

## A Study of 2 Samuel 18

### I. Outline.

1. The experienced warrior prepares for battle and yields to demands of his faithful not to lead the charge personally (2 Sam 18.1-5).
2. It was the “*people of Israel*” versus “*the servants of David*,” and led to the defeat of the people of Israel (2 Sam 18.6-8).
3. The rebel, Absalom, meets his end and Joab restrains the people from further carnage against the people of Israel (2 Sam 18.9-17).
4. Absalom’s self-arranged memorial (2 Sam 18.18).
5. How the news of Absalom’s death was communicated to David (2 Sam 18.19-32).
6. The grieving King (2 Sam 18.33).

### II. Summary.

*The Outline Bible* summarizes this chapter with six R-words: (1) **REFUSAL** (2 Sam 18.1-4); (2) **REQUEST** (2 Sam 18.5); (3) **ROUTING** (2 Sam 18.6-8); (4) **REPRISAL** (2 Sam 18.9-18); (5) **REPORT** (2 Sam 18.19-32); (6) **REMORSE** (2 Sam 18.33). The **REFUSAL** is David’s loyal army refusing to allow him to lead them in battle, fearing for him being killed. David’s answer is: **what seemeth you best I will do**. The **REQUEST** is a bit more than a request and came as David stood before the assembled army and ordered their three commanding officers to **deal gently with the young man, even with Absalom**. All of the people heard this command. The **ROUTING** is a description of how the battle went. There was no question that the smaller army prevailed mightily over the larger one and possibly reminds us of the David and Goliath incident in 1 Samuel 17. The **REPRISAL** (i.e., retaliation against an enemy), comes when the one who was so proud of his hair and appearance is **taken up between the heaven and the earth**, apparently the hair having something to do with it. Joab, understanding the danger of further problems if Absalom is allowed to live sticks three darts into his middle. Then Joab is able to call off any further skirmishes. The **REPORT** is news of the victory delivered twice to the King. The second message came from Cush, who made clear that Absalom was no more. The **REMORSE** is given in the last verse where the words provide a good understanding of the passionate grief of a great warrior, but not so excellent father.

### III. Chronology/Lists/Links.

**BIBLE PERIOD:** The Period of the United Kingdom.

If you are not familiar with the **15 Bible Periods**, please click here: <https://tinyurl.com/wl79hp7>

You can read an excellent article on Chronology from Wayne Jackson here:

<https://tinyurl.com/wylvljh>

**LINKS:** *These links are to the writings of men and not to inspired Scripture, thus care and caution in weighing the conclusions is always wise. Some might not be online links, but listing of material commonly available in books and publications.*

- 1) Burton Coffman: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/2-samuel-18.html>

- 2) JFB on 2 Samuel 18: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/jamieson-fausset-brown/2-samuel/2-samuel-18.html>

#### IV. Notes on the text.

1. **The experienced warrior prepares for battle and yields to demands of his faithful not to lead the charge personally** (2 Sam 18.1-5). We are not given the number of either opposing army, but it is obvious that Absalom's forces were vastly superior to David's. Almost certainly implied here is that David had a good bit of time to regroup and gather the support of forces in addition to those who left Jerusalem with him. *"The events here recorded cannot have followed immediately on David's arrival at Mahanaim. An interval of a few weeks must be assumed, during which the rival armies were mustered and organized"* [A.F. Kirkpatrick]. Abishai was the oldest son of David's sister Zeruiah (1 Chr 2.16). He was famous for his bravery and also was impulsive (2 Sam 3.30; 16.9; 1 Sam 26.6-9). Joab was the younger brother of Abishai, and became commander as a result of his good work in the capture of Jerusalem (1 Chr 11.4-6). Ittai is someone less known. He was a Gittite and was a powerful leader of fighting men who had a small army (2 Sam 15.22). Bob Winton tells us that by this time David was getting along in years. If the army was defeated in this battle, David would be able to raise another, IF he remained safe in this situation. However, David's friend, Hushai had convinced Absalom to lead his men PERSONALLY (2 Sam 17.11-12), and by this placed himself in great jeopardy! *"The FOUR uses of 'the young man Absalom' (verses 5, 12, 29, 32) imply that David sentimentally viewed Absalom as a youthful rebel who could be forgiven"* [John MacArthur, *2 Samuel: David's Heart Revealed*, p. 98]. From verse 5 we get the impression that David was quite confident of a victory, and that confidence may have contributed to his command to spare Absalom. Many commentators feel that David's command here was partly due to his own recognition and awareness of the fact that this rebellion was part of Nathan's prophecy.
2. **It was the "people of Israel" versus "the servants of David," and led to the defeat of the people of Israel** (2 Sam 18.6-8). The fact is that the exact location of **THE WOOD OF EPHRAIM**, is not known today. Was it on the east or the west of the Jordan River? Both views are possible and there are some good arguments for both sides. Absalom is last mentioned as being on the EASTERN side of Jordan (2 Sam 17.26). Also, David was located at Mahanaim (May huh NAY im), which is also east of Jordan. No mention is made of either army crossing the Jordan to the west. But Ephraim's territory was on the western side of Jordan. If it is the case that the battle took place west of the Jordan, it would be possible for David's forces to again cross the river to go back to Mahanaim. Then they would cross it a third time to go back to Jerusalem. To me that seems less likely. We have a very concise report of the battle and the followers of Absalom suffered the loss of 20,000 men. How horrible that would be for thousands of families that forsook the guidance of the God-appointed king to follow a usurper! Robert Bergen points out in the New American Commentary: *"By choosing a forest as the battlefield, David hoped to minimize the value of Absalom's numerical advantage. The strategy paid off handsomely. Under the capable leadership of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, David's men fought well in the forest. One reason for David's success was that his three commanders fragmented the opposition. By deploying their separate units in different areas, they spread Absalom's troops over the whole countryside (2 Sam 18.8), thus preventing them from making a united stand. David's forces also used the terrain to maximum advantage."*

3. **The rebel, Absalom, meets his end and Joab restrains the people from further carnage against the people of Israel** (2 Sam 18.9-17). In some kind of way, Absalom was caught in a tree by the head or hair as he fled on a mule from David's soldiers. Suspended above the ground, he was unable to move to save himself from Joab's subsequent attack with three darts. The conversation between Joab and the person who first saw Absalom hanging in the tree is recorded for us. We see Joab was upset with the man for not killing Absalom. Yet, the man boldly defended himself before Joab, noting that the king had commanded Absalom to be spared and that Joab would not spare him if he had been charged with Absalom's murder. Absalom wasted no time further and grabbed three darts as he went to kill him whom he had been commanded to spare. In my opinion, Joab was loyal to David, even as he went against the order. He knew well the emotional attachment David held in his heart for this rebellious son. He also knew well Absalom would remain a threat so long as he was alive. Some have tried to imply that Joab was taking out his own vengeance on Absalom for burning his barley field (cf., 2 Sam 14.30). After this, knowing the death of the one who usurped the throne would end the conflict, Joab blew the trumpet (v. 16), and the battle ended. The final resting place for Absalom was a dishonorable one which he deserved. The custom of that culture was to indicate the degree of their disgust for the memory of someone by throwing stones at the place of burial. We can read about a similar situation regarding Achan (Josh 7.26) and Achan (Josh 8.29). Some suggest it might be like the stoning which was the penalty of a rebel son (Deut 21.20-21).
4. **Absalom's self-arranged memorial** (2 Sam 18.18). We are told that Absalom had three sons (2 Sam 14.27). The explanation seems to be that those sons had died previously or else that Absalom had erected the monument before they were born.
5. **How the news of Absalom's death was communicated to David** (2 Sam 18.19-32). Generally speaking, kings did not look with favor upon those who brought bad news. Coffman points out that David had killed messengers who brought news of Saul's death and that of Ishbosheth (2 Sam 1.15-16; 4.5-12). Of course there were other factors involved in those cases, those messengers sought rewards for their messages. At any rate, Joab did not want the same to happen to Ahimaaz, so he was reluctant to allow him to bear the message. Ahimaaz was so insistent that Joab finally yielded and Ahimaaz left second, but arrived first, having taken a different, and supposedly easier route than Cushie whom Joab sent first. The king was anxiously awaiting news and with both messengers would ask about Absalom. We know that Ahimaaz had been told about the death of Absalom (2 Sam 18.20), but he withheld that information. When Cushie came, David learned of Absalom's death.
6. **The grieving King** (2 Sam 18.33). Warren Weirsbe, in *Be Restored*, well describes David's grief: *David's problem wasn't that he grieved over his son, for grief is a very human response, and tears are a part of the healing. His problem was that he grieved EXCESSIVELY and wouldn't permit himself to be comforted. His response was abnormal. He neglected himself and his responsibilities and had to be soundly rebuked by Joab before he would take steps to return to Jerusalem and save the kingdom. His troubles weren't over, but the Lord would empower him to be the ruler He wanted him to be.*

**V. Lessons & Applications.**

1. Terry Varner writes: *The great lesson of this chapter is the sober reminder that sin has far-reaching and tragic consequences here and hereafter. The wailing and pitiful cry of Davie over the death of Absalom teaches us that there is a price attached to our sin and disobedience (Romans 6.23).*
2. Jabez Burns, in his *FIVE HUNDRED SKETCHES AND SKELETONS OF SERMONS*, writes: *LEARN:*
  - 1) **The doctrine of personal responsibility should teach us submission under the most distressing bereavements.** All souls are individually accountable to God. Parents have not to answer, in the stead of their children. Parents cannot impart grace. Life is in the hands of God. He will not only do right, but what is really best; therefore, to God should we bow, in submission to His will.
  - 2) **Lead parents to be devoutly concerned for the salvation of their children.** Means are ours, though results are not. Hence how important to treat our children as accountable, immortal beings. To labor for their spiritual welfare, by example, by teaching, by prayer, etc. To see to it, that they shall have no just cause to blame us, for their eternal ruin.
  - 3) **Let children here see the awful results of opposition to parental authority.** There is a tradition respecting what is referred to (2 Sam 18.18), that all passers-by continued to throw a stone on the heap, to testify their abhorrence of Absalom's rebellion. There is no hope of rebellious wicked children (who remain so, DRL). One of the greatest sins, is the base ungrateful conduct of children, to their parents. So great, that under the law, it was deemed a sin worthy of death. Let me press the subject on all young persons present to honor father and mother— Ephesians 6:2 **Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)**
  - 4) **Let me now address all who are in a state of rebellion against Christ, the King of kings.** How base is this! How ruinous it must be! The end of rejecting Christ, is necessarily death— eternal death! Who are guilty of this? Let me press repentance, and forsaking of the evil.

**VI. Questions.**

**True or False**

- 01. \_\_\_\_ It was David’s intention to lead his men in the battle against his son.
- 02. \_\_\_\_ THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL was the expression used to speak of David’s forces.
- 03. \_\_\_\_ It was Joab who put an end to the battle in the Field of Ephraim.
- 04. \_\_\_\_ Ahimaaz was told he would bear no tidings this day.
- 05. \_\_\_\_ WOULD GOD I HAD DIED FOR THEE, were words spoken by David.

**I Found it in Verse(s)**

- 06. \_\_\_\_ The word COMMANDED.
- 07. \_\_\_\_ Three verses that mention Ahimaaz’s father.
- 08. \_\_\_\_ WHY DIDST THOU NOT SMITE HIM THERE TO THE GROUND?
- 09. \_\_\_\_ David’s question to Cush.
- 10. \_\_\_\_ A trumpet sounds.

**Short Answer**

- 11. David said it to the people...  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 12. The extent to which a certain one would NOT take Absalom’s life.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 13. Used to cover up Absalom’s dead body.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 14. Path chosen by the messenger: Ahimaaz.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 15. Ahimaaz’s first three words to King David:  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Each Question is worth 7 Points*

**My Score is: \_\_\_\_\_**

*Answers will be found on next week’s handout*

**ANSWERS to 2 Samuel 17 Questions...** **01**—True, (1); **02**—False (24); **03**—False, 6; **04**—False, (23); **05**—True (11); **06**—11; **07**—28; **08**—2; **09**—23; **10**—14; **11**—It pleased him well (4); **12**—Robbed of her whelps in the field (8); **13**—That they might not be seen (17); **14**—A well (18); **15**—Hungry, weary, thirsty (29).

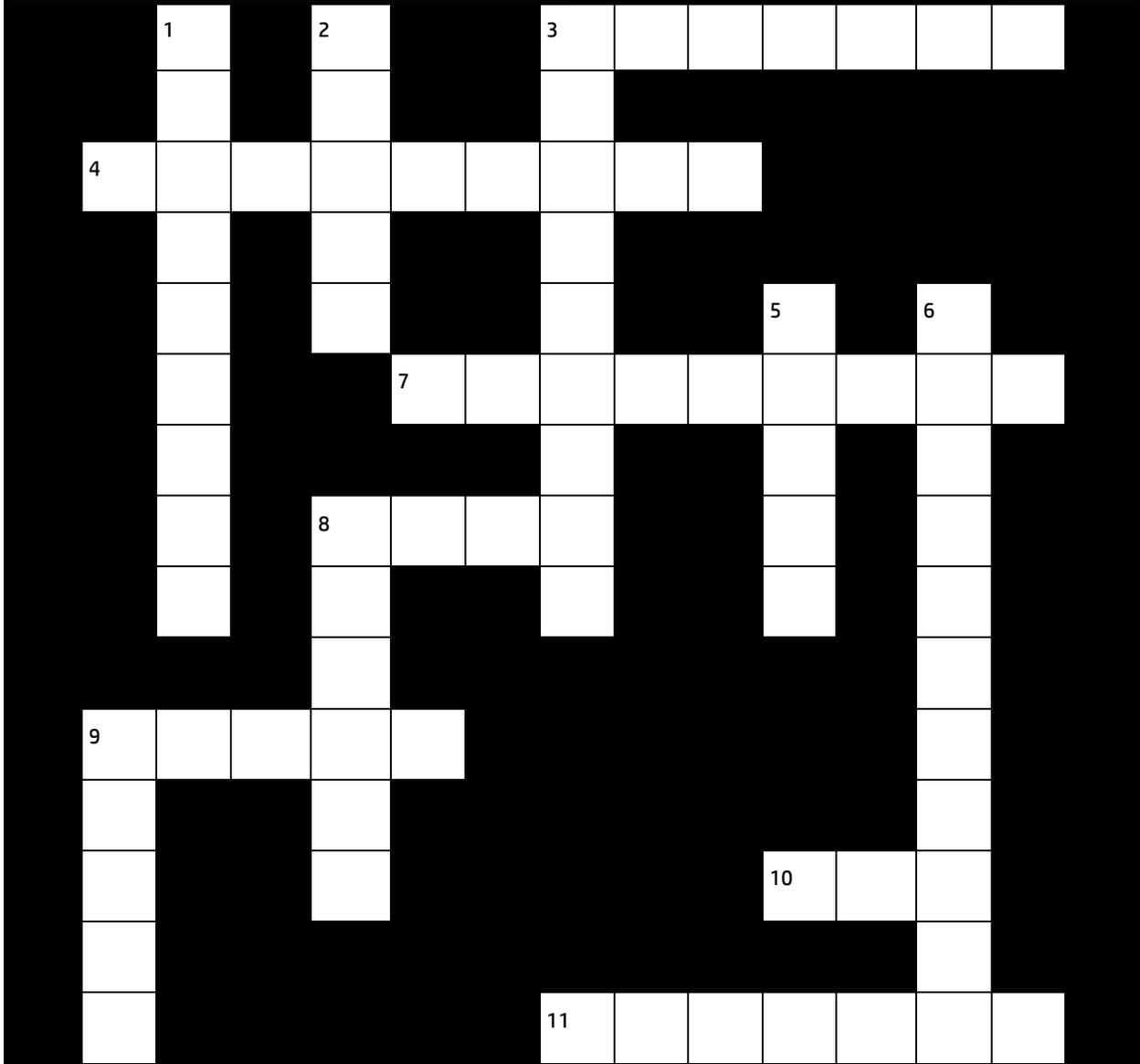
**VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.** The words may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. -DRL 5.82Wx6.32H

T U G T I D I N G S W R  
 J C B H T C A L L E D M  
 T P E O P L E A U R K W  
 U Z A U S W B H R V C W  
 R G R S C A E I G A T E  
 N F W A T C H M A N A N  
 Y O U N G H O A B T E T  
 P D I D G A L A S H J H  
 V A C F R R D Z A E O K  
 L V U O E G O H L R A I  
 O I S R A E L B O E B N  
 R D H T T H E N M U J G  
 D V I H A N D S A V S D

ABSALOM	AHIMAAZ	BEAR	BEHOLD	CALLED
CHARGE	CUSHI	DAVID	FORTH	GATE
GREAT	HAND	ISRAEL	JOAB	KING
LORD	PEOPLE	SAID	SERVANT	THEN
THERE	THOUSAND	TIDINGS	TURN	WATCHMAN
WENT	YOUNG			

VIII. Crossword Puzzle.

**2 Samuel 18 (KJV):** From Your Friends at Maple Hill Church of Christ  
 3960 Scale RD, Benton, KY 42025 <http://maplehillchurchofchrist.blog>



**ACROSS**

- 03) Something said to be in someone’s mouth.
- 04) Had he killed Absalom, one said he would have wrought \_\_\_\_ against himself.
- 07) It was a great one
- 08) David felt Ahimaaz would be bringing \_\_\_\_ tidings.
- 09) Three of these were thrust into Absalom by Joab.
- 10) David’s value to the people: \_\_\_\_ thousand of us.
- 11) At the \_\_\_\_ over the gate David wept for Absalom.

**DOWN**

- 01) One word describing the battle scene.
- 02) Lost the race.
- 03) David’s forces included captains of \_\_\_\_.
- 05) Absalom’s mule rode under a \_\_\_\_ bough of a great oak.
- 06) Absalom said: “I have no son to keep my name in \_\_\_\_”
- 08) All the people heard when David told his commanders to deal \_\_\_\_ with Absalom.
- 09) \_\_\_\_ sat between the two gates.