

2 Samuel 23:1-39

The Last Words of David, and David's Mighty Men

These are not really his last words. He later gives instructions to Solomon on his deathbed. But this is his last inspired utterance which, like the Psalms, expresses the thought and attitude of Christ, and is spoken through the Holy Spirit.

2 Samuel 23:1 - "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,"

The Targum calls these words a prophecy, and takes them to be a prophecy of the Messiah: "These are the words of the prophecy of David, which he prophesied concerning the end of the world, concerning the days of consolation that should come."

Remember, David is a type of the Messiah, and the Psalms in many ways reflect the thoughts of Jesus.

Jesus told his disciples after His resurrection:

- **Luke 24:27** - "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

- **Luke 24:44-45** - "Jesus said to them, "These are the words I spoke to you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures..."

2 Samuel 23:2 - "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue."

This is a description of the Spirit's inspiration - it was not David's own creativity or cleverness. He recognized that the Lord Himself was using him directly.

2 Samuel 23:3 - "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

This was how David had ruled, and would be the same for the Messiah:

- **2 Samuel 8:15** - "Thus David reigned over all Israel and administered justice and righteousness for all his people."

The Targum applies these words to the Messiah: "The true Judge said, he would appoint to me a King, who is the Messiah, who shall arise and rule in the fear of the Lord."

2 Samuel 23:4 - "And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even

a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

Indeed, the Messiah is called the true light that shines, **John 1:9**; the morning star, **Revelation 22:16**; the dayspring from on high, **Luke 1:78**; the sun of righteousness, **Malachi 4:2**; and light of the world, **John 8:2**; his going forth or appearance in human nature, at his incarnation, was as the morning, **Hosea 6:3**.

"as the tender grass" - This image is taken up later by Isaiah, with the additional information that Christ's coming forth was in spite of inhospitable conditions. The "clear shining" of the sun and the nourishing rain were supernatural and come from God.

- **Isaiah 53:2-3** - "He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no stately form or majesty to attract us, no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Like one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not."

2 Samuel 23:5 - "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."

David did not come from a such a bright and shining lineage - he was a shepherd, a son of Jesse and of lowly status. And his "house" had been torn apart by rebellion. But the covenant made between God and David's house was eternal, stable and would not be shaken - despite persecutions, heresies, temptations, backsliding and scandals the Kingdom of Christ would continue, increase and advance.

The Davidic Covenant:

- **2 Samuel 7:12-13** - "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever."

Confirmed by the Prophets:

- **Isaiah 9:6-7**- "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from that time and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will accomplish this."

- **Jeremiah 23:5-6** - "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He will reign wisely as King and will administer justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will

dwell securely. And this is His name by which He will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness."

Fulfilled in Jesus:

- **Luke 1:31-33** - "Behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end!"

What does he mean: "although he make it not to grow"?

David's outlook for his house at this point was grim. His family was decimated and now he was entering the end of his life.

He was expressing the hope of **Habakkuk 3:17** - "Though the fig tree does not bud and no fruit is on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though the sheep are cut off from the fold and no cattle are in the stalls, yet I will exult in the LORD; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!"

2 Samuel 23:6-7 - "But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands: But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place."

Thorns can't be handled with bare hands. They have to be cut down with a blade or axe or weapons of war.

"Belial" comes from two common words: *beli-* (בְּלִי "without-") and *ya'al* (לַעֲלֹ "to be of value") or "worthless" and therefore can also mean "ruin" or "destruction" indicating this person's final end and where his counsel leads.

By the time of Paul, Belial was equated with Satan:

- **2 Corinthians 6:14-16** - "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership can righteousness have with wickedness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement can exist between the temple of God and idols?"

A "son of Belial" is a man worthless to God. Belial is usually associated with idolatry. To have a heart of Belial is to be selfish and wicked, "without a yoke" i.e. without the yoke of heaven or the Law, lawless.

For instance, "the sons of Eli were sons of Belial" (**1 Samuel 2:12**) i.e. ruled by the evil inclination.

- **Deuteronomy 13:13** - "Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known"

The Targum refers these words to the Day of Judgment "when they [the sons of Belial], whose end, like thorns, is to be burnt, will be cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone."

To be "utterly burned with fire" is also the destiny of the chaff in the Pentecost threshing floor analogy.

The List of David's Mighty Men

These were all military men under David's general Joab, and are distinguished into three classes; the first and highest consisted of three only, who were general officers; and the second also of three, who perhaps were colonels of regiments; and the third of thirty, who were captains of thousands and hundreds.

This roll call of noble warriors comes just after David's word against the "sons of Belial." The men in the list represent the various ways of attacking and defeating the temptations, pride and rebellion that Satan puts in our hearts to lure us away from Christ. Or maybe it's discouragement, or fear, or unforgiveness, or hatred of our brother. Each enemy is met with the right skills, weapons and temperament for the job, as supplied by God.

The point of this is that although the sons of Belial and enemies of the kingdom are doomed and destined for the lake of fire, their defeat depends of God using us to "revenge the disobedience" as Paul says. Spiritual warfare - although opposing principalities and powers and wickedness on high - is fought out in the inward places of the heart and mind as we release ourselves in surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit.

These warriors are tools of David/ the Messiah that He uses to overcome, and they operate at His command.

- **Revelation 3:21** - "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

And we must remember that it is God fighting through us, in the person of Christ, not we alone in our own strength:

- **Isaiah 59:16-17** - "And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak."

Remember there was another "mighty man of Valor" mentioned in Judges - Gideon. He

had to realize, like Paul, that ...

- **2 Corinthians 12:9** - "(God's) strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

This also reminds us that faith is the conduit for God's power.

Jesus marveled at the faith of the Centurian - someone who understood military discipline:

- **Matthew 8:8-9** - "The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

2 Samuel 23:8 - Adino the Eznite - He was not dismayed by the numbers against him. He stood up to 800, whom he slew at one time.

2 Samuel 23:9-10 - Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite - He persevered although he was weary and alone. His hand "clave unto the sword" - the "sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

2 Samuel 23:11-12 - Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite - He "stood his ground" here in a field of lentils. But in 1 Chronicles 11:13 it is called a field of barley. The Targum says it was half one and half the other. Barley is the poor grain that made up the first fruit offering representing the resurrection. Lentils were the ingredients of the pulse that tested Esau to sell his birthright.

2 Samuel 23:13-17 - Water from the Well of Bethlehem

David was holed up, possibly in the cave of Adullam. The valley where the Philistines gathered (see **2 Samuel 5**) was named Rephaim, after the Rephaim ("giants") - the giants or the Anakim or Zamzummim who were descendants of the Fallen Angels who mated with human women in Genesis 6 producing the Nephilim. The meaning of the term Rephaim includes the quality of being "dead, extinct or powerless."

The Valley of the Rephaim connected to the Valley of Hinnom (Gehennah) that ran beside Jerusalem and the future Temple area. A Philistine garrison also occupied Bethlehem, where David grew up, about 6 miles from Jerusalem.

The association of the Philistines (of whom Goliath and his brothers were allies) with the Rephaim tells us that spiritually all the deceptive thoughts of the enemy and of self are already "dead, extinct and powerless."

2 Samuel 23:15 - "And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!"

David's physical thirst was a picture of spiritual thirst. He thirsted after the coming of the Messiah, his descendant, to be born at Bethlehem, and the living water which he only can give, John 4:10.

2 Samuel 23:16 - "And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD."

They risked their life to carry out the desire of King David.

2 Samuel 23:17 - "And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men."

But David would not drink the water that they risked their life for.

It's similar to what David told Ornan when buying the threshing floor on which the Temple would be built:

- **1 Chronicles 21:24** - "Then King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will surely buy it for the full price, for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings with that which costs me nothing."

He understood that drinking the living water of the Spirit requires an exchange of your life for Christ's life, a recognition of the shed blood of His sacrifice by reckoning self as dead (**Romans 6:11-14**).

- **Matthew 16:24-25** - "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

2 Samuel 23:18-19 - Abishai the brother of Joab - He was also not troubled by superior numbers but slew 300. His many other actions : he went down with David into Saul's camp, and took away his spear and cruse **1 Samuel 26:6**; he relieved David when in danger from Ishbibenob the giant, **2 Samuel 21:16**; he beat the Edomites, and slew eighteen thousand of them in the valley of salt, **1 Chronicles 18:12**.

2 Samuel 23:20 - Benaiah the son of Jehoiada - slew two lionlike men of Moab and "a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow." The Aramaic translation has "two giants of Moab."

Moab usually signifies false religion or idolatry trying to seduce Israel (as in **Numbers 25**). And a lion is sometimes a biblical image of the Evil One.

- **1 Peter 5:8-9** - "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring

lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith..."

Benaiah even went into the pit or cave to confront the lion on his own turf, sort of like Phinehas entering the tent and spearing the fornicating idolatrous couple.

Rabbi Gedaliah Schorr (1910-1979) notes - just as one dares not relax his concentration for even an instant when fighting a lion, so one must study Torah with total concentration.

Benaiah also confronted an Egyptian warrior almost as tall as Goliath (**1 Chronicles 11:23** adds "five cubits high; and in the Egyptian's hand was a spear like a weaver's beam") with only a staff, "and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear."

Egypt represents enslavement to the temptations and value systems of the world, and this Egyptian is here connected to the Nephilim giants.

God often arranges for our idolatries to conflict and contradict one another, which leads us to repentance. This is similar to taking the enemies weapon and turning it against him.

- **Jeremiah 2:19** - "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts."

2 Samuel 23:23 - "He was more honorable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three. And David set him over his guard."

i.e. he was fourth in honor and capabilities, so David set him over his personal guard, the Cherethites and Pelethites.

The Thirty

Next comes a list of 30 valiant soldiers. Actually there are 15 verses each containing two names. They come from all over the geography of the Promised Land, so that in a sense the whole land is represented.

The number 15 resonates with the 15 Psalms of Ascent sung by pilgrims going up to Jerusalem. Each psalm contains vital truths that can dispel attacks of the enemy.

(See https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/429856/jewish/The-Fifteen-Steps.htm)

Rav Chisda asked "a certain rabbi" why King David composed these fifteen Songs of Ascents to begin with. The rabbi replied that when King David had begun the

excavations for the place of the Temple's altar, the waters of the subterranean deep rushed upwards and threatened to engulf the planet.

King David thought to inscribe the name of God on a piece of earthenware and cast it into the waters. His teacher, Achitofel, ruled that it would be permissible to do so based on the following reasoning: if, for the sake of harmony between a husband and his wife whom he suspects of infidelity, God commands us to erase His name by placing the parchment into a container of water and giving it to the woman to drink, then it is certainly permissible for King David to cast the divine name into the surging waters to bring peace to the entire world! The particular divine name that King David wrote was *Yud-Hei*, which bears the numerical value of fifteen, from **Isaiah 26:4**, "For in God (*Yud-Hei*) is the strength of the worlds."

King David immediately cast the name into the waters, which then subsided sixteen levels. King David realized this threatened the world's need for water, and therefore he voiced fifteen Songs of Ascents that brought the waters back up to a safe and useful level.

It is 15 days between Rosh Hashanah and Tabernacles. There were also 15 steps leading up from the court of women to the court of the Israel. The offerers would ascend the 15 steps on Tabernacles with offerings, and then descend to receive blessing and delight from God.

This list of 30 warriors reflect the 15 steps up and then 15 down in the Temple.

Uriah

Perhaps the most interesting addition to this list is Uriah the Hittite, who David had murdered after his adultery with Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 23:39 - "Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all."

37 by reckoning the three mighty men of the first class, the three of the second, and the third class consisting of thirty men, whose names are listed, plus Joab the general and head of them all who is not mentioned.

Uriah is included at the end to induce humility in David by reminding him of his sin. Although Christ removes our sin "as far as the east is from the west," if we turn our thoughts to focus on self, our sin is ever before our face, which hopefully will bring us to repentance and turning back to Him.

In that sense Uriah - the constant representative of the consequences of sin - is always positioned to battle against our pride.