

David Expands the Kingdom

2 Samuel 8

2 Samuel 8 - *“After this it came to pass that David attacked the Philistines and subdued them. And David took Metheg Ammah from the hand of the Philistines. ² Then he defeated Moab. Forcing them down to the ground, he measured them off with a line. With two lines he measured off those to be put to death, and with one full line those to be kept alive. So the Moabites became David’s servants, and brought tribute. ³ David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his territory at the River Euphrates. ⁴ David took from him one thousand chariots, seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. Also David hamstringed all the chariot horses, except that he spared enough of them for one hundred chariots.*

⁵ *When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand of the Syrians.*

⁶ *Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became David’s servants, and brought tribute. So the LORD preserved David wherever he went. ⁷ And David took the shields of gold that had belonged to the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸ Also from Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took a large amount of bronze.*

⁹ *When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated all the army of Hadadezer, ¹⁰ then 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, articles of gold, and articles of bronze. ¹¹ King David also dedicated these to the LORD, along with the silver and gold that he had dedicated from all the nations which he had subdued— ¹² from Syria, from Moab, from the people of Ammon, from the Philistines, from Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah.*

¹³ *And David made himself a name when he returned from killing eighteen thousand Syrians in the Valley of Salt. ¹⁴ He also put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David’s servants. And the LORD preserved David wherever he went. ¹⁵ So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered judgment and justice to all his people. ¹⁶ Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; ¹⁷ Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were the priests; Seraiah was the scribe; ¹⁸ Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David’s sons were chief ministers.”*

Background Notes

The Davidic Covenant was an unconditional and eternal covenant that God made with David and his descendants (2 Samuel 7). This Covenant will be completely fulfilled in the future when Jesus Christ, David’s descendant and greater Son, will return as King. He will set up His throne in Jerusalem, and He will reign over Israel and the whole world. The

Davidic Covenant included the promise that all of Israel's enemies would be defeated, that Israel would be established in the Land, and would have rest from all her enemies. 2 Samuel 7:10-11 - *"Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house."*

In 2 Samuel 8, we see God making good on that Covenant promise. David was given the military strength and strategy to defeat Israel's enemies one by one. David's expanded kingdom began to approach the boundaries of the Land of Promise that God had given to Abraham and his descendants - from Egypt to the Euphrates River. Aram was north of Israel (the Arameans were later the Syrians, as some translations read), and Zobah was north of Damascus. So, David actually continued the conquest of the Promised Land that had never been completed under Joshua.

All this historical information looks forward, of course, to the return of the Lord in judgment. At that time all the enemies of the restored and converted nation of Israel will be subdued. In fact, David's "harsh" treatment of Israel's enemies is a spiritual picture of the way the Lord will judge the nations and rule them with a rod of iron when He returns. Look at a description of the Lord's return to this earth in Revelation 19:11-16 - *"I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."* The return of the Lord will bring about a complete fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant!

According to Jewish tradition, after David had taken his parents to Moab for safety from King Saul (1 Samuel 22), the Moabites turned against David and killed his father and mother. That may explain why David put two-thirds of the captured Moabite army to the sword (v2). The fact that David kept one-third of them alive would actually have been considered an act of mercy in that day.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord helps committed believers in spiritual warfare.

David's victories and expansion of the kingdom of Israel look forward to the coming of Christ, when the Lord will return in victory and judgment to set up His earthly kingdom. They also portray principles for victory in spiritual warfare now. All the battles that Israel fought in the Old Testament, right from the Exodus on throughout their history, in some way provide us with lessons about spiritual warfare. These battles may teach us about the tactics of our enemy in spiritual warfare, or they may give us principles for victory. In 2 Samuel 8 gives us some principles for victory in spiritual warfare.

a. **The enemy forces must be defeated, captured and destroyed.** We can't play games with Satan. We must be ruthless in dealing with enemy forces. Listen to the words of 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 - "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...*" We are to *demolish* all the strongholds and arguments of the enemy. *Everything* that sets itself up against the knowledge of God must be *destroyed!* That principle for spiritual warfare is illustrated in 2 Samuel 8, in the way David dealt with Israel's surrounding enemies. In spiritual warfare, our enemy forces must be defeated, captured and destroyed.

b. **The Lord helps committed believers in spiritual warfare.** Look at the end of verses 6 and 14: "...*the LORD preserved David wherever he went...*" David was committed to expanding the kingdom of Israel and defeating the enemies of God, so that the Land originally given by God to Abraham could be fully possessed by His people. In the same way, committed believers desire to defeat our spiritual enemies and expand the kingdom of God. Just as David's plans were in line with God's plans and the Lord greatly helped David, so He will help committed believers in spiritual warfare today.

2. The Lord helps committed believers in spiritual administration.

Verses 15-18: "*So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered judgment and justice to all his people. Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were the priests; Seraiah was the scribe; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites [elite military troops]; and David's sons were chief ministers.*" David not only administered justice and righteousness for all his people, but he organized job assignments so the work was done efficiently. Just as the Lord helped David to administer his kingdom with righteousness and efficiency, the Lord will help committed believers today with spiritual administration. Whether it is spiritual leaders in the church or directors of Christian ministries, the Lord will help us to be more efficient and effective if we look to Him and ask for His guidance. God is not a God of disorder and inefficiency! He will provide the right people and resources to properly administer whatever He has called us to do. The Lord helps committed believers in spiritual administration.

Practical Application

Assume that there are no contradictions in the Bible!

We should assume that there are no contradictions in the Bible. Why? Because the Bible is God's Word, it is therefore inerrant. The original Biblical documents contain *no errors* because the Bible is the *inspired* Word of God. So, we should assume that there are no contradictions in the Bible. In this chapter there are several apparent contradictions with other Scripture, but like all other supposed "contradictions" in the Bible, they can easily be explained.

2 Samuel 8:4 says, “*David took from him one thousand chariots, seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers.*” The parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 18:4 says, “*David took from him one thousand chariots, seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers.*” Most likely the “7,000” in the 1 Chronicles data is correct, and the “700” is a copyist’s error in 2 Samuel 8. Early manuscripts of 2 Samuel 8 support the 1 Chronicles reading.

Another apparent contradiction is in verse 13: “*And David made himself a name when he returned from killing eighteen thousand Syrians in the Valley of Salt.*” The parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 18:12 says, “*Moreover Abishai the son of Zeruiah killed eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.*” The Valley of Salt was southwest of Israel where Edom was located, thus “Edomites” in the 1 Chronicles data is probably correct, and “Syrians” is a copyist’s error in 2 Samuel 8. In addition, there are early manuscripts of 2 Samuel 8 that support the reading in 1 Chronicles. Abishai, David’s nephew would have fought under David’s command, so both were given credit for the victory.

2 Samuel 8:17 says that Ahimelech was the son of Abiathar, but we’ve seen in our studies of Samuel that Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech. This apparent contradiction is easily resolved: Abiathar’s father and son were both named Ahimelech – thus Abiathar was both son and father of Ahimelech. As is the case in many families today, the grandson was given his grandfather’s name.

Apparent contradictions in the Bible are usually very easy to explain. Because the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we should simply *assume* that there are *no* contradictions in the Bible!