

Joab – General and Master Tactician

### **Introduction and narrative of Joab**

Joab was David's Nephew and had two brothers who were, like him, capable warriors. Joab was a capable leader, leading the assault on the Jebusite stronghold of Zion. His actions earned him the rank of Command in Chief of the Army due to David making a rash promise in his time of desire. (1 Chron 11)

Every move he made was carefully planned to promote himself. He eliminated contenders for his position: Abner, King Saul's Commander-in-Chief, had killed Joab's brother in legal combat. Despite David's wishes, Joab killed Abner for revenge. This event in Joab's life is pointed to by another General: Josephus. In his writings, "The Antiquities of the Jews", Josephus posits that Joab had already forgiven Abner for killing his brother, but because he was a former Commander-in-Chief who had turned to David's side, he killed him anyway. He writes an entire chapter on the death of Joab's brother at the hand of Abner and the treachery of Joab that led to Abner's death.

This sums up Joab's life. He had no moral or Godly compass. He did what was convenient. When David ordered the death of Uriah, Joab did not blink in accomplishing the task. When David ordered the saving of Absalom's life, Joab murdered Absalom (not in combat, but taking advantage of a mistake) and then giving advice to David in order to strengthen his own position.

David did come to understand the danger Joab posed to him, saying once "What have you sons of Zeruiah to do with me, that you would be adversaries (literally: Satan) for me today?" (2 Sam 19:22)

David replaced Joab with a less capable nephew, Amasa. During Sheba's rebellion, Joab took the opportunity to slyly kill Amasa in broad daylight in front of the people. He took back his position.

Coming to the end of David's life, Joab and other commanders questioned David's decisions. Eventually, Joab makes the mistake of backing Adonijah, instead of Solomon. He saw someone of his own caliber, that he could extend his position and power with.

His final days continue to show his politicking character: Seeing Adonijah successfully plead for mercy at the horns of the Altar of the Tabernacle, he shrewdly does the same. However, Solomon wisely sees through the charade of a man who had never expressed faith or an ounce of mercy. He has him killed where he stood at the Altar. (1 Kings 2:29-34)

### **Application**

Joab has no redeeming characteristics. He is ambitious and good at his job. The best lessons are from those who had dealings with him.

1 (As Amasa failed to do 2 Sam 20) Identify those who, by their actions, show that their ambition exceeds their morality/spirituality – and stay away from them. Amasa must have been naïve to think that Joab was friendly to him, having taken his position. Such people will not stop at cutting you down in broad daylight.

2 (As David came to understand about the sons of Zeruiah 2Sam 19/and in the matter of the death of Uriah 2 Sam 11) Identify those who rush to do with you that which is morally wrong without question. Such people are called "brown nosed" in the world for a reason. Their only ambition is to gain more power and influence.

3 (As David did 1 Chron 11) Avoid making rash promises of reward in times of conflict or desire. David wanted the Jebusite city for his capitol because of its strategic location at the junction of two tribes – making it a neutral location to rule from. His rash promise was taken advantage of by Joab to achieve his desire.

4 (As Solomon did 1 Kings 2) Do not hesitate to remove such people from your life, even if they, at the end, plead from the Scriptures, or instruction you in forgiveness and mercy, having not given such throughout their lives.

### **Conclusion and Prayer**

Wherever there is power or influence to be gained, there also are the Joabs. It is not a character to be desired, but to be uncovered and removed. In short – though such people may advance your cause, they will do you more damage in the long term.

Let us pray that our focus remains on the Lord and on having our own moral compass. Let all that we do be for God and His glory alone.

Let us also pray that we, and especially our leaders, see clearly about the people around them, that they may gather such people that are ambitious for the Lord alone.

Finally, pray for the salvation and repentance of the Joabs, that they may see the error of their ways before they find themselves at someone else's mercy and come to their ugly end.