

Second Samuel Chapter 20 - John Karmelich

This chapter (in effect) brings the story of King David to an end. He doesn't die until 1st King Chapter 1, but this chapter is the end of his life's story which was the main topic of this book. I realize there are four more chapters to go, but they're in effect appendixes because they're events that occurred earlier in the life of David. Time for my "so what" question: Why should I care what is in Chapter 20 or the rest of the book for that matter? Here we go: David just won a civil war in Israel as his oldest son Absalom organized a national rebellion against him. The son was killed in that war, so this chapter is about what took place as David returned to "the palace"! To answer my question, this chapter teaches about what's the consequences to decisions we make in life. I'll explain the chapter a bit more and I'll come back to that point about life's decisions and "consequences".

This chapter also has another Israelite who says in effect we still don't want David as king. Realize the reason for the rebellion is a lot of Israelites wanted someone besides David to rule. Anyway, that rebel gets decapitated in this chapter, so let us just say it wasn't a good idea to rebel against David! Then the chapter focuses on David's general (Joab). Back in Chapter 19, Joab killed David's son in the rebellion. It cost Joab his job, as David was mad he killed his son. It leads to Joab killing his rival general in this chapter. That in effect the chapter other than ending credits!

All of that leads back to my favorite question, why should we care? Why have these 25 verses that tell us about David's return, putting down a rebellion, getting his house in order and then telling us about a few events in Joab's life, that on one hand protect David's life but also make Joab look bad! I'd argue it is how life works. Good and bad things happen in life even by veteran believers! We must do our best to make the best decisions we can. We look to God for guidance (via His Word) then go through life as we deal with problems and once again trying to make the best decisions we can. Gee John, you realize most of us are Christians and do that already. So again, what's there to get out of these chapters? First is the simple fact that decisions we make often has unforeseen circumstances. Did David realize Joab's going to kill an innocent man that he saw as his rival? In this chapter David "locks up for life" the girls that his dead son Absalom raped a few chapters back. Were these great decisions? Who knows? That is up to God to judge what we did with our lives. Our job is just to make decisions the best we can and deal with the consequences as they come. That's why I call this chapter "consequences".

Of course, decisions usually lead to consequences for those decisions. That's old news. What I suspect God wants us to consider as we read this chapter is to try to think of life as a "chess game". To think of the decisions we make in life and what that could mean in the long term. Of course, not everything we do has significant consequences. One of my favorite odd expressions I love to state is, "God gave us a brain and He expects us to use it!" Of course, I think we should pray for guidance. Then I think we got to think about significant decisions and the consequences that come from those decisions and what it is going to mean to our future. Therefore, as we go through this fairly short chapter, think about why the decisions in this chapter were made and what were the consequences to those affected by them! That's enough of this long introduction, let me get to the chapter itself!

To begin let's remember where we left off. The last chapter was a war between David and his son over who would be the next king. David won, his oldest son was dead and now he is returning home to be a king again. (There are no chapter breaks in the original text, so it's essential to put things in context.) In this chapter it opens with a man called a troublemaker or worthless man depending upon the translation of the original Hebrew. Keep in mind God said David was to be the king and his descendants would be kings after him. I'm sure this was "old news" in Israel so any rebellion against David is in effect telling

God "I don't want this" so that's why the rebellion leader was called worthless! That guy did not ask for everyone to follow him or David, just that everyone should go do whatever they feel like!

Remember most of Israel wanted David's dead son as king a few chapters back, so it shouldn't surprise us that that most of Israel sided with this guy (Sheba). Anyway, the point is David is back and he now must deal with this Sheba guy! Before David could do that, first he must return home to Jerusalem. It's what Verse 2 is about. I'll give a "head start" by saying the consequences of Sheba rebelling David did cause him to lose his head as we'll read in a few verses!

When David gets home, the first recorded decision is what to do with concubines his dead son raped as a sign he was in charge. I don't know if locking up those 10 women for life was what God wanted. It's that David didn't want to embarrass them anymore, so they remained celibate after that! Nothing more is said of them, so that's that! The text just says they lives as if they were widows the rest of their lives!

That leads us back to the rebellion by this guy Sheba. David was mad at Joab for killing his son despite the fact David ordered him not to be killed. David appoints the general who did lead his son's forces to find and kill this Sheba guy! David gave that general an order to organize troops in a three-day period! That general failed to do that in that time frame, and David was still mad at Joab so David asked Joab's brother who was also a military leader to lead the palace guards to track down and kill Sheba.

Then the story switches back to Joab. Apparently, he was still a respected military leader and he along with the guy David fired, were out looking for this guy. If there's one thing one learns about Joab is he is the kind of guy not to be trusted or messed with! He gets a chance to meet the Amasa, again the one who was fired by David and well, when Amasa wasn't "looking" Joab murders him! By the way, when one gets to 1st Kings Chapter 1, David tells Solomon to find a way to kill Joab since he committed sins by killing a bunch of rival leaders in cold blood! Again, there are consequences to actions!

After this Amasa's dead body became a "traffic hazard" as soldiers were stopping to gawk at the body! It led to his dead body being covered (again consequences)! the soldiers followed Joab as he went after Sheba the other "bad guy of the moment". Meanwhile Sheba knew his life was in danger and he ran a good distance from Joab. Bottom line: Joab caught up with him in a walled city in north Israel. It leads to the final confrontation of this chapter.

The next thing we read is Joab organizing a siege against the walled city where Sheba was. This was a way to starve out the residents. Joab was also trying to speed up the process by tearing down the walls of that city. Before things got too bad, a woman from that city spoke to Joab in effect to say, "None of us want this! Our city is known for its wisdom. Besides we're Jewish! How can we resolve this"? The woman then probably led a meeting where she said, "Either we kill Sheba or that army outside will kill all of us. What will it be?" Anyway in "no time flat" Sheba's head was tossed over the wall as that was that! The war ended, the last significant consequence of David's life besides naming Solomon the next king (that's in First Kings).

The only thing left in the chapter is to list a few credits. Let's be honest, this book didn't write itself, so we get a mention of the king's recorder, the guy in charge of organizing labor for the army and projects to build things, and even Joab was listed as the general in spite of his actions. In summary this book is full of decisions and consequences for those decisions.

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! If you'd like you can read the rest or stop now. Either way, I'm grateful for you reading this. To see the other one, click on one of the two links on this web page. Thanks again, John