

Belial verses the Battering Ram
2 Samuel 20
August 5

I chose the title I have given this lesson based on the character of the two protagonists – Sheba and Joab. The CSB states that Sheba was a “wicked man.” The Hebrew terms translated “wicked man” is the term “Belial.” The Hebrew term occurs twenty-seven times to describe a wicked, corrupt individual that is a detriment to society. Paul used this term as a description of Satan. “What agreement does Christ have with Belial?” (2 Cor. 6.15). Satan stands behind every worthless, corrupt person that threatens the moral fabric of society. The name "Joab" means "God is my Father," yet he acted in ways that destroyed other people. In 2 Samuel 20, Joab built battering weapons to destroy the wall of the city Abel of Beth-maacah. As the Bible describes the actions of Joab, he functioned like a battering ram destroying people opposed to him. Joab killed Abner (2 Sam. 2-3), Uriah (2 Sam. 11), David’s son Absalom (2 Sam. 18.14), and David’s relative Amasa (2 Sam. 20).

What lessons can believers learn from two bad examples from the Old Testament?

First, Satan, the “wicked one,” seeks to divide the people of God (2 Sam. 20.1-2). Saul, the first

king of Israel, was from the tribe of Benjamin. Apparently, even after the death of Saul, the tribe of Benjamin did not favor David. Jacob described the descendants of Benjamin as "ravenous wolves," perhaps because of the skills of the tribe in warfare (Gen. 49.27). The majority of the tribe supported Saul over David. Sheba announced an intention to separate from the kingship of David - We have no portion in David, no inheritance in Jesse's son. Each man to his tent, Israel! (2 Sam. 20.2). When the northern kingdom of Israel officially separated from Judah, they used the same terminology (1 Kings 12.16). The term “son of Jesse” has a negative connotation (1 Sam. 20.27, 30, 31; 22.7, 8, 13). Sheba called for succession from David’s kingdom. Sheba, the wicked one followed Satan the original Belial, for the purpose of dividing the people of God. As a result, the tribe of Judah alone remained loyal to David.

Second, wisdom provided a means to avert war (2 Sam. 20.14-21). The battering ram Joab attacked Abel-Beth-Maacah. The Bible notes Joab’s success in conquering cities (2 Sam. 11.1; 12.26). The name Abel-Beth-Maacah means “house of pressure.” Joab applied pressure as he besieged the city and planned to destroy the city wall. The situation for Sheba was desperate. “So all the men of Israel deserted David and followed Sheba son of Bichri, but the men of Judah . . . (2 Sam. 20.2). When Joab surrounded the city, Sheba’s followers were limited to his family clan. “All the Berites came together and followed him” (2 Sam. 20.14). [Berites is an alternate form of Berichi in 2 Sam. 20.1.]

According to the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, the residents of Abel of Beth-maacah were noted for their wisdom (2 Sam. 20.18). The unnamed woman based her appeal for the preservation of the city on three points. First, she noted the reputation of the town for wisdom (2 Sam. 20.18). Second, she claimed that the town was loyal to David. She speaks as a peaceful and faithful representative of the city. Third, the action of destroying the town was an unreasonable one since the town belonged to the Lord’s inheritance given to his people. Why would the general do such

an action? To destroy God's inheritance equaled fighting against God. One wise woman saved the city from destruction. While the Bible connects "wisdom" with ethical decision making, the wisdom of this woman appears to be worldly wisdom. She agreed to Joab's demand for the death of Sheba to save the population of the city.

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