

Exegetical Notes – 2 Samuel 13:23-39

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2 Samuel 13:23-39

Verse 23

²³ Two years later, when Absalom's sheepshearers were at Baal Hazor near the border of Ephraim, he invited all the king's sons to come there.

- Two years had passed since Amnon had raped his half-sister, Tamar, and nothing had been done to bring him to account (see 2 Samuel 13:1-22). King David had done nothing to his son Amnon.

Verses 24-25

²⁴ Absalom went to the king and said, "Your servant has had shearers come. Will the king and his attendants please join me?"

²⁵ "No, my son," the king replied. "All of us should not go; we would only be a burden to you." Although Absalom urged him, he still refused to go but gave him his blessing.

- Absalom, another of David's sons and Tamar's full brother, invited the king, and all the royal household to join him for the festival that would follow the shearing of Absalom's sheep. But the king refused Absalom's invitation because he believed that entertaining the entire royal household would be a financial strain for Absalom.

Verses 26-27

²⁶ Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon come with us."

The king asked him, "Why should he go with you?" ²⁷ But Absalom urged him, so he sent with him Amnon and the rest of the king's sons.

- When the king refused Absalom's invitation, Absalom asked the king to allow Amnon to attend the party.
- The king found this request surprising because he knew that Absalom's relationship with Amnon was not good (see 2 Samuel 13:21-22). Perhaps David hoped that this would be the beginning of better things between his sons.

- Absalom was insistent that Amnon come to his party, so David agreed.

Verse 28-29

²⁸ Absalom ordered his men, “Listen! When Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine and I say to you, ‘Strike Amnon down,’ then kill him. Don’t be afraid. Haven’t I given you this order? Be strong and brave.” ²⁹ So Absalom’s men did to Amnon what Absalom had ordered. Then all the king’s sons got up, mounted their mules and fled.

- Absalom ordered his men to kill Amnon at his command. The nature of the order is that he, Absalom, will take full credit for the act of killing Amnon.
- Absalom’s men followed his order. When he cried out, “strike Amnon down,” his men killed Amnon, David’s apparent heir.
- The rest of David’s son fled assuming that their lives were also in danger from their brother Absalom.

Verses 30-31

³⁰ While they were on their way, the report came to David: “Absalom has struck down all the king’s sons; not one of them is left.” ³¹ The king stood up, tore his clothes and lay down on the ground; and all his attendants stood by with their clothes torn.

- Word reached David that Absalom had killed all the king’s sons. David and his advisors believed the report.

Verses 32-33

³² But Jonadab son of Shimeah, David’s brother, said, “My lord should not think that they killed all the princes; only Amnon is dead. This has been Absalom’s express intention ever since the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar. ³³ My lord the king should not be concerned about the report that all the king’s sons are dead. Only Amnon is dead.”

- Jonadab, David’s nephew, had, somehow, received another report about what had happened at Absalom’s party. He told David that not all his sons had been killed, just Amnon.
- The text also makes it clear that the court knew that it was Absalom’s intention to kill Amnon for raping their sister, Tamar. Neither Absalom’s intent, nor the reason for it, were secret.
- There is also indication that the court did not hold Amnon in high regard. Jonadab seems to think that Amnon’s death is no real reason for alarm.

Verses 34-35

³⁴ **Meanwhile, Absalom had fled.**

Now the man standing watch looked up and saw many people on the road west of him, coming down the side of the hill. The watchman went and told the king, “I see men in the direction of Horonaim, on the side of the hill.”

³⁵ **Jonadab said to the king, “See, the king’s sons have come; it has happened just as your servant said.”**

- Before news reached David of what Absalom had done to Amnon, Absalom fled.
- The guards announced that men were approaching the city.
- Jonadab quickly pointed out that he was right. The men approaching the city were the king’s sons. Only Amnon was dead. Jonadab is apparently hoping to gain favor with the king.

Verse 36

³⁶ **As he finished speaking, the king’s sons came in, wailing loudly. The king, too, and all his attendants wept very bitterly.**

- As Jonadab was speaking, the king’s sons entered confirming his report.

Verses 37-39

³⁷ **Absalom fled and went to Talmai son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. But King David mourned many days for his son.**

³⁸ **After Absalom fled and went to Geshur, he stayed there three years. ³⁹ And King David longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon’s death.**

- Absalom fled to Geshur.
- David mourned for Amnon. But he made no attempt to pursue Absalom.
- Absalom was in Geshur for three years.
- David “longed” to go to Absalom. He forgave Absalom for killing Amnon.

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