

In this chapter we find the disheartening details of internal conflict within a family and a nation. Joab murders his cousin Amasa (see 2 Samuel 17:25). And a troublemaker named Sheba attempts a secession of the northern tribes. From verse 14 it appears he gains support from only one sect of the Israelites. In 1 Kings 12, however, we read that his heir in rebellion Jeroboam will succeed in splitting the Lord's people in two.

War between brothers is as old as Cain and Abel and as modern as a present day civil war. The tensions and jealousies between Jacob's sons become conflicts between the tribes of Israel. Even before the land is taken, it is feared that the tribes east of the Jordan will fail in their loyalty to the nation (Numbers 32).

It was hoped that a king could unite the people. Both Saul and David managed to do so at times. But a

stubborn and stiff necked people who refused to unite under their God would hardly do so for His anointed either. It seemed that hatred of an enemy was their only common thread.

Christians also have been known to give their allegiance to clans and tribes instead of to their King. It is true that we are told to separate from moral and doctrinal evil. This can keep us from gathering with other believers (but never erase our debt of love to them). But we are not to separate and then gather to a person, a nationality, a theology, or a place, nor define ourselves by opposition to others. We are to gather to the Lord alone, our King, our David, under His Word.

Notes

20:14 Abel of Beth-maacah is in the very north of Israel, near later day Caesarea Philippi.

Questions for study and discussion:

1. What is the significance that Sheba is a Benjaminite?
2. The men of Israel will repeat the words of verse later in 1 Kings 12. What happens when they do?
3. Why do you think David places the ten concubines into seclusion?

4. Why would Joab want to kill Amasa?

5. What's the deal with Joab's sword falling out of its sheath?

6. What's the purpose of the young man's declaration in verse 11?

7. Read verses 14-22. What other wise woman helped bring peace to a family earlier in this book?