

## Exegetical Notes – 2 Samuel 3:22-39

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### 2 Samuel 3:22-39

#### Verses 22-26

***<sup>22</sup> Just then David's men and Joab returned from a raid and brought with them a great deal of plunder. But Abner was no longer with David in Hebron, because David had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. <sup>23</sup> When Joab and all the soldiers with him arrived, he was told that Abner son of Ner had come to the king and that the king had sent him away and that he had gone in peace.***

***<sup>24</sup> So Joab went to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you. Why did you let him go? Now he is gone! <sup>25</sup> You know Abner son of Ner; he came to deceive you and observe your movements and find out everything you are doing."***

***<sup>26</sup> Joab then left David and sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern at Sirah. But David did not know it.***

- As Abner, the commander of Ish-Bosheth's army, was departing David's camp, Joab, the commander of David's army returned to David's camp. Joab learned from camp gossip that Abner had just left and that he had gone in peace.
- Joab went to King David demanding to know if what he had heard about Abner was true. When David confirmed that it was true, Joab was upset. He pointed out that Abner had come to deceive David and to spy on David.
- Joab then left David's camp secretly. He sent messengers to Abner and brought Abner back to the cistern at Sirah. He did this without David's knowledge.

#### Verse 27

***<sup>27</sup> Now when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into an inner chamber, as if to speak with him privately. And there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed him in the stomach, and he died.***

- When Abner came to the place where Joab was waiting for him, Joab took him aside privately and killed Abner in revenge for the death of Joab's brother Asahel (see 2 Samuel 2:12-32).

### Verses 28-30

<sup>28</sup> Later, when David heard about this, he said, "I and my kingdom are forever innocent before the Lord concerning the blood of Abner son of Ner. <sup>29</sup> May his blood fall on the head of Joab and on his whole family! May Joab's family never be without someone who has a running sore or leprosy or who leans on a crutch or who falls by the sword or who lacks food."

<sup>30</sup> (Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.)

- When David heard that Joab had killed Abner, David declared himself innocent of Abner's death and laid blame for it on Joab and Joab's family.
- David's curse of Joab is especially strong. Hebron was a city of refuge (see Joshua 21:13). Thus, Joab had not only disobeyed the King by killing Abner there, but had broken the Law of God (see Numbers 35:22-25). The curse is perpetual, falling on Joab and his family forever.

### Verses 31-34

<sup>31</sup> Then David said to Joab and all the people with him, "Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth and walk in mourning in front of Abner." King David himself walked behind the bier. <sup>32</sup> They buried Abner in Hebron, and the king wept aloud at Abner's tomb. All the people wept also.

<sup>33</sup> The king sang this lament for Abner:

*"Should Abner have died as the lawless die?"*

<sup>34</sup> *Your hands were not bound,  
your feet were not fettered.*

*You fell as one falls before the wicked."*

*And all the people wept over him again.*

- David then ordered a state funeral for Abner. The funeral was held in Hebron and Abner was buried there.

### Verse 35

<sup>35</sup> Then they all came and urged David to eat something while it was still day; but David took an oath, saying, "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets!"

- David was fasting as part of the funeral ritual. When the people urged him to eat something, he refused to eat until after sunset on the day of Abner's funeral.

### **Verses 36-39**

***<sup>36</sup> All the people took note and were pleased; indeed, everything the king did pleased them. <sup>37</sup> So on that day all the people there and all Israel knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner.***

***<sup>38</sup> Then the king said to his men, "Do you not realize that a commander and a great man has fallen in Israel this day? <sup>39</sup> And today, though I am the anointed king, I am weak, and these sons of Zeruah are too strong for me. May the Lord repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds!"***

- "All the people took note and were pleased." What David did in honoring Abner pleased all the people of Israel, even those who were followers of Abner. Everyone was agreed that David had nothing to do with Abner's death.
- David lays blame for Abner's death on Joab and his family. He prays that God will repay those who killed Abner. However, no official charges are brought against Joab until after David's death (see 1 Kings 25). Joab is part of the state funeral for Abner (see verse 31). David seems to be insecure in his position. He does not wish to offend the northern tribes who revere Abner nor the tribe of Judah who loves Joab. The whole event lacks sincerity. However, the way David handles matters allows for the kingdom to remain united.

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