives alongside of the life of the thrice-holy God of Israel?
- b. Our holiness must be given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Shechem - Shoulder = strength or support = Jesus Christ is my strength & support.

Jesus, our Refuge, bore a guilty world upon His shoulders.

Isa. 53:4 Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows!

Recall: The good shepherd who went out and found the lost sheep.

Luke 15:5 He layeth it on His shoulders, and bringeth it back."

Isa. 9:6 And the government shall be upon His shoulder.

1. Jesus Christ is not only our Savior who gives us holiness, but He is our strength who carries us along and bears us along.
2. Do you feel you just can't live this Christian life?
 - God never asked you to live the Christian life.
 - He wants to be your strength; live His life in you and through you.
 - He wants to do for you what you could never do for yourself.

C. Hebron = Fellowship and Fullness = Jesus Christ is my satisfaction.

1. Hebron was where the grapes did grow and the milk and honey flowed.

2. It was the luscious, glorious, beautiful mountain.

I John 1:3 "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

3. We can each live on the mountaintop of fellowship.

D. Bezer = stronghold or fortification = Jesus Christ is my security.

1. Jesus Christ is my hiding place.

Ps. 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Prov. 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous run into it and is safe.

Col. 3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

E. Ramoth = Exalted = A High Place

Acts 2:33 Jesus Christ is now "by the right hand of God exalted."

1. Jesus Christ is my sovereign; He rules over all.

F. Golan = "Separated" = Jesus Christ is my sanctification.

1. He separates me from the world. He is the one who is to make me different.
2. He enables me to fulfill the commands in Scripture:

II Cor. 6:17 "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you"

Hebrews tells us we have great security and great promises.

Heb. 6:18-19 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

¹⁹ Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

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|-----------------------------|------------|---------|
| • Strong Consolation | Strength | Bezer |
| • Who Runs For Refuge | Exile | Golan |
| • An Anchor Of The Soul | Fellowship | Hebron |
| • Sanctuary Within The Veil | Sanctuary | Kedesh |
| • In The Heavenly Place | High Place | Ramoth |
| • In His Shoulders | Shoulder | Shechem |

A Lament Of King David

1. Abner was standing right in the gates of Hebron, a city of refuge.

2. All he had to do was be inside the gates and he would be safe.

3. He is right at the gate with a "Joab of justice" on his trail.

4. Joab takes him aside quietly to "talk to him."

5. We can't believe our eyes - Abner walks right toward Joab!

a. You want to yell: Abner! Don't do it! Joab is deceiving you!

b. Joab smote him under the 5th rib.

6. King David lamented - Abner died like a fool.

a. He died right at the gate of the city of refuge.

Note: II Sam. 2:38 And the king said unto his servants,

Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?

b. So wise, so great, so strong, and so foolish, because he died outside the city of refuge, and he died right at the gates—right at the gates—deceived.

Ps. 145:18 "The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him"

The cities of refuge are types of Christ, in whom sinners find a refuge from the destroyer of our souls. Just as the guilty person sought refuge in the cities set up for that purpose, we flee to Christ for refuge from sin. We run to Christ to escape the danger we are in from the curse and condemnation of the law, from of the wrath of God, and from an eternity in hell.

Only Christ provides refuge from these things, and it is to Him alone that we must run.

Just as the cities were open to all who fled to them for safety, it is Christ who provides safety to all who come to Him for refuge from sin and its punishment. Our Savior is only a prayer away!