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# The Victories of David

## 2 Samuel 8

*Mark Schindler, for Russ Kennedy*

Victory parades at the end of a war have long been human traditions. From Alexander the Great, to the Roman conquests, to the great World Wars, victory over the enemy was celebrated. I want to read to you a celebration song written by David, **Psalm 60:1–12**. The heading tells us what was being celebrated and the instructive purpose of the celebration song. Yes, the Psalm also seems to have a warning element in it. So, hear the Word of God...

*To the choirmaster: according to Shushan Eduth. A Miktam of David; for instruction; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and when Joab on his return struck down twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt.*

<sup>1</sup> *O God, you have rejected us, broken our defenses;  
you have been angry; oh, restore us.*

<sup>2</sup> *You have made the land to quake; you have torn it open;  
repair its breaches, for it totters.*

<sup>3</sup> *You have made your people see hard things;  
you have given us wine to drink that made us stagger.*

<sup>4</sup> *You have set up a banner for those who fear you,  
that they may flee to it from the bow. Selah*

<sup>5</sup> *That your beloved ones may be delivered,  
give salvation by your right hand and answer us!*

<sup>6</sup> *God has spoken in his holiness:  
"With exultation I will divide up Shechem  
and portion out the Vale of Succoth.*

<sup>7</sup> *Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine;  
Ephraim is my helmet;  
Judah is my scepter.*

<sup>8</sup> *Moab is my washbasin;  
upon Edom I cast my shoe;  
over Philistia I shout in triumph."*

<sup>9</sup> *Who will bring me to the fortified city?  
Who will lead me to Edom?*

<sup>10</sup> *Have you not rejected us, O God?  
You do not go forth, O God, with our armies.*

<sup>11</sup> *Oh, grant us help against the foe,  
for vain is the salvation of man!*

<sup>12</sup> *With God we shall do valiantly;  
it is he who will tread down our foes.*

So this Psalm celebrates one of the great milestones in 2 Samuel. We have seen several of them in the last chapters.

They form a structure and a story that looks like this.

- The Consolidation of David as the King (Ch.5)
  - The Presence of the Ark in Jerusalem (Ch.6)

- The Promise of the Throne in Jerusalem (Ch.7)

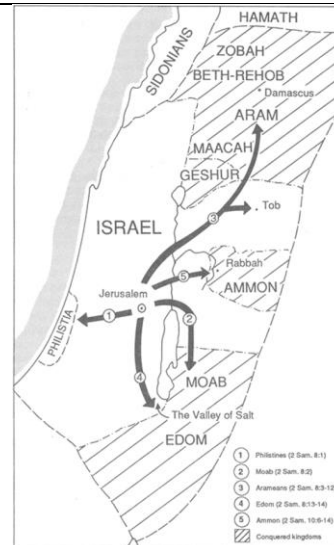
- The Consolidation of Israel in the Land (Ch. 8)

Our author records this to show:

1. That God has begun to fulfill the promise He made to David;
2. That God has used David to decisively defeat the enemies around Israel;
3. That David dedicated the riches he acquired through warfare to God and to the nation;

It is important to note that since the last chapter spoke of David being at rest, the events of this chapter probably precede the ones before it. In other words, what the author is doing, is showing us how God brought Israel rest. It is another example of where biblical history or a story not necessarily putting the events together chronologically. Rather, the author has a thematic and structural purpose for ordering things as he does.

So let's follow the course of these great victories that David wrought. Here is a map of these campaigns.



### [Opening Prayer]

#### Victory over the Primary Enemies (v. 1-8)

Please open you Bibles and turn to 2 Samuel 8, Verse as we start in our text this evening. In the first two verses we the first set of victories is over enemies who are most dangerous to Israel. Follow along as I read.

*<sup>1</sup> After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and David took Metheg-amah out of the hand of the Philistines.*

*<sup>2</sup> And he defeated Moab and he measured them with a line, making them lie down on the ground. Two lines he measured to be put to death, and one full line to be spared. And the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute.*

- **The Defeat of the Philistines (v. 1)**

The Philistines have long been trouble for Israel. Saul made a few half-hearted attempts to deal with them. When David became the military commander under Saul, he led several very significant campaigns that deeply eroded their military might. But now David breaks their back and they are subdued.

We find that the defeat of the Philistines is completed in the capture of their largest city. The Philistines were a loose collection of city-states. So the loss of their largest city would have brought an end to their seeking to control the eastern seaboard of Israel and their being a thorn in their side.

- **The Destruction of the Moabites (v. 2)**

First, we see that they are slaughtered... Two thirds of the defeated army are killed. While this may seem brutally harsh to us, this was how wars were fought and ended during this time. To leave an enemies army strong only mean their eventual return as a threatening power.

Second, they are made servants. They are made subjects of David and are required to pay a tribute or tax to Israel. The tribute not only brought wealth to Israel, but it also served to keep the conquered nation from using money to fund an army or fund a treaty with country who might attack them.

- **The Despoiling of the Arameans (v. 3-8)**

Before we look at the next part of this passage, let me note that Zobah and Syria are places we will see here, but they were both occupied by Aramean peoples. Let's look at verses 3 through 8.

*<sup>3</sup> David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his power at the river Euphrates. <sup>4</sup> And David took from him 1,700 horsemen, and 20,000 foot soldiers. And David hamstringed all the chariot horses but left enough for 100 chariots. <sup>5</sup> And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down 22,000 men of the Syrians. <sup>6</sup> Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David and brought tribute. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. <sup>7</sup> And David took the shields of gold that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup> And from Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took very much bronze.*

Remember that God had given all of the land from the Euphrates to the Nile Rivers to Israel. This was their land. All of these peoples who were still living in the land either were to be expelled or subjugated. This is what David did in these great victories.

- **By Annihilating their Armies (v. 3-5)**

David's victories are noteworthy here as he annihilates Israel's enemies. To us some of this sounds bloody, cruel and not in line with our concepts of a just war and the Geneva Conventions. But these were battles to gain and hold control of their homeland. God had commanded Israel to deal decisively with these people. David is ensuring that these people groups will not be able to raise effective rebellions within or along the borders of Israel for a very long time.

- **By Establishing his Garrisons (v. 6)**

Next, David establishes military garrisons throughout the various regions he has conquered. These garrisons there to quell rebellions and provide military security. Jewish settlers began moving into the areas establishing settlements and villages. Eventually, Israel would become the dominant peoples living in these areas.

Our author reminds us that this was God's doing. God has given these victories to David and to Israel. They have had to fight the battles and wisely establish the people in the conquered territories. But, they do so authorized and enabled by Yahweh.

- **By Confiscating their Wealth (v. 7-8)**

David also confiscated their wealth. He took their shields made of gold – imagine that, these warriors went into battle against David and his army carrying shields plated in gold. Even assuming only half of them carried them, there would be 10,000 to 18,000 shields. ... made of gold. And he took much bronze. David came home from these battles with enormous treasures of spoil.

So our author makes the point that it is the Lord who gave David victory wherever he went. This is the key to the structure that we are following here. As one author noted, "These were not 'easy' victories, but triumphs of divine power and human blood, sweat, toils and tears. The fruits were all the sweeter for that and the Lord all the closer as the object of his people's worship." (Keddie, The Triumph of the King, The Message of 2 Samuel, p. 10)

## Treasure Dedicated to the Lord (v. 9-12)

As we move on, we see that David's greatness was not only in his victories over his enemies, but also in a victory over himself. Consider that all of the treasures and tribute would normally have gone to the king. But David did something else that is characteristic of such a godly man. Follow along as I read verses 9 through 12.

<sup>9</sup> When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, <sup>10</sup> Toi sent his son Joram to King David, to ask about his health and to bless him because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him, for Hadadezer had often been at war with Toi. And Joram brought with him articles of silver, of gold, and of bronze. <sup>11</sup> These also King David dedicated to the Lord, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, <sup>12</sup> from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

- **The Tribute Freely Offered (v. 9-10)**

King Toi is no fool. Rather than present his own armies and peoples to be slaughtered, he submitted to David's rule without a fight. To signify that, he sent his son loaded down with all different kinds of things made from silver, gold and bronze. He wisely honors David for defeating a common enemy. He subjects his kingdom to David and pays a tribute.

- **The Spoils Taken in War (v. 11-12)**

All of the treasures that David had taken as the spoils of war and the all tribute both exacted and freely given, David had a right to as king. He could have enriched himself. But instead, he dedicated it to the Lord. He gave it to God. This was his way of publically acknowledging that God had given him the victories. Just as the victory is the Lords, so David are its spoils.

## Victory over the Last Enemy (v. 13-14)

Here our author briefly relates the victory over the enemy to the south. Let's look at verses 13 and 14.

<sup>13</sup> And David made a name for himself when he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. <sup>14</sup> Then he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.

- **The Defeat of the Edomites (v. 13)**

Our author notes that David enhanced his reputation by finally and decisively defeating the Edomites. Like the Philistines, they had been a long and persistent disrupter of Israel's peace and purity. Once again we are struck by the count of the enemy dead but no published record of the loss of Israelite life. The magnitude of the victory is astounding.

- **The Building of Garrisons (v. 14)**

Once again we see David consolidating his gains by wisely establishing garrisons in the Edomite areas. Stationing soldiers here would be primarily to keep the Edomites subjugated. But again over time, many Israelites settled into this area building settlements and villages under the protection of the garrisons.

## The Establishment of the King's Court (v. 15-18)

David now establishes his court appointing people to its essential functions. Look at verses 15 through 18.

<sup>15</sup> So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people. <sup>16</sup> Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder, <sup>17</sup> and Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were priests, and Seraiah was secretary, <sup>18</sup> and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and David's sons were [advisors] priests.

- **David's Just Administration (v. 15)**

The government of David was characterized by justice and equity to all the people. He gave equal consideration to all parts of his nation and to all peoples in the nation. They were treated equally under the Law. No one had to fear that the Law was going to be applied differently to different groups. David saw to it that all was done in a way that was pleasing to God.

- **David's Governmental Appointments (v. 16)**

David continued to organize his kingdom with his appointments to governmental offices. Part of what is reflected here is the limited role of government that God had established in Israel. David appointed Joab over the military. Jehoshaphat was appointed to the office of recorder. He was to keep the official books of the kingdom. He was to keep a record of the nation's history and finances. David gave responsibilities to gifted men to lead Israel.

- **David's Religious Appointments (v. 17)**

David also appointed the official priests. Both of these men and their fathers had long and loyal service to David. They served the Lord and the king well.

- **David's Civil Appointments (v. 18)**

In a very interesting civil appointment, Benaiah is placed over two ethnic minorities living in Israel. He seems to be responsible to ensure their welfare and that they be treated equitably.

There is some discussion about what role David's sons were given. They would not be qualified to be priests which David would know very well. It is possible to translate the word here as "advisor" or "counselor". That would have been the common practice of the day and align better with the other Biblical historical books. So David appointed his sons as advisors. This would have helped them learn the art of governance while David would get opportunity to shape their thinking.

Keddie summarizes this whole section very well.

Foreign wars have been the ruin of many a nation. David was neither an adventurist nor a megalomaniac. He only waged the 'battles of the Lord'—those which the Lord commanded for the accomplishment of his covenant promises concerning the land of Israel (1 Samuel 18:17; 25:28). David did not neglect his government at home. He ruled impartially over 'all Israel', in other words, over every part of the kingdom, without prejudice to Judah over the rest. His was a 'just and right' administration 'for all his people'. And he delegated authority: military (Joab, 8:16), civil (Jehoshaphat, 8:16, and Seriah, 8:17), ecclesiastical (Zadok and Ahimelech, 8:17) and, startling to us in these days of the civil rights movement, that of minority peoples (Benaiah, 8:18). He also appointed his sons as advisers for his own executive role as king. All this was to provide for benevolent and efficient government. (Keddie, *The Triumph of the King, The Message of 2 Samuel*, p. 11)

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## Reflect and Respond

This chapter portrays David as the servant of God, who successively gains total victory over the Lord's enemies (8:1–8), dedicates the spoils of victory to the Lord (8:9–14) and executes his kingly calling in faithfulness to the Lord (8:15–18). (Keddie, *The Triumph of the King, The Message of 2 Samuel*, p. 66)

God used David, the great King, to overcome the enemies of God's people. He brought in great riches in treasure that was captured and tribute that was paid. He wisely organized the Kingdom so that the court could function. He took gifted, loyal and able men and set them over the important functions of the government.

Remember the Psalm? Listen to two of the stanzas again for in them is the theme, the thread that points us to the Messiah, to the Lord Jesus.

*<sup>4</sup> You have set up a banner for those who fear you,  
that they may flee to it from the bow. Selah*

*<sup>5</sup> That your beloved ones may be delivered,  
give salvation by your right hand and answer us!*

*<sup>11</sup> Oh, grant us help against the foe,  
for vain is the salvation of man!*

*<sup>12</sup> With God we shall do valiantly;  
it is he who will tread down our foes.*

We David as the Servant of God who obeys God in the mission he was given. David brings victory and rest to God's people. In David, we see Jesus, the greater David, who completed the Father's mission to bring deliverance to His beloved ones. He will grant His people salvation. Not from enemy nations. Jesus has gone against our perilous foes of sin and death. He has given us life and freedom from bondage. And not just for a season. Jesus has delivered and redeemed His people for eternity.

We see David as the victorious warrior King. David battles for God's people and God gives him the victory. Here again, we see Jesus who will help us in our battle against our foes, the world, the flesh and the devil. Just as David worked to win the battle, the victory was the Lord's. And as we work, God works through us. He has sovereignly ordained our battles and we will fight with all that we are. But our hope and strength is found in Christ. He has gone before us and defeated our foes.

In this Psalm we see David as the celebration poet who looks to God for strength and salvation. The Lord has set a banner over His people. The Lord is our refuge. The Lord is our salvation. The Lord is our answer. The Lord is our help. To seek any of these things without Him is simply foolishness. But David shows us that with God, we shall triumph and for He has defeated our enemies.

The greater David, the Lord Jesus, has already conquered triumphantly.

2 Corinthians 2:14–17

*<sup>14</sup> But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. <sup>15</sup> For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, <sup>16</sup> to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? <sup>17</sup> For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.*

Revelation 11:15–18

*<sup>15</sup> Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." <sup>16</sup> And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, <sup>17</sup> saying,*

*"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,  
who is and who was,  
for you have taken your great power  
and begun to reign.  
<sup>18</sup> The nations raged,  
but your wrath came,  
and the time for the dead to be judged,  
and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,  
and those who fear your name,  
both small and great,  
and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."*

Revelation 19:6–8

<sup>6</sup> Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

*“Hallelujah!  
For the Lord our God  
the Almighty reigns.  
<sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and exult  
and give him the glory,  
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,  
and his Bride has made herself ready;  
<sup>8</sup> it was granted her to clothe herself  
with fine linen, bright and pure”—  
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

Hallelujah, indeed!

[closing prayer]