

## Sanctuary

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2 Samuel 2:12-1

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The book of 1 Samuel ends with the tragic death of Jonathan and two of his brothers, as well as the suicide of King Saul. His army defeated by the Philistines, three of his son's killed, and he badly wounded, Saul falls on his sword ending his life.

With the death of Saul at the end of 1 Samuel, you expect 2 Samuel to begin a whole new glorious chapter in David's life. With the way God had been grooming and shaping him, and considering David's godly character, finding him ruling in peace is what we naturally expect. But David is about to be handed a kingdom that is still thinking like the rest of the world.

2 Samuel begins, not as we had hoped, but as a reminder that there are those in the land who live according to the world's standards and not God's. That's not what God had intended for His chosen nation. God has said, *"You must be holy because I, the Lord, am holy. I have set you apart from all other people to be my very own."*<sup>1</sup> (Leviticus 20: 26) And yet instead of an easy transition of leadership there is division and strife.

In the northern part of the nation Abner (who was commander of Saul's Army) decides to make Saul's only surviving son the king. Abner picks the city Mahanaim (may huh NAY im) to be the capital and appoints Ishbosheth (ihsh BOE sheth) as king. While in the southern part of the nation David becomes King and makes Hebron his capital. You know what I find interesting about the city of Hebron. This was a City of Refuge. In Joshua chapter 20, God set aside certain cities as a place of refuge; a sanctuary, if you will. *"These cities were set apart for all the Israelites as well as the foreigners living among them. Anyone who accidentally killed another person could take refuge in one of these cities. In this way, they could escape being killed in revenge prior to standing trial before the local assembly."*<sup>2</sup> (Joshua 20:9)

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<sup>1</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>2</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

This nation, which was to be different than all others, begins acting just like everyone else. Abner, a military commander, wants to decide by force who should be king, rather than submitting and surrendering to God. And because of this, things get so bad that brothers actually begin fighting among themselves.

(Read *2 Samuel 2:12-17*)

What a horrible tragedy, this senseless battle. What did it accomplish except needless pain and anguish? And I can't help but think that had these stubborn people only submitted and surrendered to God, this tragedy would not have occurred. But there will always be strife when people follow their own selfish ambition and vain conceit.

In the next seven and a half years, three murders will take place before David sets securely upon the throne. Here's the scenario; Abner was a commander in Saul's army, Joab served David. After the battle in chapter 2, one of Joab's brothers begins chasing Abner (2 Samuel 2:18). Now Asahel (AS ah hell) was Joab's brother, and even though Abner had warned him to stop chasing him, Abner ends up killing him, basically in self defense. This makes Joab quite angry, and he begins looking for an opportunity to get revenge.

Ishbosheth, who is now King over the Northern part of the nation, starts acting like a king. He scolds Abner for his behavior, Abner goes ballistic, and then travels to Hebron and sides with David (2 Samuel 3:7). After all, if he can't be in control in one kingdom, he'll just move to another and take control there. Abner was the type of person whose whole life surrounded his own vain conceit.

When Abner shows up in Hebron to meet with David, Joab gets his revenge. He actually tricks Abner into thinking all was well, and then kills him right at the gate to this city (2 Samuel 3:27), a City of Refuge! Can you imagine what God must have thought about this! Joab was the type of person who did not have a forgiving and understanding heart.

With the death of Abner, two enterprising young men who want to make a name for themselves sneak in and kill Ishbosheth hoping to earn David's favor (2 Samuel 4:8). David is outraged by the murder of this innocent man, and has Recab

(REE kab) and Baanah (BAY UH nah) executed. These were the type of men who were motivated by selfish ambition.

The nation that was to be Holy and Sacred; that Nation that was supposed to be a Sanctuary in a wicked and violent world, became defiled and unholy. And because of this, there was needless pain and conflict.

Like the Nation of Israel, God expects the church to be set apart and different from the rest of the world. His church must surrender to His authority and lay aside the things of this world. As Paul reminds us, *“Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”*<sup>3</sup> (Philippians 2:1-5) God expects His church to be a Sanctuary; a place of refuge and safety from the cold-hearted indifference found in the world. His church is to be a place absent of politics; where all stand equal before the cross. His church is to a place absent of judgment; where a person can find refuge until the time when God judges with fairness and righteousness.

Just like the Nation of Israel, only pain and turmoil will result when God’s people begin thinking, living, and acting just like the rest of the world. And there will be nothing but anguish within God’s church if we allow ourselves to be ruled by indifference, thoughts of revenge, selfish ambition, and empty conceit.

I believe the best way for us to keep this from happening is to remember that this place is called a Sanctuary.

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<sup>3</sup>New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (Php 2:1-5). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.