

# Joab

**Joab was the son of Zeruah, the half-sister of David, [2 Samuel 2:18]. His father's name is not mentioned in this scripture but Josephus gives it as Suri, whose sepulchre was in Bethlehem, [2 Samuel 2:32; Josephus Ant. 7:1, 3].**

The life of Joab is first recorded when with his brothers Asahel and Abishai, he led David's army to victory against Ishbosheth's rebel forces under Abner [2 Samuel 2:12-17]. Abner reluctantly killed Asahel in self-defence and was later treacherously slain by Joab, ostensibly in blood-revenge, [2 Samuel 2:23; 2 Samuel 3:27, 30] but probably also because Abner's new-found loyalty to David confronted Joab with a potential rival for the king's favour.

David was angry with his nephew for this murder of Abner and prophesied that God would punish the killer, [2 Samuel 3:31-39].

Nevertheless, after taking the Jebusite stronghold, Joab was made commander-in-chief of all Israel [2 Samuel 5:8; 1 Chronicles 11:6, 8], of which David was by this time king.

**Joab proved himself a skilful general who greatly helped the establishment of the monarchy, but his character was a strange mixture.**

**Apart from his personal deeds of violence and opportunism, Joab's cruelty can be seen in the way he swiftly comprehended and carried out David's plan to kill Uriah, [2 Samuel 11:6-26].**

**Yet Joab could be magnanimous, as when he gave David the credit after the capture of Rabbath-Ammon, [2 Samuel 12:26-31].**

**Perhaps most notable and surprisingly, Joab tried to dissuade David from numbering the people.**

**2 Samuel 24:1-4 [New King James] “Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, ‘Go, number Israel and Judah.’ So the king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, ‘Now go throughout all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and count the people, that I may know the number of the people.’ And Joab said to the king, ‘Now may the LORD your God add to the people a hundred times more than there are, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king desire this thing?’ Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the army. Therefore Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of the king to count the people of Israel.”**

**Two things we need to remember when we study this passage of scripture. God does not cause people to sin, 1 Chronicles 21:1 tells us it was Satan who moved David to number Israel.**

**God allowed Satan to do this because of a disastrous national tendency in Israel and Judah, not to give the Creator God the credit when He intervened to give them victory against their enemies.**

**What was wrong with taking a census?**

**Numbers 26:2 [New King James] “Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel from twenty years old and above, by their fathers' houses, all who are able to go to war in Israel.”**

**A census amounted to a draft conscription for the army.**

**God had caused the land now to be at peace so there was no reason to enlist troops.**

By doing this census David was placing his faith in the size of his army rather than God's ability to protect them regardless of their number.

**Joab through personal experience knew what God had done in securing the land for King David, so warned David against committing this sin.**

**Joab is found in the role of peacemaker, reconciling David and Absalom on one occasion [2 Samuel 14:23, 31-33], but later when Absalom's guilt was clearly seen, Joab had a hand in Absalom's death [2 Samuel 18:14-33], despite David's injunction that Absalom life should be spared.**

After this incident David superseded Joab by Ahasa as commander of the army, [2 Samuel 19:13].

But the resourceful Joab subdued Sheba's revolt and seized the first opportunity to slay Ahasa the new commander, who proved to be inefficient, [2 Samuel 20:3-23].

Thereafter for a time Joab seems to have been restored to favour, [2 Samuel 24:2].

In David's last days, Joab's loyalty to the king faltered, and with Abiathar and others he supported Adonijah as claimant to the throne, [1 Kings 1:5-53] in defiance of David, who had resolved that Solomon should succeed him, [1 Kings 2:28].

For once Joab supported the wrong side and eventually it cost him his life, [1 Kings 2:28-35].

**Joab set his own standards, he lived by them and died because of them.**

**There is little evidence that Joab ever acknowledged God's standards.**

**Joab's self-centredness eventually destroyed him.**

**Joab was loyal only to himself, even willing to betray his lifelong relationship with David to preserve his own power and authority.**

**Joab's life illustrates the disastrous results of having no source of direction outside of ourselves.**

**Brilliance and power are self-destructive without God's guidance, for only the Creator God can give our life the direction we need, through the study and meditation on His Word, the Christian Bible.**

The first step towards such guidance is to admit we have a need for such instruction, [Proverbs 14:12; Proverbs 12:15].

**Other lessons we can learn from Joab's life –**

Even brilliant leaders of human beings need guidance from the Creator God.

Those who live by violence often die by violence, for such people are seldom concerned about how they hurt others, and such an attitude will generate anger in other people.

Loyalty is **not** genuine when it is only limited to being of advantage to our own lives, and must be life-long.