

Lecture #12 – Exposition of II Samuel 11-16

Chapter 11 – David and Bathsheba – 1037 B.C.¹

Here begins the decline of David and his kingdom. The events that follow fracture his family and kingdom.

vs. 1-5 – David’s Sin

An old proverb states: “If Satan tempts busy men, idle men tempt Satan.”

David is tired and overconfident. He takes a leave from his duties and stays behind in his comfortable palace. As he walks about his palace (like proud Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel, perhaps?), he sees something he should have never seen and falls to temptation.

His sin betrayed the trust of his closest friends. Bathsheba (“daughter of the oath”) was the wife of Uriah (“light of Jehovah”)² the Hittite³, one of David’s mighty men listed in II Samuel 23:39 and I Chronicles 11:41. Her father Eliam (“God’s people”)⁴ may have been one the mighty men also, if it is the same person as listed in II Samuel 23:34. Yet the connections do not stop there. If the Eliam of II Samuel 23:34 is her father, that will make her grandfather to be Ahithophel (“brother of foolishness”)⁵, one of David’s most trusted advisors (II Samuel 16:23). This could very well be Ahithophel’s motivation for future actions in siding with Absalom.

Who is to blame? The Bible clearly puts the blame on David and David alone.⁶ He had given in to lust to marry multiple wives in violation of Deuteronomy 17:17. He has become callous to getting his way and taking what he wants. He was not a good man that fell to a temptress; he was a sinful man in a compromised position that gave into the weakness of his flesh. He knew what he was doing and held no remorse for almost a year. His chief sin is that of pride (Proverbs 16:18).

Most importantly it is a sin against God. Carroll writes: “It was a presumptuous sin against Jehovah, to whose favors it was ingratitude and to show holiness it was insult, and to whose omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence it was a brazen dare.”⁷ In his psalm of repentance, David is forced to admit to God that “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” (Psalm 51:4).

¹ David is 48 years old according to Reese’s Chronological Bible.

² Smith’s Bible Dictionary

³ He seems to be a Jewish proselyte from the Hittite empire in Asia Minor.

⁴ Smith’s Bible Dictionary

⁵ Smith’s Bible Dictionary

⁶ This is not to say that Bathsheba was fully innocent in the matter. She did not have to bathe on the roof or go to David. She could have resisted or refused. We have no record of her repentance either. But the Scripture places the greater responsibility on David to the point that Bathsheba’s role is minimized so as to not be visible.

⁷ An Interpretation of the English Bible: The Hebrew Monarchy, by B.H. Carroll. p. 191

vs. 6-27 – David Hides His Sin

“Be sure your sin will find you out.” – Numbers 32:23

Uriah has been away on extended campaign against the Ammonites. There is no cover for the fact that Bathsheba is now expecting a child. Questions will be asked, and these will lead back to David.

David attempts to cover his sin by bringing Uriah back from the war so that it would appear that Bathsheba's child was Uriah's. Uriah is too faithful to David, his comrades, and the greater cause to indulge in pleasures when the battle still raged. Too many witnesses saw Uriah's actions. David's scheme failed.

Now David sinks even lower. He plans the death of his faithful servant Uriah to cover his sin. Uriah returns to the battlefield unknowingly carrying his own death sentence.⁸ He is placed in the fiercest fighting then abandoned by the army. His death is reported back to David via messenger. David's callous remark in vs. 25 exposes the coldness of his heart.

After her required period of mourning⁹, Bathsheba becomes David's wife. Months later she gives birth to a son. It seems that David's sin will go unpunished and unpublished.

“But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD...”

Chapter 12 – David Rebuked

vs. 1-14 – Nathan Rebukes David

On Nathan's approach to confronting David, Davis writes:

“Nathan's approach to David on this very difficult occasion was both skillful and effective. With the use of a parable he was able to both reveal David's sin and allow David to indict himself. The illustration was an appropriate one, for David knew how attached one could become to a lamb as a pet since he had been a shepherd for a good part of his life. It is also obvious that Nathan was employing David's knowledge of the law to make his sin clear. As Nathan described the arrogance of the rich man who seized that precious new lamb from the poor man, one can imagine the indignant response of David. In effect, Nathan was describing David's seizure of Bathsheba, who was precious to Uriah.”¹⁰

⁸ In Greek legend, the hero Bellerophon is given a similar letter to carry that demanded his death. A rarely used phrase, “Bellerophon letters”, is based on that legend and is appropriate here.

⁹ John Gill and others say seven days.

¹⁰ Israel: From Conquest to Exile by John J. Davis and John C. Whitcomb. p. 304.

David pronounces his own judgment – four-fold payment. While some debate whether this literally occurs, I see it in: (1) the death of Bathsheba’s child, (2) the rape of Tamar, (3) Absalom’s murder of Amnon, and (4) Absalom’s rebellion.¹¹

♪ Psalms 6, 38, 39, 51

vs. 15-23 – Death of David’s Child

Edersheim writes:

“Assuredly it was so in the case of David. But the sting of that wound could not be immediately removed. The child who was the offspring of his sin must die: for David's own sake, that he might not enjoy the fruit of sin; because he had given occasion for men to blaspheme, and that they might no longer have such occasion; and because Jehovah was God. And straightway the child sickened unto death. It was right that David should keenly feel the sufferings of the helpless innocent child; right that he should fast and pray for it without ceasing; right even that to the last he should hope against hope that this, the seemingly heaviest punishment of his guilt, might be remitted. We can understand how all the more dearly he loved his child; how he lay on the ground night and day, and refused to rise or be comforted of man's comforts. We can also understand - however little his servants might - how, when it was all over, he rose of his own accord, changed his apparel, went to worship in the house of Jehovah, and then returned to his own household: for, if the heavy stroke had not been averted, but had fallen - his child was not gone, only gone before.”¹²

It does not appear that the infant lived more than eight days, upon which it would have been given a name (Luke 1:59).

♪ Psalm 32¹³

vs. 24-25 – Birth of Solomon – 1035 B.C.

Matthew Poole on David “comforting” Bathsheba:

“David comforted Bathsheba; who was now much dejected, both for her former sin, which she truly repented of, as may be gathered from Proverbs 31:1-3, &c., and for the loss of that child which was very dear to her, and which might seem to be the only tie of David’s affection to her; which being now dead, she might think that David would utterly cast her off, and leave her to that shame and punishment which she had deserved. Went in unto her, to wit, into her chamber or

¹¹ Another way of interpreting this would be the four deaths of Bathsheba’s baby, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah.

¹² Bible History: Old Testament by Alfred Edersheim. Book 4, p. 196.

¹³ “But if Psalm 51 is the highest expression of penitence, Psalm 32 is the model expression of the joy of forgiveness.” – B.H. Carroll.

bed. The Lord loved him, i.e. the Lord declared to David that he loved his son, notwithstanding the just cause which David had given to God to alienate his affections from him.”¹⁴

John Gill on David “comforting” Bathsheba:

“And David comforted Bathsheba his wife,... Which is the first time she is so called, Uriah being dead, and David having married her; which though at first displeasing to the Lord, because the circumstances attending it, was afterwards confirmed by him. Bathsheba no doubt was very much distressed, and greatly disconsolate, on account of the sin she had committed, and because of the wrath and displeasure of God, and because of the death of the child, which was a token of it; and she might have some scruples in her mind whether it was lawful to continue cohabiting with David. Now David comforted her, by telling her that God had pardoned that iniquity they had been guilty of, and that he would give them another son, who should succeed him in the throne, and build an house for his name.”¹⁵

David and Bathsheba’s second child¹⁶ is named both Solomon (“peaceful”) and Jedidiah (“beloved of Jehovah”)¹⁷. It appears from the names and involvement of Nathan that Solomon is already marked as the heir to the throne.

vs. 26-31 – David captures Rabbah

☪ I Chronicles 20:1-3

In the background of the story of David and Bathsheba there is still the Ammonite War that has been continuing. Joab and the army have nearly taken the city, so David is sent for to lead the final offensive. David places the crown of the king on his own head as symbol of their victory and subjugation of the Ammonites.

Scholars try to interpret vs. 30 in every way except as straightforward and literal. The crown weighed one talent (75 pounds)¹⁸ which would be massive for a traditional crown. For instance, the St. Edward’s Crown used in British coronations weighs almost 5 pounds.¹⁹ Some speculate there is corruption in the text and instead of it being the king’s crown it instead belonged to an idol²⁰ (ridiculous!). Others believe it was more of a canopy than a crown²¹ (also implausible). It must be noted that it was clearly able to be put on David’s head like it had been on its previous owners’ (vs. 30).

There are two simple explanations to this crown problem that seem plausible to me. First, it could be more of a massive headdress than a crown. Second, the “weight” may not refer to how heavy the

¹⁴ https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_samuel/12-24.htm - accessed 9-25-22

¹⁵ https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_samuel/12-24.htm - accessed 9-25-22

¹⁶ Solomon is listed last of four sons in I Chronicles 3:5, though he is the oldest surviving son of David and Bathsheba. Some confuse this and make him the youngest.

¹⁷ Smith’s Bible Dictionary.

¹⁸ As given in Reese’s Chronological Bible. Other estimates include 60-100+ pounds.

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Edward%27s_Crown – accessed 9-25-22

²⁰ See Albert Barnes and Pulpit Commentary as examples.

²¹ Jamieson-Fausset-Brown.

crown was but rather what its value.²² Since there was no established coinage or currency, items were valued according to their “weight” in precious metals.²³ So, this crown may have been worth one talent of gold instead of weighing one talent total, especially since the presence of gems clearly adds to the value.

We must also deal with vs. 31, in which is found the third of the “dark events” we mentioned in in the notes on chapter 8. There are two interpretations to this verse: (1) that David slew the Ammonites in a brutal manner, or (2) that they were enslaved by Israel.

The best interpretation of David’s treatment of the Ammonite prisoners is that he tortured and killed them.²⁴ It fits the language of the text. It fits the Jewish code of war in Deuteronomy 20:10-14. It fits the violent nature of the times and of David himself²⁵. It fits the *lex talionis*, or law of retribution.²⁶ The only reason to doubt the account is because of a desire that David would not have acted in such a manner, but we cannot judge these men by modern culture or standards.²⁷

Chapter 13 – David’s Fractured Family

Referring to chapters 13-18, W. Graham Scroggie writes:

“We cannot study these chapters too carefully, for if the lessons they teach were learned sin would receive a devastating shock. The key verses are xii. 13, 14, 10.

“David said unto Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD’
Nathan said unto David, ‘The LORD also hath put away they sin; thou shalt not die.
HOWBEIT’?
‘The sword shall never depart from thine house’.

“These seven chapters are written to show that repentance and forgiveness of our sin do not carry with the remission of penalty. Over a large area of experience pardon and retribution invariably go together. Our past is not done with us when we have repented of it, and have been forgiven.”

“Sorrow tracketh wrong
As echo follows song;
On, on, on, on.

²² The word used for weight here is *mishqal* (Strong’s H4948) which is based on the root word *shaqal* (Strong’s 8254). Careful study of these words will show how precious metals were weighed for value in trade.

²³ “Rabbi Elazar says: What is meant is not that it weighed a full talent of gold, but rather that there was a precious stone on it that was worth a talent of gold.” - https://www.sefaria.org/Avodah_Zarah.44a.15?lang=bi – Accessed 9-18-23

²⁴ I have a deeper analysis of this issue on my website: <https://www.baptistbasics.org/2022/01/28/what-did-david-do-to-the-ammonites-in-ii-samuel-1231-and-i-chronicles-203/>

²⁵ He was a man of war who cut off Goliath’s head as a war trophy and provided 200 foreskins as a dowry for Michal. He also oversaw some sort of execution of 2/3 of the Moabites in II Samuel 8:2.

²⁶ The Ammonites had threatened gruesome action on Jabesh-Gilead in I Samuel 11, had mistreated the envoys of David in II Samuel 10, and will be accused 250 years later in Amos 1:13 of having “ripped up the women with child of Gilead”.

²⁷ Which may be called chronological snobbery, presentism, or the historian’s fallacy.

“‘The sense of forgiveness differs from the sweetness of innocence’. Past sin carries with it inevitably deterioration of the present and future. The consequences of transgression remain long after the transgression is forgiven (Ps. xxxii. I).”²⁸

vs. 1-20 – Amnon and Tamar

David’s fractured family begins to come apart. Amnon (“faithful”) lusted for Tamar (“palm tree”), his half-sister and the full sister of Absalom (“father of peace”).²⁹ Reese suggests the Amnon is 23 years old, Absalom 21, and Tamar 15.³⁰

Amnon’s “friend” Jonadab (“whom Jehovah impels”)³¹ hatches a plan that Amnon uses to rape Tamar. Tamar tries to resist and convince Amnon to not do it. She even suggests that David would give her to Amnon as wife if only he’d ask for her, a situation expressly forbidden in Leviticus 18:9-11. Amnon’s lust turns to hate and casts her from his house.

Tamar is overwrought by the crime committed against her. She does the actions of mourning/distress by rending her garment and placing ashes on her head. She finds refuge in Absalom’s house. Gill comments on Absalom’s directions to Tamar to “regard not this thing”:

“...it is thy brother that has done it, and not so disgraceful as a meaner person, done in the heat of lust, and a youthful one, and should be forgiven; besides, to divulge it would bring disgrace upon the whole family, and no recompence would be obtained by telling the king of it, since he was his son, his firstborn, and heir to the crown; this he said not out of love of Amnon, but as desirous of gratifying private revenge upon him for it when opportunity should serve.”³²

vs. 21-29 – Absalom Kills Amnon

David is made aware of Amnon’s terrible sin. Yet David takes no action. Some speculate it is because Amnon was the firstborn and heir to the throne. Some say that it is because of his own sins that he is hesitant to seek justice. The punishment commanded for such a crime in Leviticus 20:17 is not followed.

B.H. Carroll observes: “You will find that whenever you do wrong, it will make you more silent in you condemnation of wrong in others.”³³

But Absalom is a patient and vengeful man. He waits two years before taking his revenge on Amnon for the crime against Tamar.

²⁸ The Unfolding Drama of Redemption by W. Graham Scroggie. Vol. I, p. 263.

²⁹ These name definitions from Smith’s Bible Dictionary.

³⁰ Reese’s Chronological Bible, p. 471.

³¹ Smith’s Bible Dictionary.

³² John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible.. E-Sword module.

³³ An Interpretation of the English Bible: The Hebrew Monarchy, by B.H. Carroll. p. 228.

Edersheim describes what follows:

“These two years had the presence in his home of a loved sister, now ‘desolate’ for ever, kept alive the remembrance of an irreparable wrong. The king had been ‘very wroth’ - no more than that; but Absalom would be avenged, and his revenge should not only be signal, but overtake Amnon when least suspecting it, and in the midst of his pleasures. Thus Amnon's sin and punishment would, so to speak, be in equipoise. Such a scheme could not, however, be immediately carried out. It required time, that so all suspicion might be allayed. But then, as Absalom's plan of revenge was peculiarly Oriental, these long delays to make sure of a victim are also characteristic of the lands of still, deep passion. At the same time, the readiness with which Jonadab, Amnon's cousin (13:3) and clever adviser in wickedness, could suggest, before it was correctly known, what had taken place (vers. 32, 33), shows that, despite his silence, Absalom had not been able effectually to conceal his feelings. Perhaps the king himself was not quite without suspicion, however well Absalom had played his part. And now follows the terrible history. It is the time of sheep-shearing on Absalom's property, not very far from Jerusalem - a merry, festive season in the East. Absalom pressing to it the king and his court, well knowing that such an invitation would be declined. But if the king himself will not come, at least let the heir-presumptive be there; and, if the king somewhat sharply takes up this suspicious singling out of Amnon, Absalom does not ask him only, but all the king's sons.

“The consent has been given, and the rest of the story is easily guessed. Absalom's well-concerted plan; the feast, the merriment, the sudden murder; the hasty flight of the affrighted princes; the exaggerated evil tidings which precede them to Jerusalem; the shock to the king and his courtiers; then the partial relief on the safe arrival of the fugitives, followed by the horror produced as they tell the details of the crime - all this is sketched briefly, but so vividly that we can almost imagine ourselves witnesses of the scene....”³⁴

vs. 30-39 – David and Absalom

Sometimes it takes an evil mind to recognize evil at work. It was so with Jonadab you recognized that not all of David's sons were killed by Absalom, but only Amnon had been targeted.

The fracture that likely started as a chip with David's sin with Bathsheba, turned into a crack when Amnon raped his sister, and now it becomes a full break. They will try to piece it together, but it will never be whole again.

Absalom flees to Geshur, a region east of the Sea of Galilee, where his maternal grandfather ruled³⁵. He is there for three years as David mourns the death of Amnon to death and Absalom to exile.

³⁴ Bible History: Old Testament by Alfred Edersheim. Book 5, p. 12-13.

³⁵ See II Samuel 3:3.

Chapter 14 – Absalom Returns

vs. 1-24 – Joab’s Plot to Restore Absalom

The motivations for Joab’s actions here are debated. He was faithful to David yet would step in and act against his orders when he felt it necessary. Wood speculates that he senses that Absalom will be the next king and is trying to get into his favor.³⁶

Joab takes a page from Nathan’s playbook, and like the prophet who confronted David before he does so indirectly at first by weaving a tale that would move David’s heart and bring him to see his actions in a new light.

Adam Clarke has several observations on the wise woman and her actions:

“1. She was a widow, and therefore her condition of life was the better calculated to excite compassion.

“2. She lived at some distance from Jerusalem, which rendered the case difficult to be readily inquired into; and consequently there was the less danger of detection.

“3. She was advanced in years, as Josephus says, that her application might have the more weight.

“4. She put on mourning, to heighten the idea of distress.

“5. She framed a case similar to that in which David stood, in order to convince him of the reasonableness of sparing Absalom.

“6. She did not make the similitude too plain and visible, lest the king should see her intention before she had obtained a grant of pardon. Thus her circumstances, her mournful tale, her widow’s needs, her aged person, and her impressive manner, all combined to make one united impression on the king’s heart. We need not wonder at her success.”³⁷

The story is a good one. The old woman has two sons, which got into a fight, and one killed the other. Justice demanded that the murderer be put to death, but that would mean no heirs for her house. David’s verdict that no harm should come to the living son is turned back on him as the woman praises him for deciding in such a merciful and God-like manner. It is then that David realizes what the ploy by Joab was and relents to have Absalom return to Jerusalem.

Absalom is allowed to return but not to be in the royal court or in the presence of David.

³⁶ A Survey of Israel’s History by Leon Wood. p. 234.

³⁷ Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible, E-Sword module.

vs. 25-27– Absalom’s Fame

Like Saul before him, Absalom *looked* like a king. He was the perfect physical specimen. His body and hair are immaculate. His family is picture perfect. But we have already seen that looks can be deceiving and that beauty is only skin deep.

The mentioning of Absalom’s hair is interesting. It appears to be against custom for Jewish men to have long hair, yet the hair was also seen as an important sign of health and virility. The amount of hair that Absalom had is remarked upon as being “weighed... at two hundred shekels” when it was cut once a year. That weight would be about 5 pounds³⁸, a remarkable amount since a person with hair six-inches long is estimated to only have 6-13 ounces of hair by weight³⁹ and hair typically grows at about 6 inches per year⁴⁰. Some critics claim this amount is absurd and that there must be an error in the text.⁴¹ We are left with a few options: (1) Absalom’s hair was 10x thicker/longer than average to make the weight of 200 shekels, (2) there is an error in the text, or (3) that the weight refers to the value of the hair.

Let me explain that last option. Essentially, we are faced with a similar situation as we faced in with the Ammonite crown in 12:30. We have an extraordinary weight ascribed to something which appears to be extraordinary yet not wholly improbable. The Hebrew word here is *shaqal* (Strong’s H8254) which in its 21 appearances is translated as *weigh, pay, receive, or spend*. Of the 21 appearances, only four are not related to valuing precious metals or financial transactions. Matthew Poole is one of the few commentators to acknowledge this possibility, saying: “But others understand this not of the weight, but of the price of his hair, which was sold by him that polled it at that rate.”⁴²

vs. 28-33 – Absalom and Joab

Absalom is unhappy with his situation. He attempts to have Joab intercede with David on his behalf again, but Joab would not. Perhaps Joab believed he had done as much as he could in the situation by bringing Absalom back to Jerusalem, or he saw David’s cold attitude toward Absalom and did not press further. To get Joab’s attention, Absalom has his barley fields set on fire to force him to intercede again.

Absalom’s actions here are clearly leading defiant and rebellious. He is pressing for power and prestige. He likely knows that Solomon had been chosen as successor and knows he must act before that time came. He is not repentant of his murder of Amnon nor desirous of a reunion with David. His machinations are already at work.

³⁸ Reese’s Chronological Bible, p. 474.

³⁹ <https://www.healthline.com/health/how-much-does-hair-weigh#hair-weight> – accessed 9-26

⁴⁰ <https://www.livescience.com/42868-how-fast-does-hair-grow.html> - accessed 9-26

⁴¹ Most claim that the 200 should be 20, making the hair weigh about ½ pound. That weight is holy unremarkable based on the information I have provided here.

⁴² https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_samuel/14-26.htm - accessed 9-26-22

Chapter 15 – Absalom Rebels – 1026 B.C.

vs. 1-6 – Absalom Steal the Hearts of the People

Absalom begins his plot to seize the throne in earnest. He moves about with great pomp and fanfare with chariots and runners. He involves himself in matters of civil judgment while planting seeds of doubt about David's abilities. He honored those that honored him.

♪ Psalms 5, 36, 62, 64

vs. 7-12 – Absalom Revolts

The “forty years” in vs. 7 is often cited as a mistake in Scripture. Most critics will change this to “four years” on no evidence other than they cannot understand how forty years fits. I have an article⁴³ on my website that deals with this at length, but the simplest and most reasonable answer is to link the forty years to prior related event. We find that in I Samuel 18:16 when we find that “all Israel and Judah loved David.” which is when David won the hearts of the people from Saul. Reese, who does not even support his theory, given evidence for it in dating I Samuel 18:16 to 1067 B.C.⁴⁴ and II Samuel 15:7 to 1026 B.C.⁴⁵

Under the guise of paying a vow to God, Absalom returns to his hometown, the former capital at Hebron. There he is proclaimed king and the rebellion is made manifest.

Note the presence in vs. 12 of David's (former) advisor Ahithophel among the conspirators. I believe we can safely assume this is his retribution for David's sins against Bathsheba and Uriah.

vs. 13-18 – David Flees Jerusalem

David had been either blind to or lax concerning Absalom's actions. We might theorize that he has been more private and less assertive in the days since the Ammonite War. This would explain how Absalom could sweep in and act so publicly in stealing the people's hearts.

David leaves Jerusalem with his family (leaving 10 concubines behind), his bodyguard, and his mighty men.

⁴³ <https://www.baptistbasics.org/2022/02/10/ii-samuel-157-forty-years-or-four-years/>

⁴⁴ The Reese Chronological Study Bible, p. 397

⁴⁵ The Reese Chronological Study Bible, p. 475

vs. 19-37 – David’s Flight – Part I

David’s escape across the Jordan River is marked by many episodes where he interacts with various people.

The first is Ittai (“with the Lord”)⁴⁶, a Philistine mercenary, who with his men willingly choose to follow David.

The second is Zadok the High Priest, who arrives carrying the Ark. David sends them back with instructions that Zadok should signal him when it was safe to return (vs. 28).

The third is Hushai (“hasting”)⁴⁷, who is sent back as a spy to counter the counsels of Ahithophel.

Chapter 16 – David’s Flight

vs. 1-14 – David’s Flight – Part II

Continuing from the previous section...

The fourth is Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth. He comes bearing gifts with a story that his master stayed behind in hopes of taking the kingdom for himself. It is a rather absurd story if considered thoughtfully and it appears to me that Ziba is seeking to profit in the situation. David carelessly says that Ziba can have all of Mephibosheth’s properties.

The fifth is Shimei (“renowned”)⁴⁸, a kinsman of Saul that uses the opportunity to curse David while he is at such a low point.

The sixth is Abishai, Joab’s brother, who helpfully offers to kill Shimei. David refuses his offer.

♪ Psalms 3, 41, 55.

vs. 15-23 – Absalom Takes Jerusalem

Absalom, Ahithophel, and their supports march into Jerusalem. Hushai convinces Absalom that he supports him and not David.

Edersheim writes:

⁴⁶ Smith’s Bible Dictionary

⁴⁷ Smith’s Bible Dictionary

⁴⁸ Smith’s Bible Dictionary

“Considering the vanity and folly of Absalom, of which his easy reception of Hushai must have afforded fresh evidence to Ahithophel, and David's well-known weakness towards his children, it was quite possible that a reconciliation might yet take place between the usurper and his father. In that case Ahithophel would be the first, the other leaders in the rebellion the next, to suffer. The great aim of an unscrupulous politician would therefore be to make the breach between father and son publicly and absolutely permanent. This was the object of the infamous advice which Ahithophel gave Absalom (2 Samuel 16:21, 22), though, no doubt, he represented it as affording, in accordance with Oriental custom, public evidence that he had succeeded to the throne. While recoiling with horror from this unnatural crime, we cannot but call to mind the judgment predicted upon David (2 Samuel 12:11, 12), and note how, as so often was the case, the event, supernaturally foretold, happened, not by some sudden interference, but through a succession of natural causes. Having thus secured himself and his fellow-conspirators, Ahithophel proposed to select 12,000 men, make a rapid march, and that very night surprise David's followers, weary, dispirited, greatly outnumbered, and not yet properly organized. Had this advice been followed, the result would probably have been such as Ahithophel anticipated. A panic would have ensued, David fallen a victim, and with his death his cause been for ever at an end. But a higher power than the wisdom of the renowned Gilonite guided events. In the language of Holy Scripture, ‘Jehovah had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel’ (Samuel 17:14).”⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Bible History: Old Testament by Alfred Edersheim. Book 5, p. 23.