

Second Samuel

Lesson 9

In David's prayer he said, "*For you are God, O LORD. And you have promised these good things to your servant.*"²⁷ *And now, it has pleased you to bless the house of your servant, so that it will continue forever before you. For when you grant a blessing, O LORD, it is an eternal blessing!*" (1st Chronicles 17: 26-27) These are the last two sentences of his prayer.

Here is the background from the previous passage. David wanted to build the Temple as a permanent house for the Ark of the Covenant, but the LORD would not let him. Nevertheless, the LORD bestowed a great honor on David. David was in awe. To think that the honor would be eternal must have boggled his mind. And, because we have the rest of the Scripture, we know what David could not have known. "Eternal" for the LORD means "forever." During the thousand years kingdom on earth, Ezekiel tells us, "*Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.*"²⁴ *And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the Lord have spoken.*" (Ezekiel 34:23-24) Ezekiel tells us, "*My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them.*"²⁵ *They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever.*" (Ezekiel 37:24-25) These words are the end of the story when the LORD returns to be the King of kings and LORD of lords for one thousand years. Here in 2nd Samuel and in Ezekiel, the LORD reveals the part David will play in the LORD's kingdom. In the LORD's thousand years kingdom, David will be serving as the prince in his glorified, resurrected body, with the LORD as God over all. The LORD keeps His promises – we can be assured of that fact. This promise will come to pass.

D. The Subdued of the Kingdom (8:1-18)

1. David's Triumphs (8:1-12)

a) The Philistines (8:1)

In the last chapter, the compiler told us that David had conquered the surrounding nations and there was peace in Israel. Now the compiler circles back to tell us about how he conquered the nations and their names. So, David's triumphs continue as the compiler summarizes how David subdued the nations. The compiler lists David's triumphs at this point in the story, and he begins with the Philistines. Chapter 8, verse 1. "*Now after this it came about that David defeated the Philistines and subdued them; and David took control of the chief city from the hand of the Philistines.*"

Sometime long before David received his instruction about his son building the Temple, David found his nation in the contest with the Philistines again for the third time. If we were to place a time on this in his reign, it was probably in the second year after he moved to Jerusalem and Zion. This timing meant that this third battle was just ten years after David was living with the Philistines under the full approval of the King of Gath. Saul was still king then, and David had found favor with the Philistine king. But, after the death of Saul at the hands of the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, David became the new king, and tensions must have risen between the once-friendly relationship with the Philistines. We naturally want to see what the Chronicles can add to this story. Still, all we find is, "*After this, David defeated and subdued the Philistines by conquering Gath and its surrounding towns.*" (1 Chronicles 18:1). Evidently, Gath was the chief city of the Philistines at that time. It was also the city where the King was once David's friend. One point we might make here is that the Philistines had moved into the villages around Mount Gilboa at the time of Saul's death. At this time in the storyline, David had only been king in Jerusalem for a little more than two years. Thus, it might have been that David finally rid the kingdom of the Philistines and subdued them back to their own land.

b) The Moabites (8:2)

The compiler then lists the Moabites. Verse 2. *“He defeated Moab, and measured them with the line, making them lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death and one full line to keep alive. And the Moabites became servants to David, bringing tribute.”* We wish we knew more about why this took place. David was of the tribe of Judah. Boaz, David’s great-grandfather, married Ruth, a Moabite. Therefore, there was a close relationship with the Moabites through Ruth than just being cousins through Abraham and Lot. Lot was Abraham’s nephew and the father of Moab. Before David became king, he had taken his parents to Moab and asked the king to protect them (1 Samuel 22:3-4). Looking to the Chronicles for insight, we only find, *“David also conquered the land of Moab, and the Moabites who were spared became David’s subjects and paid him tribute money.”* (1 Chronicles 18:2) The whats and the whys of this battle are not clear, but one thing is clear; David’s victory fulfilled prophecy. Balaam prophesied, *“...a scepter shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab...”* (Numbers 24:17). We can only speculate, but a new Moabite king must have come to the throne who betrayed the trust of David and Israel.

c) The Hadadezerites (8:3-8)

The compiler mentions the Hadadezerites next. Verse 3. *“Then David defeated Hadadezer, the son of Rehob king of Zobah, as he went to restore his rule at the River. ⁴ David captured from him 1,700 horsemen and 20,000 foot soldiers; and David hamstringed the chariot horses, but reserved enough of them for 100 chariots. ⁵ When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer, king of Zobah, David killed 22,000 Arameans. ⁶ Then David put garrisons among the Arameans of Damascus, and the Arameans became servants to David, bringing tribute. And the LORD helped David wherever he went. ⁷ David took the shields of gold which were carried by the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸ From Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took a very large amount of bronze.”*

David did not capture this land to the north for the Nation of Israel, but he defeated it and brought it to its knees to pay a yearly tax to the Nation of Israel. We must wonder why he did not bring it into the kingdom because it was promised to be part of the Promised Land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but never taken. Hadadezer was the king of Aram, known today as Syria. It was bordered on the east side by the Euphrates River and the west by the Great Sea/Mediterranean Sea. It extended north to current-day Aleppo and bordered on the south with the tribes of Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh, as well as the slither of land called Phoenicia or Lebanon today. Damascus, mentioned here, sits just about twenty miles north of the border of Manasseh. Note in this passage that David stationed military outposts in Aram at this time, no doubt to protect Israel and to provide an ever-present visual to secure the yearly payments of taxes to Israel. We look to the Chronicles for more insight, and we find, *“David also destroyed the forces of Hadadezer, king of Zobah, as far as Hamath, when Hadadezer marched out to strengthen his control along the Euphrates River. ⁴ David captured 1,000 chariots, 7,000 charioteers, and 20,000 foot soldiers. He crippled all the chariot horses except enough for 100 chariots. ⁵ When Arameans from Damascus arrived to help King Hadadezer, David killed 22,000 of them. ⁶ Then he placed several army garrisons in Damascus, the Aramean capital, and the Arameans became David’s subjects and paid him tribute money. So the LORD made David victorious wherever he went. ⁷ David brought the gold shields of Hadadezer’s officers to Jerusalem, ⁸ along with a large amount of bronze from Hadadezer’s towns of Tebah and Cun. Later Solomon melted the bronze and molded it into the great bronze basin called the Sea, the pillars, and the various bronze articles used at the Temple.”*

The compiler of Second Samuel could not have known what Solomon would do with the gold shields in the future. We are forever thankful to Ezra for telling us that the gold shields were melted down to form the “Sea” or basin/bowl of water where the offerings would be washed before being placed on the altar. We will learn more about this basin/bowl called the “Sea” in 1st Kings 7:23-27. The remaining shields not used for the basin would be used in the construction and decorations of the pillars and articles for the Temple.

d) The Hamathites (8:9-10)

The compiler summarizes David's friendship with the Hamathites. Verse 9. *"Now when Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated all the army of Hadadezer, ¹⁰ Toi sent Joram his son to King David to greet him and bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him; for Hadadezer had been at war with Toi. And Joram brought with him articles of silver, of gold and of bronze."*

Hamath sat on the Orontes River. Later the name was changed to the Epiphania River by the Greeks. The Orontes River starts in the mountains of current-day Lebanon and runs north into Syria, and finally turns into the Mediterranean Sea in Turkey. Hamath was the capital of the Canaanite tribes called the Hittites while Joshua was still in charge of Israel. But by the time of David, it was simply a city about thirty miles north of the Phoenician/Lebanon border. Toi was the King of Hamath, basically the mayor of the city, who had been in a constant battle with Hadadezer. When he heard David subdued Hadadezer, he sent his son to David with gifts. The Chronicles say, *"When King Toi of Hamath heard that David had destroyed the entire army of King Hadadezer of Zobah, ¹⁰ he sent his son Joram to congratulate King David for his successful campaign. Hadadezer and Toi had been enemies and were often at war. Joram presented David with many gifts of gold, silver, and bronze. ¹¹ King David dedicated all these gifts to the LORD..."* (1 Chronicles 18: 9-11). David accepted Joram's gifts and give them to the LORD. No doubt, Toi wanted to ensure that David did not come to his doorstep. So instead, he went to David's doorstep to forge a friendly relationship.

e) The Aramites, Ammonites, Amalekites, Edomites (8:11-12)

The compiler then summarizes David's encounters and includes the Aramites, Ammonites, Amalekites, and Edomites. Verse 11. *"King David also dedicated these to the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated from all the nations which he had subdued: ¹² from Aram and Moab and the sons of Ammon and the Philistines and Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah."* The Chronicles confirmed in verse 11, *"King David dedicated all these gifts to the LORD, along with the silver and gold he had taken from the other nations—from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and Amalek. ¹² Abishai son of Zeruah destroyed 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. ¹³ He placed army garrisons in Edom, and all the Edomites became David's subjects. In fact, the LORD made David victorious wherever he went."* (1 Chronicles 18:11)

It seems that David was able to bring peace to Israel through the strength of war. He subdued the nations to the north, east, and south of his kingdom, requiring them to pay yearly taxes to Israel. The Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites were close relatives; the others were descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham. All Canaanites were supposed to have been destroyed, but Joshua failed to fulfill the LORD's command. In David's day, all he could do was subdue them.

2. David's Name (8:13-14)

David's wars with the surrounding nations brought notoriety to David's name. Verse 13. *"So David made a name for himself when he returned from killing 18,000 Arameans in the Valley of Salt. ¹⁴ He put garrisons in Edom. In all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David. And the LORD helped David wherever he went."* The Chronicles supplies a little more detail about this passage. *"Abishai son of Zeruah destroyed 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. ¹³ He placed army garrisons in Edom, and all the Edomites became David's subjects. In fact, the LORD made David victorious wherever he went."* (1 Chronicles 18:12-13)

Abishai was the brother of Joab, David's commander. Abishai received the credit for slaying 18,000 Edomites. In Psalms 60, Joab gets the credit for killing 12,000 Edomites. In the opening title of Psalm 60 says, *"For the choir director; according to Shushan [Lily of Testimony] Eduth. A Miktam [musical term] of David, to teach; when he struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt."*

Is there a conflict between Abishai destroying 18,000 Edomites in Samuel and Chronicles and Joab destroying 12,000 Edomites in Psalms 60? The answer is no. After Abishai killed the 18,000, David tells us that *"Joab returned and smote twelve thousand."* So, these were two different battles. With

the battles over, David had a name for himself because the LORD was his Helper. No one was willing to go against David because of the LORD.

3. David's Reign (8:15-18)

With all of that said, the compiler now gives a summary of David's reign in total. Verse 15. *"So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people. ¹⁶Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder. ¹⁷Zadok the son of Abitub and Abimelech the son of Abiathar were priests, and Seraiah was secretary. ¹⁸Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief ministers."*

The matching passage in the Chronicles says, *"So David reigned over all Israel and did what was just and right for all his people. ¹⁵Joab son of Zeruiah was commander of the army. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the royal historian. ¹⁶Zadok son of Abitub and Abimelech son of Abiathar were the priests. Seraiah was the court secretary. ¹⁷Benaiah son of Jehoiada was captain of the king's bodyguard. And David's sons served as the king's chief assistants."*

The compiler has jumped ahead to summarize the whole story of David's reign, beginning to end. The book of Second Samuel was not compiled until after David had resigned as King to allow Solomon to take his place. The compiler is making the point that David was a just and righteous King with all. Be that as it may, the compiler also tells us something else about one of his men, Benaiah. According to 1 Chronicles 27:5, Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the chief priest at the time. As the chief priest, it meant that Benaiah was a descendant of Aaron and because his father was the chief priest, he would have been in line to be the chief priest one day. However, Benaiah is not serving in the Levitical line of the High Priesthood. Instead, he is the commander of David's bodyguards and one of David's mighty men. Besides that, as David's bodyguard, Benaiah's men are *"Cherethites and the Pelethites."* These two tribes were Philistine tribes. David was not guarded by the Israelites but by the Philistines.

In addition, we must ask why Benaiah was not serving in the priestly line. The answer will come in chapter 23. Benaiah became the bodyguard of David while still in his twenties after David became king, yet while David's capital was still in Hebron. In chapter 23, we read, *"Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done mighty deeds, killed the two sons of Ariel of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion in the middle of a pit on a snowy day. ²¹He killed an Egyptian, an impressive man. Now the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, but he went down to him with a club and snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. ²²These things Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and had a name as well as the three mighty men."* (23:20-22) You might say, "What is wrong with that?" The problem is found in the book of Leviticus concerning the life of the potential high priests. Speaking to the priest in Leviticus 21, the LORD is clear. *"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: No one shall defile himself for a dead person among his people, ²except for his relatives who are nearest to him, his mother and his father and his son and his daughter and his brother, ³also for his virgin sister, who is near to him because she has had no husband; for her he may defile himself.'*" (Leviticus 21:1-3) Benaiah had disqualified himself from ever serving as high priest by killing the two sons of Moab and the Egyptian. In addition, he had forever forfeited his right to serve anywhere in the priestly line. Therefore, he had to have a job, so he became a warrior instead.