

“West Side Story!”

I. **INTRO:**

- A. It was not long after *the Falkland Island war* between **Argentina** and **England**, when a Member of Parliament was asked to explain the reasons for this conflict. He gave this concise summary statement: *it was “Two bald men, fighting over a comb.”*
1. This, 2 chapter **contest**, was needless and fruitless. It would accomplish nothing more than intensifying the already existing sense of **rivalry** and **competition** between the tribe of **Judah** and the other tribes of Israel, especially that of **Benjamin** (the tribe of Abner, Saul, and Ish-bosheth).

II. **WEST SIDE STORY!**

- A. **THE CEREMONY!** (1-7)
- B. **His Crowning!** (1-4)
- C. David is crowned king in the city of Hebron.
- D. (1) **David inquired of the Lord** - good start David!
1. Matter of fact he makes it habit to do so.
 2. Already we've seen it with **Abiathar** the priest as he asked him to consult the ephod (1 Sam.23:9-12).
 3. And by asking **Gad** the prophet to pray to God for a word of wisdom (1 Sam.22:5)
- E. (2,3) 20 miles N.E. to **Hebron**. [Headquarters in Hebron!]
1. Hebron was important to Jewish history: **Abraham's** tomb was near there. And **Sarah's, Isaac's, Rebecca's, & Jacob & Leah's**.
- F. David's men who had **suffered** with him, now they would **reign** with him!
1. 2 Tim.2:12 **if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us.**
- G. (4a) David was 30 years old when he started his reign.
- H. **His Commendation!** (5-7)
1. David was a man w/a **shepherd's heart** who cared about his people.
 1. **See** 24:17
 2. One of his 1st concerns was the fate of Saul & his sons who died w/him.

3. Next, David was briefed on the brave men who risked their lives to give them a decent burial.

a) He praises the men of Jabesh-gilead for recovering Saul's body.

J. David invited them to cast their lot with him.

1. **Unfortunately**, the people of Jabesh Gilead didn't choose to submit to David **but instead** followed Abner & Saul's weak son Ishbosheth.

2. They allowed their affection for Saul to blind them to God's plan for their nation.

a) They had a **good motive**, **but** they made a **bad choice!**

b) Augustine said, "Jesus Christ will be **Lord of all** or He will not be **Lord at all.**"

K. **THE COMPETITION!** (8-11)

L. The key actor of this drama is **Abner**, Saul's cousin & commander of his army.

1. He now crowns **Ishbosheth**, Saul's 40-year-old son, king over the other tribes.

M. Had Abner also **accepted God's will & submitted** to David, a costly civil war would have been averted.¹

1. **But**, Abner was more concerned with his **loyalty to the old regime** (Abner was Saul's nephew) **rather than** being loyal to God.

2. **Also**, there was a selfish desire to **protect his own interests**, **which** motivated Abner to **fight** David, instead of **follow** him.

3. **Also remember**, Abner was humiliated by David when he failed to protect the king.

N. Most of what Abner did during the 7 ½ years **wasn't** for **the glory of God** or even the strengthening of **Israel**, **but** for his own **self-interest**. *He was taking care of #1.*

1. Ishbosheth may have been **crowned by the general**, but he was never **anointed by the Lord**.

O. (11) **David Waits & Watches!**

1. Napoleon said on his deathbed, "In order to govern, the question is not to **follow out a more or less valid theory** **but** to **build** with whatever materials are at hand. The inevitable must be **accepted** and **turned to advantage.**"

2. **David has to wait, once again! The first time 10 years; this time 7 ½ years.**

a) **Wait on what?** Wait on God's timing. Wait while patiently enduring the consequences of the selfish ambitions & reckless actions of leaders who were motivated by pride & hatred.

¹ Warren Wiersbe, Be Restored, pg.18.

- b) Thus, David learned to **build** w/the materials at hand, & to trust God to use disappointments to the advantage of his people.
- c) Q: What screams inside you, “If I don’t take control of this situation myself, this might affect others!” (I hear this for a **good reason** for **divorce** all the time...“It’s for the children!” - One question is it?)

P. Similarities between David & Jesus!

- Q. In his ascension to the throne of Israel, David illustrates the career of Jesus Christ, the Son of David.
1. Like David **the shepherd**, Jesus came first as a humble servant & was anointed King privately.
 2. Like David **the exile**, Jesus is King today but doesn’t yet reign on the throne of David. He is Lord of all by divine designation **but we see not yet all things put under His feet.**
 3. Like David **in Judah**, Jesus first presented Himself to Judah.
 4. Like David’s kingdom was set up **in degrees**, Jesus’ kingdom is set up *little by little*.
 5. Like Saul in David’s day, **Satan is still free to obstruct** God’s work & oppose God’s people.

R. **THE CONTEST!** (12-17)

- S. **Joab** leads David’s forces against Abner’s forces (**1st time we meet Joab**).
1. The 2 armies face each other on opposite sides of a pool (a reservoir, water basin, w/spiral staircase down sides).
 2. **Abner challenges Joab to a sword fight between 12 men from each side.**
 - a) Very similar to Goliath challenge to Israel. (a little 1 on 1 competition!)
 3. This results in a major battle between the 2 armies.
 4. **Abner was actually declaring war on David, which was declaring war on God!**
 - a) Abner knew God’s will was for David to be the next king!

T. We think **gangs** are a 20th century phenomenon. Yet when we read of this **contest** between 12 members of the servants of Ishbosheth & 12 members of the servants of David, we look upon this as some kind of **ancient tribal dispute**, quite unrelated to our times.

1. I suggest there is **very little difference** between the **gang disputes** of our day and the **contest** we read about in 2 Sam 2,3.
2. Tribal rivalry and gang rivalry are almost the same thing:

a) Its *West Side Story's*, Jets vs. Sharks, *except w/out the love story!*

(1) Remember it was set in NY City in the mid-1950s. The musical explores the **rivalry** between the **Jets** and the **Sharks**, 2 teenage street gangs of different ethnic backgrounds. The members of the **Sharks** from Puerto Rico are taunted by the **Jets**, a white working-class group.

b) So r 2 gangs meet: Each has its **leaders**(Abner & Joab). Each have their **turf** (Benj/ Judah). Word is circulated that there will be a rumble between these 2 rival gangs. A place and a time to meet are set. The **Jets** sit in one place, the **Sharks** in another, facing each other. Abner and Joab agree there should be a contest, which will show the best gang. 12 fighters are selected to represent each side. The side that wins has the best gang! The problem is that the men on each side are intent on killing their opponent, so when the contest begins, each man grabs his opponent by the hair and thrust's his switch blade into his chest. All 24 men die, which immediately leads to all out fighting between the 2 sides, so that many others die in the conflict.

U. **THE CHASE!** (18-23)

V. Joab, Abishai, & Asahel were David's *nephews*, the sons of his sister Zeruiah.

W. Joab's brother Asahel pursues Abner who warns him to abandon the chase. **Double Warning:**

1. First, Abner told him to turn aside & take what he wanted from one of the dead enemy soldiers (armor being a prized possession).
2. Then, he warned Asahel that if he killed him, this would start a **blood feud** that could cause trouble for many years to come.
3. Asahel refuses, so Abner uses the oldest trick in the *battlefield playbook*: he **stopped suddenly** & allowed Asahel to propel himself right into the end of the spear. [The butt end of a spear was often *sharpened* so it could be thrust into the ground & be ready for action]

a) Asahel, *swift of foot but slow in mental faculties!*

X. **THE COMPROMISE!** (24-32)

Y. An angry Joab continues the pursuit, seeking to avenge his dead brother.

1. At sunset, however, both sides agree to call off hostilities for a time. [a truce]
2. NLT vs.27 "God only knows what would have happened if you hadn't spoken, for we would have chased you all night if necessary."

Z. (3:1) David was 30 when he started; reigned in Judah 7 ½ years; 33 over all Israel. **Ishbosheth** reigned only 2 years, prob last 2 of the 7 & ½.

AA.(32) During that all night March, Joab & Abishai hatched a **plot** to avenge the death of their brother.

1. So we have, "Two bald men, fighting over a comb."
And so far, we have a total of 404 dead, & neither got the comb!

BB.Modern Application!

CC.3 kinds of people populate both our *religious & political* world:

Weak People; Strong, Selfish People; & People called of God for their position.

1. **Weak People** - like Ishbosheth.

a) Who get what they want because of their *connections*.

b) **Weak?** Scripture doesn't say much about Ishbosheth, but it's clear he was a weak puppet ruler manipulated by Abner. **See** 3:11 & 4:1.

c) How many times have we seen churches & ministries bypass God's chosen men & women & put unqualified people into places of leadership just because they were well-known or had connections.

(1) He will be assassinated in 2 years.

2. **Strong, Selfish People** - like Abner.

a) Who know how to manipulate others for their own personal profit.

b) Abner got what he wanted...but w/in a few years *lost it all*.

3. **People called of God for their position** - like David.

a) Who are **called, anointed, & equipped**; but must wait for God's time before they can serve.

b) **Let's simply do** what God has **called, anointed, & equipped** us to do, & be content with that & that alone!