

Making Promises

Part 6: The Kingdom

Review

- Having heard that Amnon was dead, David fell into inconsolable anguish. Absalom meanwhile fled from Baal Hazor and sought and found refuge with Talmi, his maternal grandfather, at Geshur, east of the Sea of Galilee. Absalom remained there for three years.
- Joab enlisted the help of a wise woman of Tekoa, who tricked David into pardoning Absalom, much as Nathan's parable had caught the conscience of the king.
- Joab was not loyal to Absalom. He most likely discerned that the king was weak and that the succession might be troublesome, and may have been supporting Absalom to prevent Solomon from becoming king.

Return from Exile

- The most famous thing about Absalom was his **hair**, which seems to be a strange detail that the author gives in the middle of Absalom's narrative (**2 Sam. 14:25-27**).
 - ▶ The reason probably has to do with parallels between Absalom and **the two kings** already presented in 1–2 Samuel. **Saul** was introduced as "choice and handsome" while on his way to be anointed by Samuel (**1 Sam. 9:2**), and **David** was described in a similar fashion shortly before he was announced as king-designate (**1 Sam. 16:12–13**). Absalom's physical appearance is described just before he makes **his bid for the throne**.
 - ▶ Verse 27 continues the cross-comparisons: Absalom's **house**, like David's, was being **built up**. The comparison with Saul was particularly close: Both are described as the most handsome Israelites of their time (**1 Sam. 9:2; 2 Sam. 14:25**), and both were distinguished by their **heads**—Saul by his **towering head**, Absalom by his **head of hair**.
- Two years after his return, Absalom was frustrated that he had not been **reintroduced at court**. To get Joab's attention, he burned his barley field. Afterward, Absalom was back in the King's **good graces** (**2 Sam. 14:28-33**).

Usurping the King

- Absalom carefully prepared his coup. First, he acquired **a chariot and horses**, along with **fifty men** as runners. Ancient Near Eastern kings often moved about with an entourage of warriors, and Absalom's first step was to surround himself

with the trappings of royalty. If he looked like a king, people would start thinking of him as a king (**2 Sam. 15:1-6; 1 Kgs. 1:5**).

- ▶ Next, Absalom **manipulated symbols** by the way he greeted people coming to the capital city for judgment. Instead of treating them as **subjects**, he embraced them as **brothers**; when they bowed, he raised them up to kiss them. Absalom presented himself as a man of the people, treating everyone with respect.
- ▶ Then, by rising early, Absalom was able to **intercept** people coming to the capital to put their cases before David. Absalom claimed to support their claims and lamented that no one in the palace was willing **to listen** to them (v. 3).
- ▶ He also **exploited divisions** within Israel that David had worked so hard to overcome. One of the crucial aspects of Absalom's plan is the way he dealt with men from the "**tribes of Israel**," that is, from outside **Judah** (v. 2).
 - ◆ Apparently, if a man was from the tribe of **Judah**, Absalom would let him through to see the king. But when Absalom found a supplicant from another tribe, he warned them that they would not get **a hearing** from David.
- Under the guise of going to Hebron to fulfill a **religious vow**, Absalom entered into the second phase of his plot – **garnering support** from men of the surrounding cities (**2 Sam. 15:7-12**).
 - ▶ Once in Hebron, Absalom sent spies throughout the land to **stir up support** for him (v. 10). This served a practical necessity, since the spies could **agitate** for Absalom and **organize demonstrations**, which would appear to be a spontaneous overflow of **support** for Absalom.
 - ▶ Absalom also took two hundred men (most likely prominent men) of Jerusalem to Hebron (v. 11). This deprived David of some of the **leading citizens** of the capital city. David found himself in a crisis but did not have the men around him that he needed to **handle it**.
 - ▶ Absalom did gain the support of **Ahitophel the Gilonite** (v. 12), one of David's most trusted counselors, whose advice was accepted like the **word of God** (**2 Sam. 16:23**). Ahitophel was **Bathsheba's** grandfather (**2 Sam. 11:3; 23:34**).
- In Absalom's coup, we see both **Yahweh's divine plan** reaching fulfillment (**2 Sam. 12:10-11**) and the **sinful rebellion** of Absalom against Yahweh's anointed king. In a similar tone, we see the sinful acts of men accomplish the plan of God in the crucifixion of Christ (**Acts 2:23**).

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<p>2 Samuel 14:25–27</p>	<p>25 Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. 26 And when he cut the hair of his head (for at the end of every year he used to cut it; when it was heavy on him, he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head, two hundred shekels by the king's weight. 27 There were born to Absalom three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar. She was a beautiful woman.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 9:2</p>	<p>And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 16:12–13</p>	<p>12 And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.</p>
<p>2 Samuel 14:25</p>	<p>Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.</p>
<p>2 Samuel 14:28–33</p>	<p>28 So Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, without coming into the king's presence. 29 Then Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but Joab would not come to him. And he sent a second time, but Joab would not come. 30 Then he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the field on fire. 31 Then Joab arose and went to Absalom at his house and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" 32 Absalom answered Joab, "Behold, I sent word to you, 'Come here, that I may send you to the king, to ask, 'Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still.'" Now therefore let me go into the presence of the king, and if there is guilt in me, let him put me to death.' " 33 Then Joab went to the king and told him, and he summoned Absalom. So he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom.</p>
<p>2 Samuel 15:1–6</p>	<p>1 After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2 And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, "From what city are you?" And when he said, "Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel," 3 Absalom would say to him, "See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you." 4 Then Absalom would say, "Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice." 5 And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. 6 Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.</p>
<p>1 Kings 1:5</p>	<p>Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.</p>
<p>2 Samuel 15:7–12</p>	<p>7 And at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the Lord, in Hebron. 8 For your servant vowed a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram, saying, 'If the Lord will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to the Lord.' " 9 The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron. 10 But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, 'Absalom is king at Hebron!' " 11 With Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited guests, and they went in their innocence and knew nothing. 12 And while Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh. And the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.</p>
<p>2 Samuel 16:23</p>	<p>Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed, both by David and by Absalom.</p>

2 Samuel 23:34	Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai of Maacah, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,
2 Samuel 12:10–11	10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' 11 Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.
Acts 2:23	this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.