

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: June 10, 2018
Lesson Title: "Crowned"
Lesson Passage: 2 Samuel 3:8-21

ABOUT THIS LESSON

David's reign over all of Israel has not quite been established by the end of our Lesson Passage (he was not yet "crowned") but his monarchy was well on its way, as Abner, longtime commander of Saul's forces, cast his lot with David, promoting his kingship among the elders of Israel's northern kingdom.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain the political meaning of Abner's confiscation of Saul's concubine, Rizpah. (2) Explain Abner's real motive for advocating David's kingship over Israel.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Note that 2 Samuel 3:1 gives us a succinct summary of the historical situation that sets the stage for the events described in this week's lesson passage--"There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David." Though David was the "heir apparent" to the throne that had been vacated by the death of Saul, the nation was divided. Abner, commander of Saul's army, had installed Saul's son Ishbosheth as king over northern Israel (2 Sam. 2:8-9); and David, who controlled Judah (southern Israel) had his headquarters in Hebron (2 Sam. 2:11). In our lesson passage, Abner becomes an advocate for David's kingship over all of Israel, as he volunteers to persuade the elders of the northern tribes to recognize David as their ruler.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. We learn from 2 Sam. 3:6-7 that Abner was very ambitious ("Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul"). In keeping with this self-promoting attitude, he took possession of Rizpah, one of Saul's concubines, although it was customary for a ruler's wives and concubines to be handed on to his successor. This is why Ishbosheth, one of Saul's four sons, challenged Abner (see v. 7b).

2. *Comment on Abner's angry response in 2 Sam. 3:8-11:* (1) Ishbosheth was not questioning the morality of Abner's taking one of Saul's concubines; it was quite customary for men to have secondary wives if they could afford them. But Ishbosheth was making a political point. (Abner was not stupid enough to miss the meaning of Ishbosheth's question, but his pretended misunderstanding was a convenient way to deal with an embarrassing question.) (2) Abner countered Ishbosheth's question by reasserting his loyalty to the house of Saul, even though the former king was now in his grave (v. 8). NOTE: The meaning of his question, "Am I a

dog's head of Judah?" is uncertain, but it probably refers to the disloyalty of a person who would stoop to deception to betray a trusting person, as a dog might turn on someone who feeds him. (3) However, recognizing the increasing supremacy of David, Abner climbs on the bandwagon of God's purpose for David (v. 9-10), even though God's plans for David would be accomplished entirely without Abner's help. (4) Ishbosheth's fear of Abner (v. 11) is quite understandable; for Abner was a formidable, battle-hardened military commander, while Ishbosheth was a youthful prince.

3. *Call attention to Abner's self-promoting actions as he curries the favor of David (2 Sam. 3:12):* (1) Because they have previously been on opposing sides in the conflict between Saul and David, Abner takes the precaution of sending messengers to David, rather than confronting him in person. (2) Abner's question, "To whom does the land belong?", is his way of posing the question, "Who is going to rule this land?" Then he offers to help David consolidate his reign over all of Israel, if David will make a pact with him. COMMENT: David would not need Abner's help to gain control over all of Israel. Actually, he would only need to get rid of Abner himself, because he was the most formidable ally of Ishbosheth, David's chief rival.

4. *Note that David readily accepted Abner's offer to intercede for him with the leaders in northern Israel ("And he said, 'Good; I will make a covenant with you"), but that his agreement was subject to one condition (read 2 Samuel 3:13-14). Then comment:* Michal--the daughter of Saul who had been given to David as a wife (1 Sam. 18:27b) but was later taken from him and given to a man named Palti (1 Sam. 25:44)--must be returned to him. David's demand for the return of Michal might have been partially motivated by lingering love for her. (We are told in 1 Samuel 18:20 that, prior to their earlier marriage, Michal loved David, "and they told Saul," indicating that this was a mutual love affair.) But, on this occasion, David's insistence that she be returned was a political move, to reinforce his claims to the kingship.

5. *Comment on the pathetic scene described in 2 Sam. 3:15-16:* (1) Michal's husband, Paltiel (or Palti), was the innocent victim of political intrigue. (2) Note that it was Ishbosheth, son of Saul and ruler of northern Israel, who "took her from her husband." (3) Even though Paltiel managed a weak protest, Michal was completely passive, while the men in the drama decided her fate. This illustrates the subordinate role of women in that culture.

CLOSING THE LESSON

Read 2 Sam. 17-18, then observe that Abner's words to the elders of Israel made of God's promise to David a mere matter of military security, a guarantee that He will save Israel from the Philistines and other enemies. But he says nothing of God's eternal purpose, his plan to establish through David a spiritual dynasty that will bring forth peace, judgment and justice to all mankind (read Isaiah 9:7). QUESTION: Do we think more broadly than Abner did when we sing "God Bless America"?