

## November 6

**Scriptures:** Read 2 Samuel 2

**Key Verse:** “They anointed David king over the house of Judah.” (2 Samuel 2:4)

### Overview

The death of Saul marked an important time of decision for David. Because he was careful that nothing be done of his own will, he first inquired of the Lord before making a move. God gave David a definite answer; he and his men were to move to Hebron, a strategically located town in the southern part of Judah’s inheritance, about 32 kilometers south of Jerusalem. God had opened the way for David to finally return and live in “the inheritance of the Lord” (1 Samuel 26:19).

Though David was grieved by the death of Saul, he must have been happy that his days as a fugitive were now over, and he could finally leave Philistine territory and live freely among his friends in Judah. He had no doubt given many of them protection during his wilderness encampments, and he had sent them gifts from the spoil of the Amalekites (e.g. 1 Samuel 25:21; 30:26). These were wise political moves to gain their support. They recognized David’s kingship as being God-ordained. He had previously been anointed secretly by Samuel, signifying his divine commission (1 Samuel 16:13), but here they anointed him in public recognition of his kingship over the house of Judah(2:4).

The first official diplomatic step David took as king was to commend the people of Jabesh Gilead for their bravery and kindness in recovering the body of Saul and giving him an honourable burial (2:5-7; 1 Samuel 31:12-13). In his message to them, he was indirectly asking for their support in an attempt to bring unity to the nation, and for the first time David openly claimed to be Saul’s legitimate successor. Saul himself and Jonathan, his eldest son and natural successor, had both acknowledged that David would be king (1 Samuel 24:20; 23:17), yet David did not have the total support of all Israel at this time, perhaps many were wary of him, since he had been dwelling among the Philistines who had killed king Saul.

The commander of Saul’s army, his cousin Abner (1 Samuel 14:50), would have known that David was to be the next king, but he put up resistance. If the monarchy remained in the family of Saul, it would be naturally advantageous to him. When enough strength and order had been regained after Israel’s defeat (we are not given the chronology, but it may have been about four years later), Abner proclaimed Saul’s son Ishbosheth as king. Saul’s capital of Gibeah must have been destroyed and that territory was taken over by the Philistines; therefore, Abner was forced to establish another capital for Ishbosheth at Mahanaim, east of the Jordan. However, his reign lasted only two years and was not successful. How could it have been when it was not ordained by God?

There was much hostility between those who were loyal to David (mainly from the tribe of Judah) and those loyal to the house of Saul (mainly Benjamites). It is likely that an issue of debate was to be settled at Gibeon (about 8 kilometres northwest of Jerusalem). Some kind of a combat contest was arranged between the two opposing sides; however, it led to a very fierce battle

(2:15-17). Abner, who had, in effect, started the battle (2:14), was forced to retreat because of obvious defeat.

The fast runner Asahel, the younger brother of Joab (commander of David's army), pursued the older well-experienced warrior, Abner. He did not want to kill young Asahel for fear of a blood feud with Joab, but when Asahel would not turn aside, Abner was forced to kill him. Realizing the seriousness of brethren fighting together, Abner counseled Joab to halt the pursuit, and Joab wisely heeded (2:26-28).

## **Prayer**

Lord, You told us in Your Word that if we lack wisdom, we are to ask You for it and You will give it liberally. Like David, we need Your wisdom in order to proceed in Your way with our lives. By faith, we believe that even now You are giving us wisdom. Thank You!