

Olivet Baptist Church

3500 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21229

Wednesday Night Bible Study (7:00 pm)

Book of 2 Samuel – Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Alex O. Stone

Classes Presented on “Zoom”

[MEETING ID: 395 133 283 * PASSCODE: 281215] Or, Call: [1-646-558-8656](tel:1-646-558-8656)

Theme: “David’s Troubles in the Kingdom” (2 Samuel 19:1–24:25)

David’s Return to Power (Chaps. 19-24)

- A. The Preparation for Return (Chap. 19)
- B. The Reestablishment of Authority (Chap. 20)
- C. Slaughter and Burial of Saul’s Sons (Chap. 21)

David’s Final Years (Chaps. 22–24)

- D. David’s Song (Chap. 22)
- E. David’s Heroes (Chap. 23)
- F. David’s Sin in Taking the Census (Chap. 24)

David is Restored as King

19 And Joab was told, “Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.” ² So the victory that day was *turned* into mourning for all the people. For the people heard it said that day, “The king is grieved for his son.” ³ And the people stole back into the city that day, as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. ⁴ But the king covered his face, and the king cried out with a loud voice, “O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!”

⁵ Then Joab came into the house to the king, and said, “Today you have disgraced all your servants who today have saved your life, the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives and the lives of your concubines, ⁶ in that you love your enemies and hate your friends. For you have declared today that you regard neither princes nor servants; for today I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all of us had died today, then it would have pleased you well. ⁷ Now therefore, arise, go out and

speaking comfort to your servants. For I swear by the LORD, if you do not go out, not one will stay with you this night. And that will be worse for you than all the evil that has befallen you from your youth until now.”⁸ Then the king arose and sat in the gate. And they told all the people, saying, “There is the king, sitting in the gate.” So all the people came before the king. For everyone of Israel had fled to his tent.

David Returns to Jerusalem

⁹ Now all the people were in a dispute throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, “The king saved us from the hand of our enemies, he delivered us from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled from the land because of Absalom.”¹⁰ But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle. Now therefore, why do you say nothing about bringing back the king?”

¹¹ So King David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, saying, “Speak to the elders of Judah, saying, ‘Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house, since the words of all Israel have come to the king, to his *very* house?’¹² You *are* my brethren, you *are* my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring back the king?’¹³ And say to Amasa, ‘Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if you are not commander of the army before me continually in place of Joab.’ ”¹⁴ So he swayed the hearts of all the men of Judah, just as *the heart of* one man, so that they sent *this word* to the king: “Return, you and all your servants!”¹⁵ Then the king returned and came to the Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to escort the king across the Jordan.¹⁶ And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, who *was* from Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David.¹⁷ There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over the Jordan before the king.¹⁸ Then a ferryboat went across to carry over the king’s household, and to do what he thought good.

David’s Mercy to Shimei

Now Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king when he had crossed the Jordan.¹⁹ Then he said to the king, “Do not let my lord impute iniquity to me, or remember what wrong your servant did on the day that my lord the king left

Jerusalem, that the king should take *it* to heart. ²⁰ For I, your servant, know that I have sinned. Therefore here I am, the first to come today of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.”

²¹ But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, “Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD’s anointed?” ²² And David said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should be adversaries to me today? Shall any man be put to death today in Israel? For do I not know that today I *am* king over Israel?” ²³ Therefore the king said to Shimei, “You shall not die.” And the king swore to him.

David and Mephibosheth Meet

²⁴ Now Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. And he had not cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he returned in peace. ²⁵ So it was, when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, “Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?”

²⁶ And he answered, “My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said, ‘I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go to the king,’ because your servant *is* lame. ²⁷ And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king, but my lord the king *is* like the angel of God. Therefore do *what is* good in your eyes. ²⁸ For all my father’s house were but dead men before my lord the king. Yet you set your servant among those who eat at your own table. Therefore what right have I still to cry out anymore to the king?” ²⁹ So the king said to him, “Why do you speak anymore of your matters? I have said, ‘You and Ziba divide the land.’ ” ³⁰ Then Mephibosheth said to the king, “Rather, let him take it all, inasmuch as my lord the king has come back in peace to his own house.”

David’s Kindness to Barzillai

³¹ And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim and went across the Jordan with the king, to escort him across the Jordan. ³² Now Barzillai was a very aged man,

eighty years old. And he had provided the king with supplies while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he *was* a very rich man. ³³ And the king said to Barzillai, “Come across with me, and I will provide for you while you are with me in Jerusalem.”

³⁴ But Barzillai said to the king, “How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? ³⁵ I *am* today eighty years old. Can I discern between the good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be a further burden to my lord the king? ³⁶ Your servant will go a little way across the Jordan with the king. And why should the king repay me *with* such a reward? ³⁷ Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, near the grave of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham; let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what seems good to you.” ³⁸ And the king answered, “Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him what seems good to you. Now whatever you request of me, I will do for you.” ³⁹ Then all the people went over the Jordan. And when the king had crossed over, the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own place.

The Quarrel About the King

⁴⁰ Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him. And all the people of Judah escorted the king, and also half the people of Israel. ⁴¹ Just then all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, “Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen you away and brought the king, his household, and all David’s men with him across the Jordan?”

⁴² So all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, “Because the king *is* a close relative of ours. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we ever eaten at the king’s *expense*? Or has he given us any gift?” ⁴³ And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, “We have ten shares in the king; therefore we also have more *right* to David than you. Why then do you despise us—were we not the first to advise *bringing back our king*?” Yet the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

The Rebellion of Sheba

20 And there happened to be there a rebel, whose name *was* Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. And he blew a trumpet, and said: “We have no share in David, Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!” ² So every man of Israel deserted David, *and followed Sheba the son of Bichri*. But the men of Judah, from the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, remained loyal to their king. ³ Now David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten women, his concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in seclusion and supported them, but did not go into them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood.

⁴ And the king said to Amasa, “Assemble the men of Judah for me within three days, and be present here yourself.” ⁵ So Amasa went to assemble *the men of Judah*. But he delayed longer than the set time which David had appointed him. ⁶ And David said to Abishai, “Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord’s servants and pursue him, lest he find for himself fortified cities, and escape us.” ⁷ So Joab’s men, with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the mighty men, went out after him. And they went out of Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri. ⁸ When they *were* at the large stone which *is* in Gibeon, Amasa came before them. Now Joab was dressed in battle armor; on it was a belt *with* a sword fastened in its sheath at his hips; and as he was going forward, it fell out. ⁹ Then Joab said to Amasa, “Are you in health, my brother?” And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. ¹⁰ But Amasa did not notice the sword that *was* in Joab’s hand. And he struck him with it in the stomach, and his entrails poured out on the ground; and he did not *strike* him again. **Thus he died.**

Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri. ¹¹ Meanwhile one of Joab’s men stood near Amasa, and said, “Whoever favors Joab and whoever *is* for David—follow Joab!” ¹² But Amasa wallowed in *his* blood in the middle of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he moved Amasa from the highway to the field and threw a garment over him, when he saw that everyone who came upon him halted. ¹³ When he was removed from the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

¹⁴ And he went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel and Beth Maachah and all the Berites. So they were gathered together and also went after *Sheba*. ¹⁵ Then they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maachah; and they cast up a siege mound against the city, and it stood by the rampart. And all the people who *were* with Joab battered the wall to throw it down. ¹⁶ Then a wise woman cried out from the city, "Hear, hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come nearby, that I may speak with you.'" ¹⁷ When he had come near to her, the woman said, "*Are* you Joab?" He answered, "*I am*." Then she said to him, "Hear the words of your maidservant." And he answered, "I am listening." ¹⁸ So she spoke, saying, "They used to talk in former times, saying, 'They shall surely seek *guidance* at Abel,' and so they would end *disputes*."

¹⁹ *I am among the peaceable and faithful* in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?" ²⁰ And Joab answered and said, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy! ²¹ That *is* not so. But a man from the mountains of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has raised his hand against the king, against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city." So the woman said to Joab, "Watch, his head will be thrown to you over the wall." ²² Then the woman in her wisdom went to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw *it* out to Joab. Then he blew a trumpet, and they withdrew from the city, every man to his tent. So Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem.

David's Government Officers

²³ And Joab *was* over all the army of Israel; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; ²⁴ Adoram *was* in charge of revenue; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder; ²⁵ Sheva *was* scribe; Zadok and Abiathar *were* the priests; ²⁶ and Ira the Jairite was a chief minister under David.

David Avenges the Gibeonites

21 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, "*It is* because of Saul and *his* bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites." ² So the king called the

Gibeonites and spoke to them. Now the Gibeonites *were* not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; the children of Israel had sworn protection to them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah.

³Therefore David said to the Gibeonites, “What shall I do for you? And with what shall I make atonement, that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?” ⁴And the Gibeonites said to him, “We will have no silver or gold from Saul or from his house, nor shall you kill any man in Israel for us.” So he said, “Whatever you say, I will do for you.” ⁵Then they answered the king, “As for the man who consumed us and plotted against us, *that* we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the territories of Israel, ⁶let seven men of his descendants be delivered to us, and we will hang them before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, *whom* the LORD chose.”

And the king said, “I will give *them*.” ⁷But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the LORD’s oath that *was* between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. ⁸So the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite; ⁹and he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the hill before the LORD. **So they fell, all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest,** in the first *days*, in the beginning of barley harvest. ¹⁰Now Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until the late rains poured on them from heaven. And she did not allow the birds of the air to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night.

¹¹And David was told what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done. ¹²Then David went and took the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son, from the men of Jabesh Gilead who had stolen them from the street of Beth Shan, where the Philistines had hung them up, after the Philistines had struck down Saul in Gilboa. ¹³So he brought up the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from there; and they gathered the bones of those who had been hanged. ¹⁴They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the tomb

of Kish his father. So they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God heeded the prayer for the land.

Philistine Giants Destroyed

¹⁵ When the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David and his servants with him went down and fought against the Philistines; and David grew faint. ¹⁶ Then Ishbi-Benob, who *was* one of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose bronze spear *was* three hundred *shekels*, who was bearing a new *sword*, thought he could kill David. ¹⁷ But Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid, and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, “You shall go out no more with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel.”

¹⁸ Now it happened afterward that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbechai the Hushathite killed Saph, who *was* one of the sons of the giant. ¹⁹ Again there was war at Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed *the brother of Goliath* the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear *was* like a weaver’s beam. ²⁰ Yet again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of *great* stature, who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; and he also was born to the giant. ²¹ So when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David’s brother, killed him. ²² These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.

Praise for God’s Deliverance

22 Then David spoke to the LORD the words of this song, on the day when the LORD had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.

² And he said:

“The LORD *is* my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;

³ The God of my strength, in whom I will trust;

My shield and the horn of my salvation,

My stronghold and my refuge;

My Savior, You save me from violence.

⁴ I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised;

So shall I be saved from my enemies.

⁵ “When the waves of death surrounded me,
The floods of ungodliness made me afraid.

⁶ The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.

⁷ In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry *entered* His ears.

⁸ “Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken,
Because He was angry.

⁹ Smoke went up from His nostrils,
And devouring fire from His mouth;
Coals were kindled by it.

¹⁰ He bowed the heavens also, and came down
With darkness under His feet.

¹¹ He rode upon a cherub, and flew;
And He was seen upon the wings of the wind.

¹² He made darkness canopies around Him,
Dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies.

¹³ From the brightness before Him
Coals of fire were kindled.

¹⁴ “The LORD thundered from heaven,
And the Most High uttered His voice.

¹⁵ He sent out arrows and scattered them;
Lightning bolts, and He vanquished them.

¹⁶ Then the channels of the sea were seen,
The foundations of the world were uncovered,
At the rebuke of the LORD,
At the blast of the breath of His nostrils.

¹⁷ “He sent from above, He took me,

He drew me out of many waters.
18 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me;
For they were too strong for me.
19 They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my support.
20 He also brought me out into a broad place;
He delivered me because He delighted in me.
21 “The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands
He has recompensed me.
22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not wickedly departed from my God.
23 For all His judgments *were* before me;
And *as for* His statutes, I did not depart from them.
24 I was also blameless before Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.
25 Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
According to my cleanness in His eyes.
26 “With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful;
With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;
27 With the pure You will show Yourself pure;
And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.
28 You will save the humble people;
But Your eyes *are* on the haughty, *that* You may bring *them* down.
29 “For You *are* my lamp, O LORD;
The LORD shall enlighten my darkness.
30 For by You I can run against a troop;
By my God I can leap over a wall.
31 *As for* God, His way *is* perfect;
The word of the LORD *is* proven;
He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him.

32 “For who *is* God, except the LORD?
And who *is* a rock, except our God?

33 God *is* my strength *and* power,
And He makes my way perfect.

34 He makes my feet like the *feet* of deer,
And sets me on my high places.

35 He teaches my hands to make war,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

36 “You have also given me the shield of Your salvation;
Your gentleness has made me great.

37 You enlarged my path under me;
So my feet did not slip.

38 “I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them;
Neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed.

39 And I have destroyed them and wounded them,
So that they could not rise;
They have fallen under my feet.

40 For You have armed me with strength for the battle;
You have subdued under me those who rose against me.

41 You have also given me the necks of my enemies,
So that I destroyed those who hated me.

42 They looked, but *there was* none to save;
Even to the LORD, but He did not answer them.

43 Then I beat them as fine as the dust of the earth;
I trod them like dirt in the streets,
And I spread them out.

44 “You have also delivered me from the strivings of my people;
You have kept me as the head of the nations.
A people I have not known shall serve me.

45 The foreigners submit to me;
As soon as they hear, they obey me.

46 The foreigners fade away,

And come frightened from their hideouts.

47 “The LORD lives!

Blessed *be* my Rock!

Let God be exalted,

The Rock of my salvation!

48 *It is* God who avenges me,

And subdues the peoples under me;

49 He delivers me from my enemies.

You also lift me up above those who rise against me;

You have delivered me from the violent man.

50 Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles,

And sing praises to Your name.

51 “*He* is the tower of salvation to His king,

And shows mercy to His anointed,

To David and his descendants forevermore.”

David's Last Words

23 Now these *are* the last words of David.

Thus says David the son of Jesse;

Thus says the man raised up on high,

The anointed of the God of Jacob,

And the sweet psalmist of Israel:

2 “The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me,

And His word *was* on my tongue.

3 The God of Israel said,

The Rock of Israel spoke to me:

‘He who rules over men *must be* just,

Ruling in the fear of God.

4 And *he shall be* like the light of the morning *when* the sun rises,

A morning without clouds,

Like the tender grass *springing* out of the earth,

By clear shining after rain.’

- ⁵ “Although my house *is* not so with God,
Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant,
Ordered in all *things* and secure.
For *this is* all my salvation and all *my* desire;
Will He not make *it* increase?
- ⁶ But *the sons* of rebellion *shall* all *be* as thorns thrust away,
Because they cannot be taken with hands.
- ⁷ But the man *who* touches them
Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear,
And they shall be utterly burned with fire in *their* place.”

David's Mighty Men

⁸ These *are* the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite, chief among the captains. He was called Adino the Eznite, because he had killed eight hundred men at one time. ⁹ And after him *was* Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, *one* of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines *who* were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated. ¹⁰ He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder. ¹¹ And after him *was* Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. So the people fled from the Philistines. ¹² But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory.

¹³ Then three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adullam. And the troop of Philistines encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. ¹⁴ David *was* then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines *was* then *in* Bethlehem. ¹⁵ And David said with longing, “Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which *is* by the gate!” ¹⁶ So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that *was* by the gate, and took it and brought *it* to David. Nevertheless he

would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. ¹⁷ And he said, “Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this! Is *this not* the blood of the men who went in *jeopardy of* their lives?” Therefore he would not drink it. These things were done by the three mighty men.

¹⁸ Now Abishai the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of *another* three. He lifted his spear against three hundred *men*, killed *them*, and won a name among *these* three. ¹⁹ Was he not the most honored of three? Therefore he became their captain. However, he did not attain to the *first* three. ²⁰ Benaiah *was* the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day. ²¹ And he killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. The Egyptian *had* a spear in his hand; so he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian’s hand, and killed him with his own spear. ²² These *things* Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and won a name among three mighty men. ²³ He was more honored than the thirty, but he did not attain to the *first* three. And David appointed him over his guard.

²⁴ Asahel the brother of Joab *was* one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, ²⁵ Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite, ²⁶ Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, ²⁷ Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, ²⁸ Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, ²⁹ Heleb the son of Baanah (the Netophathite), Ittai the son of Ribai from Gibeath of the children of Benjamin, ³⁰ Benaiah a Pirathonite, Hiddai from the brooks of Gaash, ³¹ Abi-Albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, ³² Eliahba the Shaalbonite (of the sons of Jashen), Jonathan, ³³ Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite, ³⁴ Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, ³⁵ Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, ³⁶ Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, ³⁷ Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite (armorbearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah), ³⁸ Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, ³⁹ and Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all.

David's Census of Israel and Judah

24 Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah." ² 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." ³ 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?" ⁴ 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.

⁵ And they crossed over the Jordan and camped in Aroer, on the right side of the town which *is* in the midst of the ravine of Gad, and toward Jazer. ⁶ Then they came to Gilead and to the land of Tahtim Hodshi; they came to Dan Jaan and around to Sidon; ⁷ and they came to the stronghold of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites. Then they went out to South Judah *as far as* Beersheba. ⁸ So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. ⁹ Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to the king. And there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

The Judgment on David's Sin

¹⁰ And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

¹¹ Now when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, ¹² "Go and tell David, 'Thus says the LORD: "I offer you three things; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do *it* to you." ' " ¹³ So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in

your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me." ¹⁴ And David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies *are* great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man." ¹⁵ So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died. ¹⁶ And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "It is enough; now restrain your hand." And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. ¹⁷ Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, "Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father's house."

The Altar on the Threshing Floor

¹⁸ And Gad came that day to David and said to him, "Go up, erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." ¹⁹ So David, according to the word of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded. ²⁰ Now Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming toward him. So Araunah went out and bowed before the king with his face to the ground. ²¹ Then Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" And David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people."

²² Now Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever *seems* good to him. Look, *here are* oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood. ²³ All these, O king, Araunah has given to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you." ²⁴ Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy *it* from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. ²⁵ And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel.

Commentary: David's Return to Power & Final Years (CHAP. 19:1-24:25)

I. David's Sin and Domestic Problems (chaps. 19–21)

A. David's Return to Power (Chap. 19-20)

1. THE PREPARATIONS FOR RETURN (CHAP. 19)

2 Samuel 19:1–3. What should have been a day of triumphant joy became to David a day of profound grief. His elation at having regained the kingdom was undercut by his despair at having lost a **son**. So chagrined were David's soldiers that they slipped out of Mahanaim as though they were losers instead of winners.

2 Samuel 19:4–8a. **Joab**, who had known before the frustration of doing what he felt was right only to have **the king** turn it against him (cf. 3:27–39; 14:28–33), confronted David and rebuked him for his insensitivity toward his officers and people. It appeared, **Joab** said, that David would have been more satisfied **if Absalom** had lived **and all of** them had died. In order to salvage what little morale was left, Joab urged David to appear before the troops and assure them that he appreciated their selfless service to him.

2 Samuel 19:8b–13. The remnants of Absalom's army had made their way home and together with the rest of **Israel** found themselves in a quandary. They had rallied behind **Absalom**, but now he was dead. Moreover, David had provided effective leadership in the past. **So why were the elders not bringing the king back?** Sensing the local officials' indecision, **David sent ... Zadok and Abiathar, the priests**, to them to **ask** why they were so reluctant to restore David when it was clear that the people were willing and ready to do so. No doubt to shore up his support from Judah

especially, David told the priests to promise **Amasa**, his nephew (cf. 17:25; 1 Chron. 2:17), that he would succeed **Joab** as **commander of the army** (2 Sam. 19:13). Joab, also David's nephew through another half-sister (1 Chron. 2:16), had by now become completely discredited in David's eyes because of his open disagreements with David's policies.

2 Samuel 19:14–23. The mission of Zadok and Abiathar was successful. With one accord (**as though they were one man**) the people **of Judah** not only invited David to return to rule over them but they also sent a delegation to **the Jordan** River to meet him and help him cross over the river. Included in the delegation were **Shimei** (v.16), who had cursed David on his way into exile (16:5–8), and **Ziba** (19:17), Mephibosheth's servant who had refreshed David along the way (16:1–4).

Shimei, realizing the peril in which he now found himself because of David's restoration, prostrated himself **before the king** and sought his forgiveness, a favor David temporarily granted over the objections of **Abishai** (19:21–23; but cf. David's last instruction to Solomon, 1 Kings 2:8–9). The large number of **Benjamites** who accompanied **Shimei** (2 Sam. 19:17) and who were identified by him (v. 20) as elements of **the whole house of Joseph** (i.e., Israel) indicates the first steps taken by the tribe of Benjamin to link itself with Judah.

2 Samuel 19:24–30. Next came **Mephibosheth** who protested to David that **Ziba** had lied about Mephibosheth's motive for remaining in **Jerusalem** when **the king** was forced to leave. Saul's grandson said he had not tried to use the occasion as an opportunity to bring his grandfather's dynasty back into control as **Ziba** had reported (see 16:3). Whether this was true or not cannot be determined, but David

at least was somewhat convinced by Mephibosheth and agreed to return at least half of the estate he had threatened to withdraw from him (19:29; cf. 16:4).

2 Samuel 19:31–38. Then **Barzillai the Gileadite**, who had provided David with supplies when he had crossed into Transjordan (17:27–29), presented himself to **the king**. Grateful to the **80**-year-old for all his goodness, David urged him to move to **Jerusalem** and live out his days on government sustenance. **Barzillai** protested that he was too old to make such a move and preferred to die in his own land. He asked, however, that **Kimham**, perhaps his son, go in his place and be similarly rewarded. This David was more than happy to do.

2 Samuel 19:39–43. At length David and his entourage **crossed the Jordan** and arrived at **Gilgal** where they were met by a throng of citizens from both **Judah** and **Israel**. The latter were upset that the ¹ Judeans claimed **David** as one of their own to the exclusion of the other tribes (v. 41). When the Judeans replied that David was part of their own flesh (v. 42), the Israelite counter-response was that there were **10** tribes of them and therefore their claim was much more weighty.

Besides, they said, they had been **the first** to insist that David return to rule over the nation (v. 43), a claim for which, incidentally, there is an apparent basis in the preserved narrative (vv. 9–10). The argument reveals the fickleness of the people who had first acquiesced in, if not actively supported, the rebellion of Absalom and now clamored to be first to welcome David **back**. But it also indicates the depth of

¹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 474). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

the schism which was developing between **Israel** and **Judah**, a rift which eventually produced two separate kingdoms.

2. THE REESTABLISHMENT OF AUTHORITY (CHAP. 20)

2 Samuel 20:1–3. The contention between the Israelite and Judean delegations at Gilgal became so heated that a **Benjamite** by the name of **Sheba** announced a revolutionary movement against **David** and led the Israelites to desert the king. David and the Judeans then continued their homeward journey **to Jerusalem** alone. Once there, **David** reasserted his monarchical claims by, among other things, regathering his harem (cf. 15:16). **He provided for them, but** remained sexually aloof because they had been appropriated by his son Absalom (16:21–22).

2 Samuel 20:4–10. The first matter of state was urgent. It was clear to **David** that he must overcome the rump movement that had been initiated by **Sheba** at Gilgal. So he ordered **Amasa**, his new commander (19:13), to reorganize the army **of Judah ... within three days** so that Sheba might be brought to heel. **When Amasa** was unable to do so in the allotted **time ... Abishai**, at David's command, took his own personal elite troops (cf. 18:2) and set out for the North (20:7). On the way they met **Amasa** at **Gibeon**, about five miles north of Jerusalem. **Joab**, though having been ² demoted and replaced by **Amasa**, was present. Pretending to greet **Amasa** warmly, **Joab** killed him with his **dagger**. Thus **Joab** gained revenge for his loss of rank. What is particularly heinous is the fact that **Joab** and **Amasa** were cousins, sons of two of

² Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 474–475). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

David's half-sisters (1 Chron. 2:16–17). Again, then, the prophecy of Nathan came to pass: "The sword will never depart from your house" (2 Sam. 12:10).

2 Samuel 2 Samuel 20:11–22. **Joab** at once took command as though nothing had happened. **The troops** were stopping in **the road** to look at Amasa's corpse. So heartless **Joab dragged** Amasa's body to **a field and threw a garment over him**, without bothering to bury him. Summoning reinforcements, **Joab** marched as far north as **Abel Beth Maacah** (four miles west of Dan and north of the Sea of Kinnereth) through the territory **of the Berites** (site unknown). There he found **Sheba** safely ensconced behind **the city wall**, apparently prepared to face a long **siege**. While attempting to batter down **the walls** **Joab** was contacted by **a wise woman** from **the city** who yelled over the wall that she wanted to talk with him. She told **Joab** of her own fame as a purveyor of wisdom (v. 18) and then asked why he was destroying her **city** which had always been loyal to Israel. The city, as **a mother in Israel**, was a prominent one.

To this **Joab replied** that he was not attacking **the city** itself but only wanted **Sheba**, the rebel who had presumed to lead Israel away from its **king**. If she would assist in delivering **Sheba over** to him, he would end his siege. Soon **the head of Sheba** was thrown over the wall **to Joab**. Successful in his mission, **Joab** stopped the siege and returned to **Jerusalem**.

2 Samuel 20:23–26. Apparently, David tolerated **Joab's** assassination of Amasa for **Joab** appears in this list of **David's** royal administrators. **Joab was over Israel's entire army**. **Benaiah son of Jehoiada was** leader of David's special troops, **the Kerethites**

and **Pelethites** (see comments on 8:15–18). Benaiah eventually replaced Joab at ³ the beginning of Solomon’s reign (1 Kings 2:35; 4:4). **Adoniram** (Heb. “*Adoram*”) **was in charge of** conscripted **labor** gangs, a position he retained in the government of Solomon. (In 1 Kings 4:6 and 5:14 the Heb. has “*Adoniram*,” a longer form of his name.) **Jehoshaphat ... was the recorder** (or chronicler). **Sheva was** official scribe, evidently having succeeded Seraiah (2 Sam. 8:17). **Zadok and Abiathar** remained as chief **priests**. Finally, **Ira the Jairite** was David’s special minister, having succeeded the king’s own sons in that capacity (see comments on 8:18 for the meaning of *kōhēn* in 20:26, usually rendered “priest”).

G. Slaughter and burial of Saul’s sons (chap. 21)

2 Samuel 21:1–8. At some point in David’s **reign**, probably toward the end, Israel was afflicted by a **three-year** drought. When he inquired of **the LORD** as to its cause, **the LORD** revealed that it came as punishment for Saul’s violation of the covenant made with **the Gibeonites** back in the days of Joshua (Josh. 9:15–21). At that time Israel, under Joshua’s leadership, had just destroyed Jericho and Ai and was about to attack the Amorite federation of the Canaanite hill country. The people of Gibeon, who were in the direct line of Joshua’s conquest, pretended to be faraway aliens and so escaped annihilation. Moreover, they tricked Joshua into making a covenant with them whereby they would forever serve Israel in menial tasks but could never be harmed. Though the covenant was made deceitfully, its binding nature was recognized by both the Israelites and the Gibeonites.

³ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 475). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Saul, in an action not recorded in the biblical account, had slain some Gibeonites during his tenure (2 Sam. 21:1). When David learned that the **famine** had come on Israel as punishment for that covenant violation, he asked the Gibeonite leaders **what** he should **do for** them. They responded by denying any interest in **silver or gold**. Nor, they said, could they, as Israel’s vassals, take vengeance into their own hands.⁴ Instead they asked that **seven ... male descendants of Saul** be **given over to** them so that they could practice the age-old tradition of *lex talionis*—eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and life for life (Ex. 21:23–25).

David recognized the propriety of their demand, but he also had to balance against it the pledge he had made to **Jonathan** that he would forever preserve his seed (1 Sam. 20:15–16). So David **spared Mephibosheth**, Jonathan’s **son**, but singled out others of Saul’s offspring for execution. These included **Armoni and another Mephibosheth**, sons of Saul’s concubine **Rizpah** (cf. 2 Sam. 3:7). The other **five** were all **sons of Merab**, daughter of Saul, by her husband **Adriel** (cf. 1 Sam. 18:19). (As stated in the NIV marg., many Heb. mss. have “Michal,” but that reading makes 2 Sam: 21:8 contradict the statement in 6:23 that Michal died childless. Probably then, the NIV is correct in following the two Heb. mss. and a few other mss. that have “Merab.”)

2 Samuel 21:9–10. These **seven** sons and grandsons of Saul were publicly executed **by the Gibeonites** at the **beginning of barley harvest**, early in the spring (see the

⁴ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 475–476). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

chart “Calendar in Israel,” near Ex. 12:1). As their bodies hung suspended from their places of exposure, **Rizpah**, mother of the first two (v. 8), refused to take them down and bury them. In great grief she lamented for them on a rocky ledge until the coming of the drought-breaking rains. The reason for her action is not entirely clear unless she viewed the vengeance of the Gibeonites as being at the same time the vengeance of God against the land for Saul’s sake. *The fact that the bodies remained where they were until it rained suggests that God’s curse had been on the land and now rested on the executed sons of Saul for “anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse”* (Deut. 21:23).

The coming of **the rain** meant that the curse was ended, and the corpses could be taken down and buried. Though the Law stated that a body hung from a tree must be removed by sundown (Deut. 21:23), it implied punishment of ⁵ an individual for his personal crime. This case had nothing to do with any personal act of murder but rather with violation of a covenant, the results of which brought God’s displeasure on the whole nation and required vengeance of a public and extended nature.

2 Samuel 21:11–14. When David saw the devotion of **Rizpah** in protecting the bodies of her sons from the carnivorous birds and beasts, he was reminded of the shameful exposure of the bodies of **Saul and his son Jonathan** on the walls of **Beth Shan where the Philistines had displayed them after** the battle of **Gilboa** (1 Sam. 31:11–13). Though the people of **Jabesh Gilead** had brought the bodies away for

⁵ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 476). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

burial, the remains were interred far from Gibeah, Saul's family home. David resolved to bring their **bones** back from Jabesh Gilead and bury them in the sepulcher of **Saul's father Kish, at Zela in Benjamin. After** this was done **God** again **answered prayer on behalf of the** nation.

2 Samuel 21:15–22. The chapter concludes with a final word about David's hostility toward **the Philistines**. No longer the robust young warrior of former days, **David** now was old and weak. A Philistine giant, **Ishbi-Benob**, advanced on **David** with a spear (with a **spearhead** weighing **300 shekels** or about seven and one-half pounds) and a **new sword** (the Heb. in v. 16 is lit., "armed with a new thing," without specifying the weapon), threatening to **kill** him. Just in time **Abishai ... came to David's aid and killed** the giant. **David's** warriors advised him **never again** to take to the field of **battle**. His death would mean the end of his leadership, a tragedy synonymous with the snuffing out of Israel's illumination (**the lamp of Israel**) for in and through David were God's covenant blessings to be accomplished (1 Kings 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19).

Other Philistine encounters, **at Gob** and **Gath**, followed the one just recorded. At Gob (Gezer in 1 Chron. 20:4), **Sibbecai**, a heroic Israelite, slew **Saph** (Sippai in 1 Chron. 20:4), ⁶ another Philistine giant (**Rapha** is from "Rephaim," a race of giants; cf. 2 Sam. 21:16).

⁶ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 476–477). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Again, at **Gob**, **Elhanan** felled a giant, **Goliath**. Because Elhanan was from Bethlehem, some scholars believe that he was David and that the present passage recapitulates David's former exploit. Against this is the lack of evidence to equate Elhanan with David and the fact that the accounts in both verses 18–22 and 1 Chronicles 20:4–8 follow that of David's conquest of Goliath by many years. The chronicler in fact stated that the giant killed by Elhanan was Goliath's brother Lahmi (1 Chron. 20:5). The resolution of the problem might well be that two Philistines were named Goliath, one killed by David and the other by Elhanan. Perhaps the Chronicles version is an attempt to clear up the confusion of two giants with the same name.

A conflict at **Gath** involved a giant (**descended from Rapha**; cf. 2 Sam. 21:16, 18) **with six digits on each hand and foot**. The genetic strains which produced gigantism must also have caused this malformity. He was slain by **David's** nephew **Jonathan**, named, of course, for David's dear friend. With this giant's death the terror caused by the Philistine giants came to an end.

II. David's Final Years (chaps. 22–24)

A. David's Song (Chap. 22)

1. EXTOLLING OF THE LORD (22:1–4)

2 Samuel 22:1. This composition, set between the account of David's Philistine wars (21:15–22) and his list of heroes (23:8–39), is a poem celebrating the providence of God in delivering him from **all his enemies** (cf. v. 4). It is found again in almost

identical wording in Psalm 18, a piece that is generally classified from a literary standpoint as a royal hymn of thanksgiving.

2 Samuel 22:2–4. In a manner characteristic of this literary form, the Psalmist David first acknowledged the greatness and glory of **the LORD** in a series of designations—**Rock ... Fortress ...** greatness and glory of **the LORD** in a series of designations—**Rock ... Fortress ... Deliverer ... Shield ... Horn of ... Salvation** (see comments on 1 Sam. 2:1), **Stronghold** (*mišgob*; see comments on Ps. 9:9), **Refuge**, and **Savior**. All God's exploits in the past and promises for the future are predicated on who He is. These descriptions of **the LORD** are especially appropriate in light of the setting of the song, that of flight, conflict, and victory.

2. EXPLOITS OF THE LORD (22:5–20)

2 Samuel 22:5–20 David was quite conscious of history and of God's providential arrangement of its particulars. He saw this in respect to his own peculiar circumstances (vv. 5–7) which he described hyperbolically as being akin to **death**. So desperate had been his peril that death was imminent. It was only the mercy of **God** in response to his prayer which brought David salvation from heaven (**His temple**).

From David, as a center of God's saving purposes, the exploits of the Lord ranged almost concentrically to the arena of **the whole earth** (vv. 8–9). With reference, perhaps, to prevailing pagan myths about Creation, David showed that it is the Lord who controls the earth. In His anger He **shook** the whole cosmos as an expression of His concern for David.

But the sovereignty of God goes even further. He is Lord also of **the heavens** (vv. 10–16). Though Baal, the Canaanite god, was known to his worshipers as “the rider of the **clouds**,” it is Yahweh who is enthroned in the heavens and who reduces all Creation to His service. With **lightning** and a **voice** like thunder He cried out against His (and David’s) **enemies**, terrifying them. The God of Creation rearranged Creation, as it were, on David’s behalf.⁷ That David refers to God’s mighty works (vv. 8–16) as an expression not of His role of Creator as such, but as One **powerful** to save is clear from the conclusion of the passage (vv. 17–20): God had delivered him from his enemies because he was the object of God’s mercy and grace.

God’s deliverance is expressed in several verbs:

- (a) **reached down**,
- (b) **took hold**,
- (c) **drew ... out**,
- (d) **rescued** (vv. 18, 20),
- (e) **brought out**.

3. EQUITY OF THE LORD (22:21–30)

2 Samuel 22:21–30. God’s deliverance of David was followed by His blessings, divine rewards commensurate with David’s own **righteousness**. David did not suggest that works are necessary for salvation, which is not the issue here. He was saying, however, that the benefits of God are often obtained in this life by faithful perseverance in godliness. He **kept** God’s **ways** (v. 22), **law** (v. 23), and **decrees** (v. 23), and refrained from iniquity (v. 24; cf. vv. 21, 25). God therefore **rewarded** him

⁷ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 477–480). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

(v. 25) and showed mercy to him as He does to all who are upright (**faithful ... blameless ... pure ... humble**; vv. 26–28). The wicked, on the other hand, because of their pride cannot expect His favor (v. 28b). With God, who gives **light** as a **lamp** (v. 29), a righteous person is invincible. He can break through barricades (not **a troop**) or **scale** the highest walls (v. 30).

4. EXCELLENCE OF THE LORD (22:31–51)

2 Samuel 22:31–51. In the final section of the psalm David turned once more to the attributes of **the LORD**, but he connected them now to specific ways in which **God** had worked and would work on his behalf. God was described first as a Strengthener (vv. 31–35), One who is **a Shield**, a **Rock**, a **Strength** (lit., “strong Refuge” or “Fortress”), One who gives speed and power to His own servants. He is also a **Shield** (v. 36), and He protects against slipping and falling (vv. 36–37). Again, He is a Subduer of **enemies** (vv. 38–41). Through **the LORD**, David was able to pursue and destroy his **enemies** so that they could not rise again.

The Lord also is a Support (vv. 42–46). David’s enemies called out to God **but** He would not answer them (v. 42). Instead He let David crush them (v. 43), and rule over them as well as over his own people (vv. 44–46).

Finally, David said that the Lord was his **Savior** (vv. 47–51). Though his enemies surrounded him and were about to destroy him, the Lord brought him through triumphantly. As a result David praised Him (v. 50) and acknowledged ⁸

⁸ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 479). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

acknowledged that all God's benefits of the past were tokens of His promised blessings on both **David and his descendants**, blessings which will endure **forever**.

B. David's Heroes (chap. 23)

2 Samuel 23:1–7. The list of David's mighty men is preceded by a short poem (vv. 1b–7) titled **the last words of David**. In the first stanza (v. 1) he identified himself as **son of Jesse ... the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob**, and **Israel's singer of songs**. There is a noticeable progress from the humble son of a Bethlehemite commoner to the poetically gifted king of Israel, a development which David attributed to his having been chosen and anointed by the Lord.

His consciousness of being God's instrument is clear from the second stanza (vv. 2–4), in which he acknowledged that God had spoken **to him (v. 3) and through him (v. 2)** to the nation, enabling him to rule righteously **in the reverential fear of God**. A king who rules as an agent of God is, he said, like the brilliance of the sun **on a cloudless morning** and like a clear day **after rain**.

In the third stanza (vv. 5–7) David centered on the Davidic **Covenant**, by which **God** chose and blessed him. God had made **an everlasting** commitment with him and his dynasty (**my house**), a covenant that guaranteed his ultimate well-being (cf. 7:8–16). In contrast, **evil men**, like so many **thorns**, will be cast aside to be consumed by the judgment of God (cf. Matt. 13:30, 41).

2 Samuel 23:8–39. David's gallery of heroes consisted of **37 men** (v. 39) who distinguished themselves by mighty exploits of service to God and Israel and who evidently made up his elite troops. These consisted of three **chief men** (vv. 8–17), two others of a second rank (vv. 18–23), and 32 in the longest list (vv. 24–39). (See the chart "David's Mighty Men.") Significant by its omission is any reference to **Joab**. Two of his ⁹ brothers—**Abishai** and **Asahel**—are listed (vv. 8, 24). Neither the author of Samuel nor that of the Chronicles felt it necessary, perhaps, to list Joab since he was the commander of the whole army throughout most of David's reign (20:23).

Though the spellings of several of the names differ in the corresponding list in 1 Chronicles 11:11–47, the names can usually be equated. The chronicler does, however, add names beyond the 37 in 2 Samuel. Perhaps they were men of lower ranks than those listed in Samuel or perhaps they replaced others (already listed) who had fallen in battle. **The first three were:**

- (a) **Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite**, who slew **800 men ... in one encounter** (2 Sam. 23:8; on the "300" in 1 Chron. 11:11 see comments there);
- (b) **Eleazar, son of Dodai the Ahohite**, who **struck down the Philistines** (2 Sam. 23:9–10) **at Pas Dammim** (1 Chron. 11:13; 1 Sam. 17:1); and
- (c) **Shammah son of Agee the Hararite**, who brought **great victory over the Philistines** (2 Sam. 23:11–12).

These **three** also displayed their courage by obtaining **water** from **Bethlehem** for **David** while he was besieged in the summer (**harvesttime**) by **the Philistines** at

⁹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 479–481). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Adullam (vv. 13–15; cf. 1 Sam. 22:1). So touched was **David** by their valor that he refused to **drink** the **water** but **poured it out** as an offering to **the LORD** (2 Sam. 23:16–17). Most scholars deny that the three involved are those just named since the word “three” has no definite article in the Hebrew text in verse 13. On the other hand, verse 17 implies that all the foregoing had been done by these three and this time the definite article is used.

Included in the second rank were **Abishai ... son of Zeruiah** (and nephew of David, 1 Chron. 2:15–16) who **was chief of the** second **3** (or “30,” NIV marg.) but not as exalted as the first 3 previously listed (2 Sam. 23:18–19; cf. 1 Sam. 26:6–11; 2 Sam. 10:14; 21:16–17), and **Benaiah**, who achieved notable victories over both men and a **lion** (23:20–23; cf. 8:18; 1 Kings 1:32, 36, 38; 2:35; 4:4).

The longest list consists of 32 men. Such a group normally consisted of 30 men but might have a few more or less and still be known as “the 30,” a technical term for a small military contingent known in Hebrew as *haššelošîm* (“the 30”). Or perhaps two had died in battle (including **Uriah the Hittite**, 2 Sam. 11:14–17) and were replaced.

C. David’s sin in taking the census (chap. 24)

2 Samuel 24:1–3. It is impossible to determine the date of this episode from 2 Samuel alone, but the parallel version in 1 Chronicles 21 places it just prior to David’s instructions to Solomon about building the temple (1 Chron. 21:28–22:19).

The census must have come late in David's reign, and may have been part of the plan of dynastic succession in anticipation of Solomon's coming to power.

For reasons not stated, **the LORD** was angry **against Israel** (the **again** of 2 Sam. 24:1 may refer to 21:1), and **He** led **David** to command that a census be taken. In 1 Chronicles 21:1 this motivation is attributed to (lit.) "a Satan" (or adversary). This is no contradiction for the Lord had simply allowed Satan to prompt David to an improper course of action in order that Israel might be punished and that David might be instructed. This is similar to the Lord's permitting Satan to trouble Job (Job 1:12; 2:6) and His allowing an evil spirit to torment Saul (1 Sam. 16:14; see comments there). In any case, the Lord Himself did not incite David to do evil for "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone" (James 1:13).

*The reasons for David's desire for a census are not clear either, though the fact that he only had military **men counted** (2 Sam. 24:2, 9) suggests that he was interested in determining his military strength. And herein lay the sin—he probably did this so he could boast in human might. This may be implied in Joab's query as to **why** the census was to be undertaken. God was able, ¹⁰ **Joab** said, to **multiply** their **troops** as much as necessary, so why did David feel the need to assess his strength?*

2 Samuel 24:4–9. David prevailed, however, and sent census takers throughout the realm. Beginning in the Transjordan they **went** counterclockwise north to **Dan Jaan** (a variation of Dan), then west and southwest of **Sidon** and **Tyre**, throughout the

¹⁰ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 481). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

plains and valleys of Canaanite and Hivite (Horites or Hurrians) population, and south to **Beersheba**.

Finally, after **nine months and 20 days**, the report was given; there were **800,000** eligible fighting **men** in **Israel** and **500,000** in **Judah** (v. 9). The figures in 1 Chronicles are 1,100,000 men in Israel and 470,000 in Judah, but the chronicler wrote that the Levites and Benjamites were not included (1 Chron. 21:5–6). The reconciliation of the data may lie in the possibility that 1,100,000 describes the grand total for Israel including the standing army which consisted of 12 units of 24,000 men each (288,000, 1 Chron. 27:1–15) plus 12,000 especially attached to Jerusalem and the chariot cities (2 Chron. 1:14). These 300,000 subtracted from 1,100,000 would yield the 800,000 figure in 2 Samuel 24:9. Also the chronicler may not have included the 30,000-man standing army of Judah (6:1) whereas they were included in chapter 24. This would raise the 470,000 total of Chronicles to the 500,000 of Samuel. This is only one solution, but with so little information available as to how the sums were obtained nothing further can be said with certainty.

2 Samuel 24:10–25. After **David** received the report, he realized his sin of pride and self-sufficiency and confessed this sin (which he called **a very foolish thing**) to the **LORD** (1 Chron. 21:7 points out that the Lord punished Israel, thus indicating the evil of the census). **The Lord then sent Gad, a prophet, to David with a list of three calamities from which he could choose and by which the Lord would register His displeasure and purge out the evil.** The choices were **three years of famine ... three**

months of enemy pursuit, and ¹¹ **three days of** pestilence (2 Sam. 24:13). (Though the Heb. reads “seven” years of famine, 1 Chron. 21:12, probably a better-preserved text, reads “three,” as the NIV has it.) **David** chose the third option, throwing himself on the **mercy** of God (2 Sam. 24:14).

The result was a **plague** which took the lives of **70,000** people. When **Jerusalem** itself was threatened, **the LORD** intervened and commanded His angelic destroyer to desist. **David** then confessed his own personal sin and urged **the LORD** to spare His innocent people. Then, in order to make proper restitution and atonement, **David** arranged to construct **an altar to the LORD**. **Gad** told him that it must be built **on the threshing floor of Araunah**, a citizen of Jerusalem, since it was there that **the angel** had been commanded to cease his destruction of the city (v. 16).

According to well-founded tradition, this **threshing floor**, a wide, smooth, ledge-like surface, was on Mount Moriah, just outside the northern wall of David’s Jerusalem. But David had no right to it because it was owned by a citizen. When **Araunah** learned of David’s desire (v. 21), however, he was willing not only to give the threshing floor **to the king** but also to provide the **wood** and sacrifices needed (v. 22). To this gracious offer David could only give a negative response. How could he **sacrifice to the LORD** what **cost** him **nothing**? That would be a denial of the very meaning of sacrifice. **Araunah** therefore sold him the **threshing floor** and **oxen** for **50 shekels of silver** (the 600 shekels of gold in 1 Chron. 21:25 includes, however, “the site,” more than just the threshing floor). Fifty shekels was about 1 1/2 pounds

¹¹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 481–482). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

of silver. The silver David paid was only for the oxen and the threshing floor, and the 600 shekels (15 pounds of gold) mentioned in 1 Chronicles 21:25 was for the lot of land surrounding the threshing floor.

Having obtained the site, **David built the altar**, offered the sacrifices, and interceded on behalf of his people. God heard and **answered**,¹² and **the land** was healed of **the plague**. This was where Abraham had offered Isaac (Gen. 22:2). And on this same spot Solomon later constructed his magnificent temple (1 Chron. 22:1; 2 Chron. 3:1).

¹² Merrill, E. H. (1985). [2 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 482). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.