

Olivet Baptist Church

3500 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21229

Wednesday Night Bible Study (7:00 pm)

Book of 2 Samuel – Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Alex O. Stone

Classes Presented on “Zoom”

[MEETING ID: 395 133 283 * PASSCODE: 281215] Or, Call: [1-646-558-8656](tel:1-646-558-8656)

Theme: “David’s Troubles & Transgressions” (2 Samuel 11:1–24:25)

The David’s Personal Struggles (chaps. 11-24)

A. The Sin of Adultery and Murder (chap. 11:1-27)

B. The Nathan’s Parable and David’s Confession (chap. 12:1-31)

The David’s Family Divided

C. Amnon and His Sister Tamar (chap. 13:1-39)

D. Absalom Return and Deceit (chap. 14:1-15:6)

E. Absalom’s Rebellion & David’s Flight (chap. 15:7-16:14)

F. Absalom’s Regent in Israel (chap. 16:15-17:29)

G. Absalom’s Defeat & Death (Hushai’s Advice) 18:1-33

David, Bathsheba, and Uriah

11 It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out *to battle*, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

² Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king’s house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman *was* very beautiful to behold. ³ So David sent and inquired about the woman. And *someone* said, “*Is* this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?”

⁴ Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. ⁵ And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, “*I am* with child.”

⁶ Then David sent to Joab, *saying*, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷ When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. ⁸ And David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” So Uriah departed from the king’s house, and a gift *of food* from the king followed him. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. ¹⁰ So when they told David, saying, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?”

¹¹ And Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? *As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.*” ¹² Then David said to Uriah, “Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. ¹³ Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

¹⁴ In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵ And he wrote in the letter, saying, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die.” ¹⁶ So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there *were* valiant men. ¹⁷ Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And *some* of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also. ¹⁸ Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war, ¹⁹ and charged the messenger, saying, “When you have finished telling the matters of the war to the king, ²⁰ if it happens that the king’s wrath rises, and he says to you: ‘Why did you approach so near to the city when you fought? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall?’ ²¹ Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go near the wall?’—then you shall say, ‘Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.’”

²² So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him.

²³ And the messenger said to David, “Surely the men prevailed against us and came

out to us in the field; then we drove them back as far as the entrance of the gate. ²⁴The archers shot from the wall at your servants; and *some* of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." ²⁵Then David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab: 'Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it.' So encourage him." ²⁶When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. ²⁷And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

Nathan's Parable and David's Confession

12 Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich *man* had exceedingly many flocks and herds. ³But the poor *man* had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

⁵So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! ⁶And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity." ⁷Then Nathan said to David, "You *are* the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if *that had been* too little, I also would have given you much more! ⁹Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife *to be* your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. ¹⁰Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' ¹¹Thus says the LORD: 'Behold,

I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. ¹² For you did *it* secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.”

¹³ So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die.” ¹⁵ Then Nathan departed to his house.

The Death of David’s Son

And the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and it became ill. ¹⁶ David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. ¹⁷ So the elders of his house arose *and went* to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them. ¹⁸ Then **on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died**. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, “Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!” ¹⁹ When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore, David said to his servants, “Is the child dead?” And they said, “He is dead.”

²⁰ So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate. ²¹ Then his servants said to him, “What *is* this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child *while he was* alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food.” ²² And he said, “While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who can tell *whether* the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?’ ²³ But now he is dead; why should I fast? *Can I bring him back again?* I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

Solomon is Born

²⁴ Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Now the LORD loved him, ²⁵ and He sent *word* by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

Rabbah is Captured

²⁶ Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the people of Ammon, and took the royal city. ²⁷ And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, "I have fought against Rabbah, and I have taken the city's water *supply*. ²⁸ Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called after my name." ²⁹ So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah, fought against it, and took it. ³⁰ Then he took their king's crown from his head. Its weight *was* a talent of gold, with precious stones. And it was *set* on David's head. Also he brought out the spoil of the city in great abundance. ³¹ And he brought out the people who *were* in it, and put *them to work* with saws and iron picks and iron axes, and made them cross over to the brick works. So he did to all the cities of the people of Ammon. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

Amnon and Tamar

13 After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name *was* Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. ² Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she *was* a virgin. And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her. ³ But Amnon had a friend whose name *was* Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother. Now Jonadab *was* a very crafty man. ⁴ And he said to him, "Why *are* you, the king's son, becoming thinner day after day? Will you not tell me?"

Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." ⁵ So Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see *it* and eat it from her hand.'" ⁶ Then Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let Tamar my sister come and make a couple of cakes for me in my sight, that

I may eat from her hand.” ⁷ And David sent home to Tamar, saying, “Now go to your brother Amnon’s house, and prepare food for him.” ⁸ So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house; and he was lying down. Then she took flour and kneaded *it*, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. ⁹ And she took the pan and placed *them* out before him, but he refused to eat. Then Amnon said, “Have everyone go out from me.” And they all went out from him. ¹⁰ Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food into the bedroom, that I may eat from your hand.” And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought *them* to Amnon her brother in the bedroom. ¹¹ Now when she had brought *them* to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, *“Come, lie with me, my sister.”*

¹² But she answered him, *“No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing!”* ¹³ And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.” ¹⁴ However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her. ¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her *was* greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, “Arise, be gone!” ¹⁶ So she said to him, “No, indeed! This evil of sending me away *is* worse than the other that you did to me.” But he would not listen to her.

¹⁷ Then he called his servant who attended him, and said, “Here! Put this *woman* out, away from me, and bolt the door behind her.” ¹⁸ Now she had on a robe of many colors, for the king’s virgin daughters wore such apparel. And his servant put her out and bolted the door behind her. ¹⁹ Then Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her robe of many colors that *was* on her, and laid her hand on her head and went away crying bitterly. ²⁰ And Absalom her brother said to her, “Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now hold your peace, my sister. He *is* your brother; do not take this thing to heart.” So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom’s house. ²¹ But when *King David heard of all these things, he was very angry.* ²² And Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad. For **Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.**

Absalom Murders Amnon

²³ And it came to pass, after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal Hazor, which *is* near Ephraim; so Absalom invited all the king's sons. ²⁴ Then Absalom came to the king and said, "Kindly note, your servant has sheepshearers; please, let the king and his servants go with your servant." ²⁵ But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, let us not all go now, lest we be a burden to you." Then he urged him, but he would not go; and he blessed him. ²⁶ Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." And the king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" ²⁷ But Absalom urged him; so he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. ²⁸ Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, "Watch now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and *when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon!' then kill him*. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant."

²⁹ So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and each one got on his mule and fled. ³⁰ And it came to pass, while they were on the way, that news came to David, saying, "Absalom has killed all the king's sons, and not one of them is left!" ³¹ So the king arose and tore his garments and lay on the ground, and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn. ³² Then Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered and said, "*Let not my lord suppose they have killed all the young men, the king's sons, for only Amnon is dead*. For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. ³³ Now therefore, let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead. For only Amnon is dead."

Absalom Flees to Geshur

³⁴ Then Absalom fled. And the young man who was keeping watch lifted his eyes and looked, and there, many people were coming from the road on the hillside behind him. ³⁵ And Jonadab said to the king, "Look, the king's sons are coming; as your servant said, so it is." ³⁶ So it was, as soon as he had finished speaking, that the king's sons indeed came, and they lifted up their voice and wept. Also, the king and all his servants wept very bitterly. ³⁷ But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And *David* mourned for his son every day. ³⁸ So Absalom fled and went to

Geshur, and was there three years. ³⁹ And King David longed to go to Absalom. For he had been comforted concerning Amnon, because he was dead.

Absalom Returns to Jerusalem

14 So Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart *was* concerned about Absalom. ² And Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman, and said to her, "*Please pretend to be a mourner*, and put on mourning apparel; do not anoint yourself with oil, but act like a woman who has been mourning a long time for the dead. ³ Go to the king and speak to him in this manner." So, Joab put the words in her mouth. ⁴ And when the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and prostrated herself, and said, "Help, O king!" ⁵ Then the king said to her, "What troubles you?"

And she answered, "Indeed I *am* a widow, my husband is dead. ⁶ Now your *maidservant had two sons; and the two fought with each other in the field, and there was no one to part them, but the one struck the other and killed him.* ⁷ And now the whole family has risen up against your maidservant, and they said, 'Deliver him who struck his brother, that we may execute him for the life of his brother whom he killed; and we will destroy the heir also.' So they would extinguish my ember that is left, and leave to my husband *neither* name nor remnant on the earth." ⁸ Then the king said to the woman, "Go to your house, and I will give orders concerning you." ⁹ And the woman of Tekoa said to the king, "My lord, O king, *let* the iniquity *be* on me and on my father's house, and the king and his throne *be* guiltless." ¹⁰ So the king said, "Whoever says *anything* to you, bring him to me, and he shall not touch you anymore." ¹¹ Then she said, "Please let the king remember the LORD your God, and do not permit the avenger of blood to destroy anymore, lest they destroy my son."

And he said, "As the LORD lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground." ¹² Therefore the woman said, "Please, let your maidservant speak *another* word to my lord the king." And he said, "Say on." ¹³ So the woman said: "Why then have you schemed such a thing against the people of God? For the king speaks this thing as one who is guilty, *in that* the king does not bring his banished one home again." ¹⁴ For we will surely die and *become* like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered

up again. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him. ¹⁵ Now therefore, I have come to speak of this thing to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. And your maidservant said, ‘I will now speak to the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his maidservant. ¹⁶ For the king will hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man *who would* destroy me and my son together from the inheritance of God.’ ¹⁷ Your maidservant said, ‘The word of my lord the king will now be comforting; for as the angel of God, so *is* my lord the king in discerning good and evil. And may the LORD your God be with you.’” ¹⁸ Then the king answered and said to the woman, “Please do not hide from me anything that I ask you.”

And the woman said, “Please, let my lord the king speak.” ¹⁹ So the king said, “*Is* the hand of Joab with you in all this?” And the woman answered and said, “As you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken. For your servant Joab commanded me, and he put all these words in the mouth of your maidservant. ²⁰ To bring about this change of affairs your servant Joab has done this thing; but my lord *is* wise, according to the wisdom of the angel of God, to know everything that *is* in the earth.” ²¹ And the king said to Joab, “All right, I have granted this thing. Go therefore, bring back the young man Absalom.” ²² Then Joab fell to the ground on his face and bowed himself, and thanked the king. And Joab said, “Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, my lord, O king, in that the king has fulfilled the request of his servant.” ²³ So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. ²⁴ And the king said, “Let him return to his own house, but do not let him see my face.” So, Absalom returned to his own house, but did not see the king’s face.

David Forgives Absalom

²⁵ Now in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. ²⁶ And when he cut the hair of his head—at the end of every year he cut *it* because it was heavy on him—when he cut it, he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels according to the king’s standard. ²⁷ To Absalom were born three sons, and one daughter whose name *was* Tamar. She was a woman of beautiful appearance. ²⁸ And

Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, but did not see the king's face. ²⁹ Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but he would not come to him. And when he sent again the second time, he would not come. ³⁰ So he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." And Absalom's servants set the field on fire. ³¹ Then Joab arose and came to Absalom's house, and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?"

³² And Absalom answered Joab, "Look, I sent to you, saying, 'Come here, so that I may send you to the king, to say, "Why have I come from Geshur? *It would be* better for me *to be* there still.'" Now therefore, let me see the king's face; but if there is iniquity in me, let him execute me." ³³ So Joab went to the king and told him. And when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king. **Then the king kissed Absalom.**

Absalom's Treason

15 After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. ² Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city *are* you from?" And he would say, "Your servant *is* from such and such a tribe of Israel." ³ Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case *is* good and right; but *there is* no deputy of the king to hear you." ⁴ Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." ⁵ And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. ⁶ In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. ⁷ Now it came to pass after forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the LORD. ⁸ For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the LORD indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.'" ⁹

⁹ And the king said to him, "Go in peace." So, he arose and went to Hebron. ¹⁰ Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the

sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom reigns in Hebron!' " ¹¹ And with Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything. ¹² Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city—from Giloh—while he offered sacrifices. And *the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number.*

David Escapes from Jerusalem

¹³ Now a messenger came to David, saying, "*The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.*" ¹⁴ So David said to all his servants who *were* with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword." ¹⁵ And the king's servants said to the king, "We *are* your servants, *ready to do* whatever my lord the king commands." ¹⁶ Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house. ¹⁷ And the king went out with all the people after him, and stopped at the outskirts. ¹⁸ Then all his servants passed before him; and all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men who had followed him from Gath, passed before the king. ¹⁹ Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you also going with us? Return and remain with the king. For you *are* a foreigner and also an exile from your own place. ²⁰ In fact, you came *only* yesterday. Should I make you wander up and down with us today, since I go, I know not where? Return, and take your brethren back. Mercy and truth *be* with you." ²¹ But Ittai answered the king and said, "As the LORD lives, and *as* my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be."

²² So David said to Ittai, "Go, and cross over." Then Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the little ones who *were* with him crossed over. ²³ And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people crossed over. The king himself also crossed over the Brook Kidron, and all the people crossed over toward the way of the wilderness. ²⁴ There was Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar went up until all the people had finished crossing over from the city. ²⁵ Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark

of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and show me *both* it and His dwelling place. ²⁶ But if He says thus: ‘I have no delight in you,’ here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him.” ²⁷ The king also said to Zadok the priest, “*Are you not* a seer? Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. ²⁸ See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.” ²⁹ Therefore Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem. And they remained there.

³⁰ So *David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept* as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who *were* with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up. ³¹ Then *someone* told David, saying, “Ahithophel *is* among the conspirators with Absalom.” And David said, “O LORD, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!” ³² Now it happened when David had come to the top *of the mountain*, where he worshiped God—there was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. ³³ David said to him, “If you go on with me, then you will become a burden to me. ³⁴ But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; *as I was* your father’s servant previously, so I *will* now also *be* your servant,’ then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me. ³⁵ And *do* you not *have* Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? Therefore, it will be *that* whatever you hear from the king’s house, you shall tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. ³⁶ Indeed *they have* there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok’s *son*, and Jonathan, Abiathar’s *son*; and by them you shall send me everything you hear.” ³⁷ So Hushai, David’s friend, went into the city. And Absalom came into Jerusalem.

Mephibosheth’s Servant

16 When David was a little past the top *of the mountain*, there was Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth, who met him with a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them two hundred *loaves* of bread, one hundred clusters of raisins, one hundred summer fruits, and a skin of wine. ² And the king said to Ziba, “What do you mean to do with these?” So Ziba said, “The donkeys *are* for the king’s household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who are faint in the wilderness to drink.” ³ Then the king said, “And where *is* your master’s son?” And Ziba

said to the king, “Indeed he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.’”⁴ So the king said to Ziba, “Here, all that *belongs* to Mephibosheth *is yours*.” And Ziba said, “I humbly bow before you, *that* I may find favor in your sight, my lord, O king!”

Shimei Curses David

⁵ Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name *was* Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came. ⁶ And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men *were* on his right hand and on his left. ⁷ Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: “Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue! ⁸ *The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!*” ⁹ Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!” ¹⁰ But the king said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the LORD has said to him, ‘Curse David.’ Who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’ ” ¹¹ And David said to Abishai and all his servants, “See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now *may this* Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him. ¹² It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day.” ¹³ And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust. ¹⁴ Now the king and all the people who *were* with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there.

The Advice of Ahithophel

¹⁵ Meanwhile Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem; and Ahithophel *was* with him. ¹⁶ And so it was, when Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, “*Long* live the king! *Long* live the king!” ¹⁷ So Absalom said to Hushai, “*Is* this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?” ¹⁸ And Hushai said to Absalom, “No, but whom the LORD and this

people and all the men of Israel choose, his I will be, and with him I will remain.
¹⁹ “Furthermore, whom should I serve? *Should I* not *serve* in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father’s presence, so will I be in your presence.” ²⁰ Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “Give advice as to what we should do.” ²¹ And Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Go in to your father’s concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; and all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong.” ²² So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the top of the house, and Absalom went in to his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel. ²³ Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, *was* as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So *was* all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

17 Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. ² I will come upon him while he *is* weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who *are* with him will flee, and I will strike only the king. ³ Then I will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, all the people will be at peace.” ⁴ And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

The Advice of Hushai

⁵ Then Absalom said, “Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he says too.” ⁶ And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom spoke to him, saying, “Ahithophel has spoken in this manner. Shall we do as he says? If not, speak up.” ⁷ So Hushai said to Absalom: “The advice that Ahithophel has given *is* not good at this time. ⁸ “For,” said Hushai, “you know your father and his men, that they *are* mighty men, and they *are* enraged in their minds, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field; and your father *is* a man of war, and will not camp with the people. ⁹ Surely by now he is hidden in some pit, or in some *other* place. And it will be, when some of them are overthrown at the first, that whoever hears *it* will say, ‘There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.’ ¹⁰ And even he *who is* valiant, whose heart *is* like the heart of a lion, will melt completely. For all Israel knows that your father *is* a mighty man, and *those who are* with him *are* valiant men. ¹¹ Therefore I advise that all Israel be fully gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, like the sand that *is* by the sea for multitude, and that

you go to battle in person. ¹² So we will come upon him in some place where he may be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground. And of him and all the men who *are* with him there shall not be left so much as one. ¹³ Moreover, if he has withdrawn into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city; and we will pull it into the river, until there is not one small stone found there.” ¹⁴ So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The advice of Hushai the Archite *is* better than the advice of Ahithophel.” For the LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom.

Hushai Warns David to Escape

¹⁵ Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, “Thus and so Ahithophel advised Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so I have advised. ¹⁶ Now therefore, send quickly and tell David, saying, ‘Do not spend this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily cross over, lest the king and all the people who *are* with him be swallowed up.’” ¹⁷ Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed at En Rogel, for they dared not be seen coming into the city; so a female servant would come and tell them, and they would go and tell King David. ¹⁸ Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom. But both of them went away quickly and came to a man’s house in Bahurim, who had a well in his court; and they went down into it. ¹⁹ Then the woman took and spread a covering over the well’s mouth, and spread ground grain on it; and the thing was not known. ²⁰ And when Absalom’s servants came to the woman at the house, they said, “Where *are* Ahimaaz and Jonathan?”

So, the woman said to them, “They have gone over the water brook.” And when they had searched and could not find *them*, they returned to Jerusalem. ²¹ Now it came to pass, after they had departed, that they came up out of the well and went and told King David, and said to David, “Arise and cross over the water quickly. For thus has Ahithophel advised against you.” ²² So David and all the people who *were* with him arose and crossed over the Jordan. By morning light not one of them was left who had not gone over the Jordan. ²³ Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father’s tomb.

²⁴Then David went to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. ²⁵And Absalom made Amasa captain of the army instead of Joab. This Amasa *was* the son of a man whose name *was* Jithra, an Israelite, who had gone in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother. ²⁶So Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead. ²⁷Now it happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the people of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, ²⁸brought beds and basins, earthen vessels and wheat, barley and flour, parched *grain* and beans, lentils and parched *seeds*, ²⁹honey and curds, sheep and cheese of the herd, for David and the people who *were* with him to eat. For they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

Absalom's Defeat and Death

18 And David numbered the people who *were* with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them. ²Then David sent out one third of the people under the hand of Joab, one third under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, "I also will surely go out with you myself." ³But the people answered, "You shall not go out! For if we flee away, they will not care about us; nor if half of us die, will they care about us. But *you are* worth ten thousand of us now. For you are now more help to us in the city." ⁴Then the king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands. ⁵Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, "*Deal* gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains orders concerning Absalom. ⁶So the people went out into the field of battle against Israel. And the battle was in the woods of Ephraim. ⁷The people of Israel were overthrown there before the servants of David, and a great slaughter of twenty thousand took place there that day. ⁸For the battle there was scattered over the face of the whole countryside, and the woods devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

⁹Then Absalom met the servants of David. Absalom rode on a mule. The mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head caught in the terebinth;

so he was left hanging between heaven and earth. And the mule which *was* under him went on. ¹⁰ Now a certain man saw *it* and told Joab, and said, "I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree!" ¹¹ So Joab said to the man who told him, "You just saw *him!* And why did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten *shekels* of silver and a belt." ¹² But the man said to Joab, "Though I were to receive a thousand *shekels* of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king's son. For in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Beware lest anyone *touch* the young man Absalom!' ¹³ Otherwise I would have dealt falsely against my own life. For there is nothing hidden from the king, and you yourself would have set yourself against *me.*" ¹⁴ Then Joab said, "I cannot linger with you." And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart, while he was *still* alive in the midst of the terebinth tree. ¹⁵ And ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, and struck and killed him.

¹⁶ So Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel. For Joab held back the people. ¹⁷ And they took Absalom and cast him into a large pit in the woods, and laid a very large heap of stones over him. Then all Israel fled, everyone to his tent. ¹⁸ Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself, which *is* in the King's Valley. For he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar after his own name. And to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.

David Hears of Absalom's Death

¹⁹ Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Let me run now and take the news to the king, how the LORD has avenged him of his enemies." ²⁰ And Joab said to him, "You shall not take the news this day, for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news, because the king's son is dead." ²¹ Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed himself to Joab and ran. ²² And Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." So, Joab said, "Why will you run, my son, since you have no news ready?" ²³ "But whatever happens," *he said*, "let me run." So, he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain, and outran the Cushite.

²⁴ Now David was sitting between the two gates. And the watchman went up to the roof over the gate, to the wall, lifted his eyes and looked, and there was a man, running alone. ²⁵ Then the watchman cried out and told the king. And the king said, "If he *is* alone, *there is* news in his mouth." And he came rapidly and drew near. ²⁶ Then the watchman saw *another* man running, and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, "There is *another* man, running alone!" And the king said, "He also brings news." ²⁷ So the watchman said, "I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "He *is* a good man, and comes with good news." ²⁸ So Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, "All is well!" Then he bowed down with his face to the earth before the king, and said, "Blessed *be* the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king!"

²⁹ The king said, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant and *me* your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what *it was about*." ³⁰ And the king said, "Turn aside *and* stand here." So he turned aside and stood still. ³¹ Just then the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, "There is good news, my lord the king! For the LORD has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you." ³² And the king said to the Cushite, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" So, the Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do harm, be like *that* young man!"

David's Mourning for Absalom

³³ Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: "O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!"

Commentary: DAVID'S Sins and Transgressions (CHAP. 11:1-18:33)

I. David's Sin and Domestic Problems (chaps. 11–18)

A. David's Adultery (chap. 11)

2 Samuel 11:1. Though the Arameans no longer came ¹ to their aid, **the Ammonites** stubbornly maintained their hostile posture toward Israel. In the context of David's ongoing problems with these inveterate foes occurred the turning point of his reign.

In the spring, after the latter rains were over and it was customary to resume military activity, **David** ordered **Joab** to launch an invasion of **Rabbah**, the capital of Ammon. Though **kings** usually led their armies personally, **David**, for reasons not related, **remained in Jerusalem**.

2 Samuel 11:2–3. **One evening**, restless on **his bed ... David** arose, went to a rooftop **of the palace**, and from there happened to observe **Bathsheba ... the wife of** his neighbor **Uriah**. She was **bathing** out in the open. One may not fault **David** for perhaps seeking the cooler breezes of the late afternoon, but Bathsheba, knowing the proximity of her courtyard to the palace, probably harbored ulterior designs toward the king. Yet David's submission to her charms is inexcusable, for the deliberate steps he followed to bring her to the palace required more than enough time for him to resist the initial, impulsive temptation (cf. James 1:14–15).

2 Samuel 11:4–5. Having discovered her identity, he **sent for her** at once and, assured of her ritual purity (cf. Lev. 12:2–5; 15:19–28), had intercourse with her. The bathing

¹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 467). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

itself may have been for the purpose of ritual purification and would therefore not only advertise Bathsheba's charms but would serve as a notice to the king that she was available to him. In due time she found that she was **pregnant** by the king and, undoubtedly in great distress, informed him of her condition.

2 Samuel 11:6–13. The crisis brought by the pregnancy required some kind of suitable resolution, so **David** determined to “legitimize” the impending birth by bringing **Uriah** back from the Ammonite campaign, thus making it possible for him to enjoy the intimacies of marriage. But the subterfuge did not work, for though **David** resorted to two schemes (vv. 8, 13) to induce **Uriah** to **go home** and be with his **wife**, the noble **Hittite** refused. (Though the Hittite Empire had ended by 1200 B.C., pockets of ethnic Hittites continued to exist in Syria and even Israel. **Uriah** was from one of these.) Why should he, he argued, be allowed the comforts of home and a conjugal visit while his friends in combat were deprived of them? Even after **David** plied him with wine, **Uriah's** sense of loyalty to his comrades prevailed over his desire for his wife.

2 Samuel 11:14–21. In utter frustration **David** wrote a memo to **Joab** commanding that **Uriah**, when he returned to **the front line**, be abandoned to the enemy by an unexpected Israelite withdrawal. Ironically **Uriah** was the bearer of his own tidings of doom. This plan succeeded; **Uriah** was surrounded and slain. Ordinarily **David** would have been upset by the news of casualties. He would have wondered at Israel's indiscretion in fighting under Rabbah's **wall**, a blunder which had cost **Abimelech, son of Gideon**, his life long ago (Jud. 9:50–54). So **Joab** instructed the courier who bore the news to inform the king specifically that **Uriah** also had died. This he knew would mollify **David's** anguish.

2 Samuel 11:22–27. David’s response to the news was predictable. He **told the messenger** to tell **Joab** that in circumstances such as war, life and death were matters of blind chance. His instruction back to **Joab** was only that the siege of Rabbah be even more aggressive. Bathsheba soon learned of her husband’s tragic death. **After the customary time of mourning**, she moved into the king’s palace in time to bear their **son**. **The LORD** was **displeased**, however, and set events in motion that would trouble **David** till his death.

B. Nathan’s rebuke and David’s punishment (chap. 12)

2 Samuel 12:1–6. Sometime after the birth of Bathsheba’s son, **Nathan** the prophet told David a story of a **rich man** who, in spite of having everything, stole a **poor** neighbor’s only **ewe**² (i.e., female) **lamb** to provide a feast for a guest. Enraged, **David** pronounced that **the man who** would do such a despicable thing ought **to die**. Though the Law contained no such penalty for the theft of property, kidnapping was a capital offense and it may be that David viewed the taking of a pet lamb in this light (Ex. 21:16). In addition, he said, **the rich man** must restore **four** lambs for the one stolen for not even the rich man’s death could compensate the poor man’s property loss (Ex. 22:1).

2 Samuel 12:7–14. Nathan’s reply to all this was a bombshell: **You are the man! The LORD**, he said, had given **David** everything, but he had taken, as it were, the pet lamb of a poor neighbor (v. 9). **David** now would suffer **the sword** as had **Uriah** and David’s **wives** would be taken from him as Bathsheba had been stolen from **the Hittite**. This

² Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 467–468). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

was fulfilled by Absalom (David's own son!) when he lay with David's concubines (16:22). But David's shame would be even greater because, in contrast with David's sin **in secret**, all these things would happen in the glare of the public eye, **in broad daylight**.

One may wonder, perhaps, why David was not punished with death as he had so sternly advocated for the guilty man. Adultery and murder both were sufficient cause for the execution of even a king (Ex. 21:12; Lev. 20:10). The answer surely lies in the genuine and contrite repentance which David expressed, not only in the presence of Nathan but more fully in Psalm 51. David's **sin** was heinous, but the grace of God was more than sufficient to forgive and restore him, as **Nathan** could testify. And yet, though David could be restored to fellowship with his God, the impact of his sin remained and would continue to work its sorrow in the nation as well as in the king's life.

2 Samuel 12:15–23. Shortly **after** the interview with **Nathan ... the child** became terminally **ill**. Despite David's intense fasting and prayer, **the baby died within a week**. Only then did **David** cease his mourning, wash, worship, and eat, contrary to custom and much **to the amazement of his servants**. **David's response is classic: While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept.... But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again?** David attested to the irrevocability of death—its finality renders further petition absurd. **I will go to him**, David said, **but he will not return to me**. This reflects his conviction that the dead cannot return to life as it was. Rather it is the living who go to the dead.

2 Samuel 12:24–25. Eventually another **son** was born to David and Bathsheba, one who bore a double name. Called **Solomon** (“peace”) by them, **the LORD ... through Nathan** named **him Jedidiah** (“loved by the LORD”).

2 Samuel 12:26–31. In the meantime, the Ammonite war went well for **Joab**. He had all but captured the Ammonite capital, **Rabbah**, having taken **the royal citadel** and the city’s **water supply**. And now, in order that **David** might gain the credit for its fall, **Joab** urged the king to lead the final assault himself. This **David** did. He sacked the city of its wealth, including the 75-pound (**a talent**) golden **crown** of the Ammonite **king** (*malkām*, which could also be a reference to “Molech,” the Ammonite god). David also put the survivors to slave labor (using **saws ... iron picks, and axes** and working **at brickmaking**) and **returned** in triumph **to Jerusalem**.

C. Sin and murder of Amnon (chap. 13)

Because of his affair with Bathsheba David had been told by Nathan the prophet that the sword would never depart from his house (12:10). It was not long before he began to experience the heartbreaks of rape and murder within his own family.

2 Samuel 13:1–6. **Absalom, son of David** by his wife Maacah (3:3), had a **beautiful sister** named **Tamar**. **Amnon**, David’s firstborn by Ahinoam (3:2), **fell in love with Tamar**. **Frustrated** in his attempts to win her favor, **Amnon** sought the counsel of his **shrewd** cousin **Jonadab**. Jonadab³ advised Amnon to **pretend to be ill** and then to plead with his **father** to have **Tamar** bake him **bread** and bring it to him.

³ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 468–469). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

2 Samuel 13:7–14. After **she** had prepared **the bread** before him, **Amnon** told her to dismiss all the servants. Then, despite her urgent pleading, **he grabbed her and raped her**. Such loss of a maiden’s virginity was an unbearable curse **in Israel** (Deut. 22:13–21). Moreover, such relationships between half brothers and sisters were strictly forbidden in the Law. Those guilty of such things were to be cut off from the covenant community (Lev. 20:17). In this case, of course, **Tamar** was innocent since she had been assaulted (Deut. 22:25–29).

2 Samuel 13:15–19. In revulsion at what he had done, **Amnon** now **hated** Tamar **more than he had** previously **loved her**. This indicates, of course, that his original feelings had not been love but only lust. To add insult to injury and in further violation of the Law, **Amnon** sent Tamar away. This suggests not only his desire to have her gone from his immediate presence but also his repudiation of her as a bride. He had humbled a **virgin** and the Law demanded that he marry her (Deut. 22:29). Tamar’s reaction to all this—putting **ashes on her head and** tearing her royal robe (cf. 2 Sam. 13:31; Job 2:12)—shows the intensity of her sorrow at losing her purity and perhaps any further opportunity for marriage.

2 Samuel 13:20–22. When **Tamar** got to the house of **her brother Absalom**, he suspected at once what had happened. No doubt he knew full well the propensities of **Amnon**. With plans for vengeance already developing in his own mind he counseled his **sister** to remain silent about the matter and to stay in his **house**. **David** somehow **heard** what had happened, and though **he was furious** he did not invoke the penalty prescribed by the Law. Perhaps this was because **Amnon** was his oldest son. But **Absalom ... hated Amnon**.

2 Samuel 13:23–29. Two long years passed before ⁴ **Absalom** effected his plan for retaliation. He hosted a festival to celebrate the time of sheepshearing, a custom observed in Israel from earliest times (Gen. 38:12–13; 1 Sam. 25:2, 8). **He invited and urged** his father David to **join** him at **Baal Hazor** (ca. six miles south of Shiloh), the scene of the festivities, but David declined. **Absalom** then requested that **Amnon** attend in David's place, a request **the king** reluctantly granted. In the midst of the merriment the servants of **Absalom**, on a prearranged signal, attacked and murdered the unsuspecting **Amnon**. **Thus, a murder avenged a rape.**

2 Samuel 13:30–39. Having heard that **Absalom** had slain **all** of his other **sons ... David** fell into inconsolable anguish. Even when he later knew that the report was unfounded and that **only Amnon** was **dead** he could not be comforted (v. 36). **Absalom** meanwhile **fled** from Baal Hazor and sought and found refuge with **Talmi**, his maternal grandfather, at **Geshur**, east of the Sea of Kinnereth. There **Absalom** remained for **three years** though his father, finally consoled, **longed to** have him return again.

D. Absalom's estrangement from David (chap. 14)

2 Samuel 14:1–3. It was evident to all that David sorely missed his exiled son but no one knew how to achieve Absalom's return and a reconciliation. Finally, **Joab**, always a tactician, convinced or commanded a clever **woman** from **Tekoa** (later the home of the Prophet Amos [Amos 1:1]; seven miles south of Bethlehem) to disguise herself as

⁴ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 469). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

a mourner and **go to the king** with a story which he himself concocted and put **in her mouth**.

2 Samuel 14:4–7. Having gained access **to the king**, the **woman** related to him that she had **had two sons**, one of whom had murdered **the other**. This meant that the surviving son was liable to blood vengeance at the hands of relatives. Since she was a **widow**, this would mean the elimination of her own source of support (expressed by the figure of speech, **They would put out the only burning coal I have left**). Perhaps even more important, **she would have no heir to carry on the name and memory of her dead husband**.

2 Samuel 14:8–11. Obviously touched by her story, David told **the woman** to return **home** in peace. He would **issue an order** to resolve the matter. She was not convinced that she had fully made her point, however, and pressed her case even further. In the event of any miscarriage of justice, she said, she and her family would bear the responsibility. That is, if the circumstances really did require vengeance (Num. 35:9–21), she wanted **the king** to know that he would not be legally or morally culpable if he did not stop it from being carried out. Patiently David heard her out and again assured her that if anyone tried to prosecute the case he would have to answer to **the king**. Relentlessly she continued, however, till she elicited from David a formal oath that her accused **son** would suffer not even the slightest harm: **As surely as the LORD lives** (cf. comments on 1 Kings 1:29) **not one hair of your son’s head will fall to the ground**.

2 Samuel 14:12–14. Satisfied at last, **the woman** boldly accosted **the king** with the meaning of her parable. *In granting amnesty to an unknown murderer, it was now incumbent on him that he do the same for his own son Absalom.* There are circumstances, she said, under which the death penalty need not be applied, particularly where premeditation was not involved (Num. 35:15). Though that was not relevant here, as **Absalom had plotted Amnon's death long in advance**, there was still the principle of mercy: **God does not take away life; instead, He devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from Him.**

2 Samuel 14:15–20. Then, to make David think that her remarks about Absalom were only incidental to her real purpose, **the woman** reminded **the king** of the fear that prompted her to come in the first place. She coupled this reminder with effusive flattery of the king's wisdom (**My lord the king is like an angel of God in discerning good and evil**, v. 17; cf. v. 20). But David discerned that "the woman doth protest too much" and asked if **Joab** had something to do with **all this**. Found out in her treachery she had to admit it was true. David's recognition of **Joab** as the instigator lies no doubt not only in the general's recognized craftiness but in the fact that David was surely aware of Joab's interest in Absalom's return.

2 Samuel 14:21–24. David had no alternative but to act on the sentiment he had expressed to the woman concerning forgiveness, even though he had been conned into doing so. He sent **Joab** to bring his alienated son **back**. But when **Absalom** returned David refused to meet him personally or to let him visit the palace. Perhaps David felt that too ready a reconciliation would lead the people to believe that he did not view Absalom's crime with sufficient seriousness.

2 Samuel 14:25–27. In order to emphasize Absalom’s attributes, features that should have made him attractive to David and which later proved irresistible to the people, the historian described **Absalom** as **handsome** in every way. The reference to his long **hair** (weighing **200 shekels**, i.e., about five pounds, when **he** infrequently **cut** it) is especially made to prepare for Absalom’s peculiar undoing—later he was caught by his head (perhaps his hair) in the branches of an oak tree (18:9). His profound love for his violated sister **Tamar** also testifies to his attractiveness; he named his own **daughter** after her.

2 Samuel 14:28–33. After **two** more **years** of estrangement from his father, **Absalom** twice sought Joab’s aid in bringing about a final resolution of their differences. Rebuffed each time, **Absalom** resorted to dramatic action—he set **Joab’s** barley **field on fire**, which did get the general’s attention. **Joab** then intervened with **the king** and at last made it possible for **Absalom** to be reunited with his father. The meeting was at least superficially cordial, but as subsequent events demonstrated, David’s long-delayed acceptance of his son came too late. **Absalom** was embittered and⁵ resolved to do whatever was necessary to make David pay for his intransigence.

E. Absalom’s Revolution (chaps. 15–18)

1. ABSALOM’S CAPTURE OF THE KINGDOM (CHAP. 15)

2 Samuel 15:1–6. *Absalom’s first move to achieve his purposes of revenge* was to make himself conveniently available (**by the side of the road leading to the city gate**,

⁵ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 470). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

with his **chariot** and **50 men**) to hear the complaints of the citizens. Cleverly he insinuated that **the king** was too busy to hear them and that David had not even provided lesser judges to adjudicate their cases. **If only** he were chief **judge** ... **Absalom** said, he would listen to one and all and deal impartially in every matter. **Absalom** showed the people great affection by kissing them when they came **to bow** ... **before him**. Thus, he gradually gained the support of the masses.

2 Samuel 15:7–12. One day, feeling that his popular support was overwhelming, **Absalom** requested and received permission from **the king** to **go to Hebron**, allegedly to pay a **vow ... to the LORD** which he had **made** while in exile in **Geshur** (cf. 13:37). For **4 years Absalom** had been weaning the people away from David. (The “4 years” appears in the Lucian recension of the LXX and the Syriac version [Peshitta], but the Heb. has “40 years,” a figure which might refer to an event early in David’s life, perhaps to his own anointing at Bethlehem, 1 Sam. 16:13.) Now the time was ripe for revolution. When **Absalom** reached **Hebron**, the very center of the Davidic dynasty, where David had begun his reign (2 Sam. 3:2–3), Absalom announced his usurpation of power (15:10). The **200 men** who **accompanied** him **from Jerusalem** were ignorant of his plans. Apparently, they were won over as was **Ahithophel ... David’s** own chief **counselor**.

2 Samuel 15:13–23. News quickly reached the capital that **Absalom** had effected a coup and that all was lost. **David**, convinced of the hopelessness of his cause and anxious to spare **the city** from destruction, made his plans to depart and head **east**

⁶ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 470–471). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

for the Transjordan. He left behind **10** housekeeping **concubines**. **The people**, including **600 Gittites** (faithful men who had followed him from Gath in Philistia when he was pursued by Saul; 1 Sam. 23:13; 27:2; 30:9), fled with David. He tried to persuade his Philistine mercenary officer, **Ittai** of Gath, to remain behind since he had nothing to fear from **Absalom**. **But** to his credit **Ittai** refused, preferring to honor his commitment of loyalty by joining **the king** in banishment.

2 Samuel 15:24–29. **Zadok and Abiathar**, the two chief priests, were sent **back to Jerusalem** by David. He knew that if it was God’s will for him to return as king, he would do so. Hence there was no need to keep **the ark** away from the sanctuary. After all, it was David and not the Lord who was going into exile. Besides, the priests’ two sons (**Ahimaaz**, Zadok’s **son**, and **Jonathan**, Abiathar’s **son**; see the chart “The Ancestry of Zadok and Abiathar,” near 8:15–18) could carry to David any revelations which God might give their fathers.

2 Samuel 15:30–37. **David** and his loyal supporters in the meantime made their way east across the Kidron Valley and **up the Mount of Olives**. His **covered** head and unshod feet indicated his depth of despair. To make matters worse **David** discovered that his trusted adviser **Ahithophel** had joined Absalom’s cause. To contravene **Ahithophel’s** effectiveness David recruited **Hushai**, a friend who asked to accompany the king on his way, and persuaded him to **return to** Jerusalem and attach himself to Absalom’s court as a counselor. His mission would be to contradict the **advice** of Ahithophel and to communicate Absalom’s plans to **Zadok and Abiathar** whose **sons** (cf. v. 27) in turn would relay them to David (cf. 17:21; 18:19). David then continued in his flight, but **Absalom** took firm control of **Jerusalem**.

2. ABSALOM'S SOLIDIFICATION OF POWER (CHAP. 16)

David's forced flight from Jerusalem not only⁷ put his own kingship in jeopardy, but it also opened the door to further contention for the throne between the dynasties of Saul and David. Absalom was apparently in the process of seizing power in Jerusalem but this by no means implied that he could also gain control over the Northern tribes. In fact, the shakeup in David's own family began to revive hope among the Saulites, that they might be able to recover the kingdom for themselves.

2 Samuel 16:1–4. This is first evident in the reaction of Saul's grandson **Mephibosheth** to David's withdrawal. While **the king** was heading east across the Judean hills, he was met by Mephibosheth's servant **Ziba** who, out of gratitude to David for his past kindness toward him (chap. 9), now provided the fugitive king **donkeys** and provisions for the journey. But **Ziba** also brought **David** the sad news that **Mephibosheth** had turned against the king, hoping that in the midst of the turmoil occasioned by the revolution he might be able to retrieve Saul's old throne (16:3; but cf. 19:24–30). David then stripped from Mephibosheth the generous pension he had given him earlier and bequeathed it all to **Ziba** (cf. 9:7, 13).

2 Samuel 16:5–14. David next encountered **Shimei**, another relative of Saul, who greeted the fleeing monarch and his officials at **Bahurim** (east of the Mount of Olives) with curses and physical abuse, pelting them **with stones**. He taunted **David** with the observation that since he was **a man of blood** God was now avenging the death **of**

⁷ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 471). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Saul and his family by driving David from power. This was untrue, of course, for David had not raised his hand against Saul, whom he regarded as the anointed of the Lord, but had taken every measure to deal graciously with Saul's survivors. Shimei's real complaint, as is evident from his own admission, was that David sat on the throne of Saul (**Saul, in whose place you have reigned**).

Abishai, David's bodyguard and nephew, begged the king to let him decapitate Shimei ⁸(whom Abishai called a **dead dog**, i.e., worthless and despised; cf. 9:8). But **David** forbade him to do so, observing that it might well be that Shimei cursed as an instrument of God Himself. If Absalom, David's own **son**, was **trying to** kill him, why should the cursing of Shimei be of concern? God would someday vindicate, but for now there must be no recompense for Shimei's evil conduct. **Shimei** continued his **cursing**, stone-throwing, and dirt-tossing as David **continued on the road** to his **destination**.

2 Samuel 16:15–23. **Meanwhile Absalom** arrived in **Jerusalem** and was immediately met by **Hushai**, a friend of David who was pretending to be loyal to Absalom. His mission as contradictor to the counsel of **Ahithophel**, Absalom's chief adviser, would be implemented later. When **Absalom** asked **Ahithophel** what he should **do**, his adviser told him to **lie with his father's concubines**, an evidence of his succession (cf. 3:6–7), advice which **Absalom** quickly followed. The words of counsel which

⁸ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 471–472). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Ahithophel gave were given credence as though they came directly from **God**, so highly regarded was his wisdom. Hushai's assignment would be difficult indeed.

3. ABSALOM'S PURSUIT OF DAVID (CHAP. 17)

2 Samuel 17:1–14. The second bit of advice which **Ahithophel** gave **Absalom** was that he, Ahithophel, *should be delegated to pursue David in order to kill him and return everyone else. With their king dead his followers would certainly capitulate and return to Jerusalem peacefully.*

Eager for a second opinion, **Absalom** called for **Hushai** and asked him if Ahithophel's counsel was wise. **Hushai** told **Absalom** that David and his men, far from being exhausted, would be more courageous and fearsome than ever. Like a **wild bear** whose **cubs** have been stolen, the king, Hushai said, would be enraged over the loss of his kingdom. To move against him now would be foolish. Initial casualties, which were certain to occur, would cause Absalom's men to despair of victory and thus his cause would be defeated. It would be far better, Hushai continued, for Absalom to wait until he could amass a huge army and then **attack**. David and his host could then be destroyed even if it meant dragging their place of refuge into **the Valley**. **Absalom** was at once struck with Hushai's sagacity and decided to follow his instruction and reject **that of Ahithophel**. Obviously, this was the Lord's doing, to **frustrate** Ahithophel's **advice** and **bring disaster on Absalom**.

2 Samuel 17:15–23. **Hushai** immediately communicated Ahithophel's advice and his own to **Zadok and Abiathar**, who then sent their sons **Jonathan and Ahimaaz** from **En Rogel** (south of Jerusalem; see the map "Jerusalem in the Time of the Kings," near 1

Kings 9:15) to **David** with the message that he must hasten his flight. But the young men were spotted and their errand was reported to **Absalom**. Thanks to the boldness and kindness of a **woman** in the village of **Bahurim** east of the Mount of Olives (cf. 16:5), they escaped detection by hiding in a dry **well**. Then they made their way to **David**, who by now was at **the Jordan**. Without delay **David** and his followers **crossed the river** where they sought refuge at Mahanaim. Back at Jerusalem, **Ahithophel**, crushed because his counsel to Absalom had been spurned, committed suicide **in his hometown** by hanging himself.

2 Samuel 17:24–29. Probably **David** chose to go to **Mahanaim** because it was fortified and also had served as the capital of Israel under Ish-Bosheth (2:8). There could well have been a residue of good feeling there toward **David** because of David's past favors to Saul's family, especially to Mephibosheth (9:10–13). While he was there, his meager provisions of food and supplies were augmented by **Shobi son of Nahash** (and brother of Hanun, 10:1), **Makir of Lo Debar** (see comments on 9:4), and **Barzillai of Rogelim**, 25 miles north of Mahanaim. They brought such items as **bedding ... bowls ... pottery**, and⁹ extensive food supplies including **wheat and barley, flour and roasted grain, beans and lentils, honey, curds, and sheep, and cheese**. These three men were chieftains tributary to **David**, bound to him by ties of loyalty and obligation. (Barzillai was old and wealthy, 19:32.) Besides, they may have preferred to cast their lot with David, a known quantity, as opposed to Absalom, an unknown.

⁹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 472–473). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

4. ABSALOM'S DEFEAT AND DEATH (CHAP. 18)

2 Samuel 18:1–5. David, now in security and with his supplies replenished, quickly took measures to reorganize his **troops** and prepare them for the inevitable encounter with Absalom. **A third** of his troops he assigned to **Joab**; **a third** to **Abishai**, Joab's brother; **and a third** to **Ittai**. David determined that he would lead the attack personally, **but** his comrades dissuaded him. He was **worth 10,000** of them, they said. **If half** of them died all would go on. But if he died the whole cause would be lost. Reluctantly David agreed to remain behind but commanded his officers that they not harm **Absalom** in the battle.

2 Samuel 18:6–18. The encounter soon followed **in the forest of Ephraim**, a deserted place in the vicinity of Mahanaim (cf. 17:24, 27) but otherwise unknown. As terrible as Absalom's losses were by the swords of **David's** heroes (18:7), they were even greater from the elements of that inhospitable terrain (v. 8). **Absalom** himself, in a frantic attempt to escape on **his mule**, rode beneath **a large oak** tree and became tangled in its **branches**. **He was** suspended **in midair**. A soldier of David found him in this predicament but because David had ordered his men not to hurt **Absalom**, the soldier refused to harm him further. **Bloodthirsty Joab was not so reluctant, however, and thrust Absalom in the heart with three javelins.** Immediately **10** of his attendants **struck** Absalom to make sure he died. Absalom had already erected a memorial (a **pillar** called **Absalom's Monument**) to his own name **in the King's Valley** (traditionally the Kidron Valley immediately east of Jerusalem) because he had **no son** to **carry on his name**. **Joab** buried him in a **pit in the forest and piled** over it a memorial cairn.

2 Samuel 18:19–23. When **Ahimaaz**, David’s courier (cf. 15:36; 17:17), announced that he would set out to bear word to David of the army’s victory **Joab** forbade him to do so, ostensibly to spare the king unnecessarily early grief over his son’s death. Joab may also have been concerned for the well-being of the young messenger for the bearer of such bad news might not be well received. Instead, **Joab** dispatched an unnamed **Cushite** (an Ethiopian) who was obviously known to David. He was either considered more knowledgeable as to what had happened to Absalom (see 18:29) or was more expendable. **Ahimaaz** was not to be denied, however, and finally received permission **to go**. Taking a shortcut, he **outran the Cushite**.

2 Samuel 18:24–33. Both runners were seen from a distance, and when **David** understood that the nearer was **Ahimaaz** he assumed that the message he was conveying was **good** because Ahimaaz himself was **good**. The assumption was unfounded, however, for when **Ahimaaz** finally was able to deliver his message all he could do was speak in general terms of the victory over **Absalom**. The details were left to **the Cushite** who presently **arrived** and shared with **the king** the grisly news that **Absalom** and his confederates were dead. Overwhelmed, **the king** retired to an upper **room** where *he privately poured out his heart before God in unremitting grief*. The depths of his love for his rebel son are couched in his lament, **If only I had died instead of you**. Two of David’s sons, Amnon (13:28–29) and Absalom (18:15), died violent deaths as a consequence of David’s sin (12:10).