
A SECOND LOOK AT JOAB, CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD

by Jim Rudd

Prisms refract light. White light splits into various wavelengths of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. Unless we are aware of how a prism operates, we would miss the fact that infrared and ultraviolet light are also being refracted since infrared and ultraviolet light are invisible to the human eye. Not detecting the refracted infrared and ultraviolet light should not affect our understanding of how a prism operates. However, serious problems will arise if all we notice is one color being refracted from the prism, whether that color is red or blue makes no difference, because we would let this mistaken notion color our prospective of what a prism was really doing.

Theologians are particularly susceptible to the process of letting an idea color their prospective because they are always caught in the quandary between making a name for themselves with new research and not disturbing the scholarly community from which they spring. These distortions can also affect average Christians in preconceived ideas or in using theologians who color personal bible study. Two obvious examples of such distortions are the Jewish people's view of Jesus, which is that he is not the messiah, and the anti-Semitism of the Catholic Church, particularly at the time of Constantine. Although these distortions may appear to cause very different effects, the reality is that both are distortions. A distortion, especially one that blinds you from understanding large portions of the bible, makes it harder to have a relationship with God because your view of what God is and what He does has been obstructed.

Even subtle distortions can have a profound effect on how we see God and his word. An examination of the life and times of Joab, the captain of the guard for David, reveals a prospective few have noticed. After serving the nation of Israel for over forty years, Joab had a death sentence pronounced on him by his uncle, King David.

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Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.¹

All of Joab's actions have been interpreted in light of the fact that he was one of the two men² David told Solomon to assassinate, supposedly because of past offenses. But a single event should not and cannot be used as a lens to focus the accomplishments of an entire life. If David's actions were viewed through a similar lens using the stinging words delivered by Nathan the prophet about his sin with Bathsheba, David's entire career could also appear very carnal.

And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them

*unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.*³

David's enemies labeled him a bloody man,⁴ but so did God.⁵ Liberal theologians have actually taken the incident of the murder of Uriah and stated that it truly represents David's character. All the good things mentioned about David, like in 1 Samuel 13:14, which states, *"David was a man after God's own heart,"* are ignored by these liberal theologians. These liberal theologians state numerous verses, like 1 Kings 11:4, which states, *"David's heart was perfect with God, unlike his son Solomon,"* were inserted into scripture to try to build up the good reputation of the monarchy according to these same theologians. They say that David was a bloody and power hungry king who subjugated Israel and scripture is nothing more than legends, myths and stories.⁶ These liberal scholars discount what the Bible states as a whole about David.

The theologians who do not believe in the sanctity of scripture, often called liberal theologians, twist and ignore that scripture repeatedly uses David as an example of a man after God's own heart.⁷ Most of us would not be fooled by these biblical scholars who believe that David was actually a wicked man, but some events in scripture can and have been twisted with more subtlety. The contention of this author is that David's example makes it clear that we must examine the whole of biblical record to determine what kind of man he or any other biblical character was. An examination of Joab's life must also be made by examining all his deeds, not simply one incident.

An examination of the man Joab has to begin with his family. He was one of three brothers, the sons of Zeruiah, David's sister. Joab's two brothers were Abishai and Asahel. Joab apparently was younger than David (Joab still was a threat to Solomon after David had died), but probably by only a few years (Joab and his two brothers were probably among David's fighting men when he ran from Saul).⁸ Abishai is specifically mentioned as being one of David's fighting men in 1 Samuel 26:8.⁹ David was only in his early twenties when he was running from Saul, therefore the sons of Zeruiah would have to be within 10 years of his age because fighting men younger than 10 or 12 would have been useless.

To understand Joab's life, we must examine all his deeds, not simply one biblical incident.

The attitude and actions of Joab must also be viewed from a Middle Eastern perspective of three millennia ago. They were stirring, but brutal times.¹⁰ When Saul stumbled into a cave to relieve himself, David's men said, *"Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee."*¹¹ David's men wanted him to kill Saul in cold blood, but all David would do was cut off a corner of King Saul's cape.¹² David was different from the average man of his time because he had God working with him. *"And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt."*¹³ David even had to restrain his men from killing Saul in the cave after he had spurned the opportunity.¹⁴ Saul knew how different David was when he asked, *"For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?"*¹⁵ after David had spared his life.

But even David had very brutal moments. David and his men had protected Nabal's goods, yet Nabal returned only insults. David was prepared to kill all of Nabal's house for this insult.¹⁶ Joab seems to have understood this kind of action, but he and his brothers never seemed to understand David's devotion to God or his softness with his enemies. When David was again given the opportunity to kill Saul, *"Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time. And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?"*¹⁷ Even though David had specifically stated that neither he nor his men could kill Saul because Saul was God's anointed servant, the sons of Zeruiah saw an opportunity to reach a goal and they wanted to take it, even if it was against God's will.

But David continued to work with the sons of Zeruiah, almost certainly because of their loyalty and abilities, even if they did not always want to follow God's will and often rejected His ways. When David needed Jerusalem for his capital for many powerful political reasons,¹⁸ even though it appeared impregnable, Joab got it for him.¹⁹ It is true that Joab was made a captain for this feat, and many critics have said that he zealously guarded this position. However, this author believes we should look at scripture and determine if Joab's actions over a lifetime of service to Israel and King David were for selfish or for other reasons.

As head of the army, Joab waged war against Abner, Saul's former general and the power behind the throne of Ish-bosheth. *"Abner was a soldier of the worst type, accustomed to war and bloodshed, careless of the land's peace, a militarist who saw his way of life at an army's head and in troubled times."*²⁰ During one battle Joab defeated Abner handily, but he did not finish him off because Abner had taken up a good defensive position when he retreated.²¹ Joab knew that Abner had just killed his brother Asahel,²² but he did not attack because many of his men would be killed needlessly. This is why Joab *"was the sort of leader that simple fighting men admire: brave, determined and straightforward."*²³ Letting his brother's killer go free rather than allow many of his men to die needlessly is not the act of a cold-blooded, ruthless killer bent on personal revenge, but are the actions of a man doing his job as best he could, and Joab did his job well.

As time passed and Joab continued to attack Abner and his puppet king, David's kingdom grew stronger and stronger, while the northern kingdom weakened.²⁴ Abner gave up hope of having the northern kingdom to himself when even Ish-bosheth stood up to him.²⁵ Abner betrayed Ish-bosheth to David when he could not have his own way. *"Abner had conferred with the elders of Israel, saying, 'You have wanted David to be your king all along.'"*²⁶ *"We may see from Abner's address to the elders, that even among the northern tribes the popular voice had long since decided for David."*²⁷ Abner had held Northern Israel in line away from David and now he hands them over to David because it serves Abner's purpose. This is not the act of a trustworthy man. *"Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to say to David, 'Whose land is it? Make an agreement with me, and I will help you bring all Israel over to you.'"*²⁸ Notice that Abner wants David to make a deal with him, not with King Ish-bosheth, whom Abner supposedly represented. *"What David had to promise Abner is not known but the price must have been high."*²⁹ When Joab returned and found that David had made a deal with Abner, he was furious. *"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! You know Abner son of Ner; he came to deceive you and observe your movements and find out everything you are doing.'"*³⁰ Joab called Abner back to Hebron and he and Abishai killed him as he entered the city.³¹

Most modern critics interpret Joab's actions in the same manner as Keil and Delitzsch. *"The principal motive for Joab's act was the most contemptible jealousy, or the fear lest Abner's reconciliation to David should diminish his own influence with the king, was the case again at the later period with the murder of Amasa."*³² Most scholars also imply that Joab was very jealous of retaining his title. *"But when Joab, on returning to Hebron, learned what was going on, he perceived that Abner, so aged and esteemed a leader, must necessarily supersede him as captain of the host of Israel."*³³ But if Joab had to be worried about losing his job to Abner, shouldn't David also have been worried about placing such a disloyal man high in his government? Even at Absalom's rebellion twenty years later a strong pro-Saul sentiment ripped at the fabric of David's kingdom.³⁴ Abner would have always been a threat to turn that sentiment against David. Joab knew that David was winning and didn't need to give Abner anything to unite the kingdoms. Some theologians have pointed out this obvious fact, but usually dismiss it in favor of Joab's supposed selfishness. *"Joab's knowledge of Abner's wily character might have led him to doubt the sincerity of the person's proposals and to disapprove the policy of relying on his fidelity. But undoubtedly there were other reasons of a private and personal nature which made Joab displeased and alarmed by the reception given to Abner."*³⁵

This author believes there is no doubt that Joab's murder of Abner was an act of personal vengeance,³⁶ but first and foremost, it was an act to protect his king and preserve Israel. Joab had seen David make strange decisions concerning Saul in the past, and only David's direct intervention had spared Saul's life from the sons of Zeruiah. But David was not there to

save Abner, thus Abner died the death of an enemy and a traitor. David was disgusted by Joab's actions. He placed a curse on Joab³⁷ and uttered, *"those men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too savage for me."*³⁸ Joab's actions as blood avenger against the one man who had kept the kingdom from uniting for years probably had popular support, unlike the king's deep lament for Abner. David, at this critical juncture in his affairs, could not *"afford the loss of such generals, or brave the people and the army. But David did all that was possible."*³⁹ So Joab escaped basically unscathed for avenging his brother's death and killing an enemy of Israel, even though Hebron was a city of refuge,⁴⁰ where such actions were not allowed. God had strictly forbidden the avenger of blood from killing in one of the twelve cities of refuge, but Joab didn't seem to care very much about the niceties of God's rules or God's way of life. That is why *"David called upon Joab to handle his most unpleasant and difficult tasks."*⁴¹

When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he commissioned his nephew to have Uriah return home to cover up his affair, and finally, to kill Uriah when the cover-up didn't work. David wrote Joab,

*"Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die." So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.*⁴²

Joab murdered Uriah because David wanted it done. He didn't question the intent of his orders, but he did change them to make them more effective. Joab realized if he left Uriah out to die by himself everyone would know what had happened. Joab ordered a small number of men to be with Uriah so his murder would look like an act of war. Even if he didn't follow orders as they were given, Joab's murder of Uriah and a number of other men shows how complete his loyalty to David was and how little regard he placed in God's law.

Joab's loyalty, and perhaps love, of David ran so deep that when Rabbah, the city of Uriah's death, was about to fall he summoned David to come for the victory.⁴³ Joab said he summoned David because he didn't want his name associated with the victory, but his name had already been associated with many victories. More likely he knew about the death of David and Bathsheba's child and how hard David took it. Joab probably summoned David to get David out of his stupor for the good of Israel, although there is also a small possibility that he did not want his name associated with the victory that caused Uriah's death.

Actions such as these lead some believe that Joab was constantly toying with David's emotions.⁴⁴ When David's daughter Tamar was raped by her half-brother and heir apparent Amnon, David did nothing, probably because of the sexual immorality he had committed with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. Absalom, Tamar's older brother plotted revenge for two years and finally murdered Amnon, then fled to his grandfather's to escape David's wrath. *"To the popular, especially the Eastern mind, the avenger of Tamar might appear in the light of a hero rather than that of an offender."*⁴⁵ This author is sure that Joab understood Absalom's actions and Joab's actions showed that he did not understand David's. After three years *"King David was pining away for Absalom, for (the king) had gotten over Amnon's death. Joab son of Zeruiah could see that the king's mind was on Absalom."*⁴⁶ Joab knew the king's pain, but also realized the difficulty in which the king found himself. *"In these circumstances Joab resorted to a not uncommon Eastern device."*⁴⁷ He had a woman tell the king a story. The king, upon discerning Joab's hand in relieving his dilemma of how to return his son Absalom, had Joab bring Absalom back to Jerusalem, but Absalom was placed under house confinement.⁴⁸ After two years of isolation, Absalom succeeded in getting an audience with his father with the help of Joab, but Absalom's disgrace eventually fermented into rebellion. Joab stood up for Absalom, a man who put on kingly ways shortly thereafter. He knew Absalom was able, was now the heir-apparent, and yet he helped get him in David's good graces because that is the way the king wanted it deep down, even if Joab's actions cost him some of the king's favor. This is not the act of a man who only cares about maintaining his power

base. Those who suggest that Joab might have helped Absalom to secure his position in some future government of Absalom ignore the role played by Joab in Absalom's rebellion.

Absalom bided his time for four more years, building a base of support against his father. Even though he was the heir-apparent, he could not wait. If Merrill's supposition that the Ark was moved to Jerusalem shortly before Absalom's rebellion is correct, Absalom probably did use this as a wedge between David and his people. However he did it, *"Absalom had gained a following all over Israel—including Jerusalem—and had managed to recruit even David's chief adviser, Ahithophel."*⁴⁹ Joab, the man who had returned Absalom to David's good graces, was not part of this rebellion. He had not even been approached by Absalom because of his loyalty to David.

Absalom's rebellion was short-lived. When he attacked his father's troops, he was dealt a crushing defeat. Although David had given specific orders not to kill Absalom to his three commanders (Joab, Abishai, and Ittai), Joab killed Absalom when he became stuck in a tree.⁵⁰ It has been speculated that Joab killed Absalom because he *"wanted to eliminate his closest rival."*⁵¹ But this speculation is groundless if Joab had been as instrumental in Absalom's return to Jerusalem as scripture indicates. It is far more likely that Joab changed the orders David had given him, just as he did with Uriah. Not only was Absalom a rebel who could not be trusted, he was a man who had crossed Joab after Joab had gone out of his way to help him. *"Joab knew what was better for the country than his uncle did."*⁵² With Absalom dead, *"Joab, with characteristic love for his countrymen, sounded the rappel, and allowed the fugitive Israelites to escape."*⁵³

When David found out that his oldest living son was dead, he broke down with uncontrollable sobbing.

*"This was the final straw as far as Joab was concerned. David had punished the young man who claimed to be the assassin of his enemy Saul (2 Samuel 1:15); he had held a state funeral and had lamented publicly for Abner, whom Joab himself had slain (2 Samuel 3:31-39); he had executed the murderers of Ish-Bosheth, the chief obstacle to his reigning over Israel (2 Samuel 4:12); and now, once again, he wept for all the world to see when Joab had done him the favor of ridding him of his rebellious son and competitor (2 Samuel 18:33)."*⁵⁴

Joab realized how serious the situation was.

*"Then Joab came into the house to the king, and said, 'Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your officers who have saved your life today, and the lives of your sons and your daughters, and the lives of your wives and your concubines, for love of those who hate you and for hatred of those who love you. You have made it clear today that commanders and officers are nothing to you; for I perceive that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased. So go out at once and speak kindly to your servants; for I swear by the LORD, if you do not go, not a man will stay with you this night; and this will be worse for you than any disaster that has come upon you from your youth until now.'"*⁵⁵

This stern rebuke was effective, but *"Joab, who had known before the frustration of doing what he felt was right only to have king turn it against him,"*⁵⁶ had to pay the price.

When David returned to Jerusalem, he replaced Joab with Amasa, Absalom's commander. *"A senile imbecility, it may be suspected, had already stolen over the king, whose conduct, ever since the announcement of Absalom's revolt, had been unaccountably weak."*⁵⁷ This decision made no sense from a military standpoint, considering how badly Amasa, with far greater forces, has just been defeated by Joab, nor from a political standpoint, because David's loyal troops could not help but be insulted.

Amasa, also a nephew of David, was then commissioned to stop a new rebellion by Sheba. But Amasa did not get the job done. He *"delayed in collecting the forces of Judah; so David called upon Abishai, Joab's brother."*⁵⁸ David commissioned Abishai and Joab to carry out the job. When they met Amasa on the road, Joab killed him in cold blood and let the mutilated

body lay on the road.⁵⁹ Keil states, *"Probably Joab, while determined to rid himself of his rival, had adopted this plan, in the hope of leaving it open to doubt whether Amasa's death had been the result of accident or of criminal intention."*⁶⁰ This author has to ask when did Joab have time to plan? He met Amasa on the road. This was an angry outburst. If he wanted to hide the act, why did he leave the body in the middle of the road? Edersheim suggests, *"It had been left on the ground, probably alike as a mark of contempt and a warning to others not to provoke the jealousy of Joab."*⁶¹ Would anyone in all of Israel have needed that kind of warning, after what Joab had already done? Leaving the body in the middle of the road with its guts spilled all over the ground was an act of contempt, but not against Joab, but for an incompetent traitor to King David. Joab felt that if David couldn't see this, he would take care of it for him. Joab was rewarded by being returned to his position as head of the army, but it is almost certainly not the reason why he killed Amasa the way he did.

Later, Joab was ordered, as head of the army, to take a census of Israel by his uncle David. But again he defied David when he thought David was wrong.⁶² *"The unwillingness of Joab and of the other captains, to whom the king entrusted the census, arose partly from the knowledge that such an attempt at converting all Israel into a large camp would be generally disliked and disapproved—a feeling with which he and his fellow-captains would, as Israelitish patriots, fully sympathize."*⁶³ David realized he was wrong and had defied God's will,⁶⁴ but Joab's objections to the census were probably not godly. They were probably based on a fear that an old and semi-senile David wanted to have one last military conquest.

As David's senility set in, the people's confidence in him faded. *"The aged king seemed incapable of choosing his successor. Perhaps he loved all his sons; perhaps he dreaded losing the love of those he would not choose. The empire was controlled by his troops; the tribal territories, divided into twelve districts, were efficiently administered; but the court, the home of the king, seethed with intrigue."*⁶⁵

Many have agreed with Edersheim's evaluation of Joab siding with Adonijah for king.

*"It is not difficult to understand the motives of Joab in trying to secure the succession for one who would owe to him his elevation, not to speak of the fact that rival candidate for the throne was Solomon, the 'man of peace,' the pupil of Nathan, and the representative of the 'religious party' in the land. But it is not so easy to account for the conduct of Abiathar, unless it was prompted by jealousy of Zadok, who officiated at Gibeon."*⁶⁶

Because Abiathar joined with Joab, it has been insinuated that he must have had personal motives, yet it appears very few scholars have considered the reverse. This author agrees with Roberts that, *"Joab's unswerving loyalty to David leads one to believe that no disloyalty was meant by his support of Adonijah, who was really the rightful heir to the throne."*⁶⁷ Solomon could not have been more than twenty,⁶⁸ and was likely younger. The kingdom was still not totally stabilized from two rebellions. There was still inter-tribal rivalry and Joab and Abiathar thought that they had chosen the best-equipped individual to deal with the problems of the nation because David would not choose. But the power of God, through the prophet Nathan, actively intervened and placed Solomon on the throne.

The motives behind Solomon's purge of the past palace guard may be argued, but the results cannot be. *"He sent away or slew all who were a threat to his throne."*⁶⁹ David warned Solomon to take care of Joab and Shimei. Shimei had cursed David as he fled from Absalom.⁷⁰ David had pardoned him,⁷¹ yet he tells his son Solomon to kill him. *"There is also with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a terrible curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim; but when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' Therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man; you will know what you ought to do to him, and you must bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol."*⁷² This could be interpreted as the last words of a bitter old man, but it is more likely words of advice for the future, not for some past insult. Notice how David stresses Shimei was a Benjaminite of Saul's family who was a focal point for the Saul faction. David knew a young king needed to be told about bitter enemies who would cause pain to the kingdom.

Just as David's advice to Solomon to kill Shimei was not a bitter, personal statement, David's advice to Solomon about Joab was not because of what he had done to Abner and Amasa. Those actions were used to emphasize to Solomon what kind of man Joab was. 1 Kings 2:5 states, *"Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me – what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet."*⁷³ Joab had done what was right in his eyes for King David and he had often ignored the king's wishes. Joab's actions showed he was not a man of God, but he obviously was used powerfully in God's plan.

God did not cause Joab to murder men in cold blood, but he had allowed it in the same way he allowed Jacob to steal the blessing and birthright.⁷⁴ God would have given Jacob these blessings without him stealing them because that was God's plan. In the same manner, God would have given the kingdom of Israel and security to David, but in both cases God allowed men to act of their own free will and used these actions in His plan. However, at the end of David's reign, Joab's usefulness was through. David could handle the loose cannon named Joab because Joab was completely loyal to what was good for Israel and what was good for David. But Solomon did not have Joab's loyalty in the same way and neither David nor God could allow him to continue doing what was good in his own sight.

Joab was an extraordinary general and showed loyalty that was unusual for that time, but he was not a man of God. He never understood the softness that David showed for his enemies, but he accepted David as his king and ruler anyway. Although God placed David on the throne of the united kingdom of Israel, scripture shows that much of David's success was due to his nephew Joab. David knew Joab and knew that Joab always succeeded at what he was assigned to do and knew that Joab would do whatever he thought would get an objective achieved, even if it was against the king's or God's orders. Solomon was a man of peace, a man of God, and his father knew that Joab would be as large an obstacle to his son's rule as Shimei, not because of what he had done to Amasa and Abner, but because of what he might do in the future.

Joab's career can and must be examined by his actions and the times in which he lived. If the facts are examined without the colorations of David's condemnations in 1 Kings 2:5-6, Joab is an extraordinary man whose loyalty to David was never questioned. But he was a savage man whose only moral center was doing what he considered good for Israel. He was not an opportunist who only cared about his position, but was a patriot of the nation of YHVH, without being a man of YHVH.

As Christians, our personal bible study must delve deeply into the word of God, not taking anything for granted. We have to study of the word of God so that we will not be fooled again.⁷⁵ Joab was totally loyal to David and the nation of Israel. But loyalty is not a godly quality. Neither the words "loyal" nor "loyalty" are found in the most translations of

"Hesed" – "loyalty" to the covenant shown by following God with your whole heart.

the Bible. The closest concept to loyalty found in the bible is *hesed*, often translated grace or loving kindness. The idea of *hesed* is loyalty to the covenant shown by following God with your whole heart. This loyalty to God is carried out by practicing righteousness. God stresses doing what is good and right, following in Christ's footsteps. Some could say this is being loyal to God, but God does not say that. Showing loyalty to God means leading a righteous life. As the old parable states, it is about how you make the journey that determines your destination and not the other way around.

Joab's loyalty to David and Israel allowed him to be used by God in many powerful ways, but in the end that loyalty cost him his life. David knew that Joab's loyalty would lay with what he thought was best for the nation of Israel. He was a man who believed the ends justify the means. When Solomon took the throne, this could no longer be allowed because it was not part of God's plan.

We, too, must not get caught in the trap of loyalty or we may end up like Joab. Being used by God, yet never truly walking with God could also cost us our life. The next time you are faced with being loyal or doing the right thing, remember that God's way of life stresses righteousness, not loyalty, and always in love.

It is true that Joab advanced the plan of God under King David. It is true that God used Joab in His plan. But it is also true that God used Balaam's donkey to advance His plan. Far too many men, believing they are serving God, have ignored God's way by becoming liars and cheats to supposedly advance "the work of God." *"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."*⁶ God, through His son, tells us what the work of God is. *"Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."* Belief is not simply hearing something and agreeing with it, but acting upon those beliefs. Jesus made it clear in the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 that those who are doing the will of God by doing righteousness are godly, but those who *believe* they are doing the work of God without doing righteousness, *"these shall go away into everlasting punishment."*⁷ As our older brother often stated, let those who have ears, hear.

NOTES

¹ 1 Kings 2:5-6, KJV

² Shimei was the other.

³ 2 Samuel 12:7-12, KJV

⁴ 2 Samuel 16:7-8 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.

⁵ Chronicles 28:3 But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood.

⁶ This author has a study titled "What is liberal theology" that is available to explain how liberal theology distorts scripture.

⁷ Acts 13:22 ,1Kings 9:4,14:8

⁸ 1 Samuel 21:1-2

⁹ 1 Samuel 26:8 Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not *smite* him the second time.

¹⁰ Bromiley, G.W., ed. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: Vol. 2: E-J. Roberts, D.F., "Joab", p. 1062

¹¹ 1 Samuel 24:4, KJV

¹² 1 Samuel 24:4, KJV

¹³ 1 Samuel 24:5, KJV

¹⁴ 1 Samuel 24:7,10

¹⁵ 1 Samuel 24:19, KJV

¹⁶ 1 Samuel 25:21-2

¹⁷ 1 Samuel 26:8-9, KJV

¹⁸ Merrill, Eugene H., Kingdom of the Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel. Grand Rapids, Mi.:Baker House, 1987, p. 234

1 Chronicles 11:4-7

¹⁹ 1 Chron. 11:6 And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief.

²⁰ Blaiklock, E.M. Today's Handbook of Bible Characters. Minneapolis, Minn: Bethany House Publishers, 1979, p.155

²¹ 2 Samuel 2:10-30

²² 2 Samuel 2:23 Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

²³ Edersheim, Alfred. Old Testament Bible History. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company,1987, p. 179

²⁴ 2 Samuel 3:1

²⁵ 2 Samuel 3:7

²⁶ 2 Samuel 3:17 Tanak

²⁷ Keil, C.F., and F. Delitzsch. Commentary on the Old Testament: Vol. 3: 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1989, p. 304

²⁸ 2 Samuel 3:12

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- ²⁹ James, Fleming. Personalities of the Old Testament. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939, p. 127
- ³⁰ 2 Samuel 3:25
- ³¹ 2 Samuel 3:27 And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth *rib*, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.
- ³² Keil, p. 306
- ³³ Newman, F.W., A History of the Hebrew Monarchy. London:N.Trübner & Co., 1865, p. 71
- ³⁴ Merrill, p. 268
- ³⁵ The Bethany Parallel Commentary. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, Minneapolis, Minn: Bethany House Publishers, 1985, p.578
- ³⁶ 2 Samuel 3:30
- ³⁷ 2 Samuel 3:29
- ³⁸ 2 Samuel 3:39, Tanak
- ³⁹ Edersheim, Vol. 4, p.159
- ⁴⁰ Joshua 21:13, 1 Chronicles 6:57
- ⁴¹ Ward, Donald. Joab the Opportunist. "Paper for Introduction to the Old Testament", June 10, 1991, p. 3
- ⁴² 2 Samuel 11:15-7
- ⁴³ 2 Samuel 12:28
- ⁴⁴ Ward, p. 3
- ⁴⁵ Edersheim, vol. 5, p. 14
- ⁴⁶ 2 Samuel 13:39-14:1, Tanak
- ⁴⁷ Edersheim, Vol. 5, p 14
- ⁴⁸ 2 Samuel 14:21-24
- ⁴⁹ Merrill, p. 267
- ⁵⁰ 2 Samuel 18:14 Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.
- ⁵¹ Ward, p. 4
- ⁵² Edersheim, p. 178
- ⁵³ Edersheim, p. 28
- ⁵⁴ Merrill, p. 270
- ⁵⁵ 2 Samuel 19:5-7
- ⁵⁶ Walvoord, John F., and Ray B. Zuck, ed. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament. USA: Victor Books, 1987, p. 474
- ⁵⁷ Newman, p. 97
- ⁵⁸ Pfeiffer, Charles F. Old Testament History. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker House Books, 1973, p. 268
- ⁵⁹ 2 Samuel 20:9-10 And Joab said to Amasa, *Art* thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that *was* in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth *rib*, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.
- ⁶⁰ Edersheim, Vol. 5, p. 35
- ⁶¹ Edersheim, Vol. 5, p. 35
- ⁶² 2 Samuel 24:4
- ⁶³ Edersheim, p. 42
- ⁶⁴ 2 Samuel 24:10
- ⁶⁵ Potok, Chaim, Wanderings, New York:Fawcett Crest, 1978, p. 153
- ⁶⁶ Edersheim, p. 52
- ⁶⁷ Roberts, p. 1062
- ⁶⁸ Edersheim, p. 57
- ⁶⁹ Potok, p. 154

⁷⁰ 2 Samuel 16:5 And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name *was* Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

⁷¹ 2 Samuel 19:23 Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him.

⁷² 1 Kings 2:8-9 NRSV

⁷³ 1 Kings 2:5

⁷⁴ Genesis 27:36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

⁷⁵ As the immortal song by The Who states.

⁷⁶ Titus 1:16

⁷⁷ Matthew 25:46

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