

# 2 Samuel 23 - David's Last Words; David's Mighty Men

IV. Six appendices testifying to the greatness of the Davidic covenant (21:1—24:25)

(4) David's last words as a reminder of the Davidic covenant (23:1-7)

(5) David's mighty men (23:8-39)

## 2 Samuel 23

(4) David's last words as a reminder of the Davidic covenant (23:1-7)

1 Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse declares, The man who was raised on high, The anointed of the God of Jacob And the sweet psalmist of Israel, declares,

1 Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse declares, The man who was raised on high declares, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel,

1 This was David's last composition: The oracle of David, son of Jesse, an oracle by the valiant one who was exalted— anointed by the God of Jacob, the contented psalm writer of Israel.

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,  
- After looking back at David's life through Ps 18 (Cf. 2 Sam 22), David's last words call us to look to the future

2 "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me, And His word was on my tongue.

2 "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue.

2 The Spirit of the LORD speaks within me; his word is on my tongue!

2 The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.

- David's claim to divine inspiration is as strong as any NT claim (Cf. 2 Tim 3:16; Heb 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:19-21)

- This is an example of the Spirit unveiling something that has not been revealed before: the ministry of "revelation" of the Spirit in relation to Scripture

— See also Ezek 2:2; 8:3; 11:1,24; Micah 3:8; John 16:12-15; 1 Cor 2:9-10; 2 Peter 1:21. Also see [Holy Spirit](#) for a complete list of ministries of the Spirit.

- The list of David's mighty men is preceded by a short poem (v1-7) titled "The Last Words of David"

— 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

3 "The God of Israel said *it*; The Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over mankind righteously, Who rules *in* the fear of God,

3 "The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me, 'He who rules over men righteously, Who rules in the fear of God,

3 The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has talked to me. "When one is governing men justly, he fears God while governing.

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.

- David recognized God as the real Ruler of Israel

— This reference is messianic

4 Is like the light of the morning *when* the sun rises, A morning without clouds, *When* the fresh grass *springs* out of the earth From sunshine after rain.'

4 Is as the light of the morning *when* the sun rises, A morning without clouds, *When* the tender grass *springs* out of the earth, Through sunshine after rain.'

4 He is like dawn's first light, like bright sun blazing on a cloudless morning, glistening on grassland that flourishes after a rain shower.

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.

- His consciousness of being God's instrument is clear from the second stanza (v2-4), in which he acknowledged that God had spoken to him (v3) and through him (v2) 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

5 "Is my house not indeed so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, Properly ordered in all things, and secured; For will He not indeed make All my salvation and all *my* delight grow?

5 "Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, Ordered in all things, and secured; For all my salvation and all *my* desire, Will He not indeed make *it* grow?

5 Is not my dynasty like this with God? Has he not made an eternal covenant with me, preparing every detail of it? And he has made it secure, including my complete salvation,

has he not? He has been of continual help, has he not, even with respect to all of my desires?

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.

6 "But the worthless, every one of them, are like scattered thorns, Because they cannot be taken in hand;

6 "But the worthless, every one of them will be thrust away like thorns, Because they cannot be taken in hand;

6 But ungodly men are like thorns that are discarded because they cannot be safely handled.

6 But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands:

7 Instead, the man *who* touches them Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, And they will be completely burned with fire in *their* place."

7 But the man who touches them Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, And they will be completely burned with fire in *their* place."

7 Whoever handles them wears heavy duty clothing, carries strong tools, and burns them to ashes on the spot!

7 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.

- In the third stanza (v5-7) 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)

(5) David's mighty men (23:8-39) (Cf. 1 Chr 11:10-19)

**8** These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth, a Tahchemonite, chief of the captains; he was *called* Adino the Eznite because of eight hundred who were killed *by him* at one time.

**8** These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite, chief of the captains, he was *called* Adino the Eznite, because of eight hundred slain *by him* at one time;

**8** Here's a list of the names of David's special forces: Josheb-basshebeth the Tahkemonite was head of the Three; he was nicknamed Adino the Eznite because he killed 800 men in a single battle engagement.

**8** These be the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.

- David's gallery of heroes consisted of 37 men (v39) 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 (v8-17)

- Two others of a second rank (v18-23)

- 32 in the longest list (v24-39)

- The first three were:

(1) Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, who slew 800 men in one encounter (v8); 1 Chr 11:11 has 300: the Hebrew symbols for 300 and 800 look very similar, so it is likely a scribal error

(2) Eleazar, son of Dodai the Ahohite, who struck down the Philistines (v9-10) at Pas Dammim (1 Chr 11:13; Cf. Ephes Dammim in 1 Sam 17:1)

(3) Shammah son of Agee the Hararite, who brought great victory over the Philistines (v11-12)

These three also displayed their courage by obtaining water from Bethlehem for David while he was besieged in the summer (harvest time) by the Philistines at Adullam (v13-15; 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 (v16-17). Some scholars deny that the three involved are those just named since the word "three" has no definite article in the Hebrew text in v13. On the other hand, v17 implies that all the foregoing had been done by these three and this time the definite article is used.

Significant by its omission is any reference to Joab. Two of his brothers—Abishai and Asahel—are listed (v8,24). Neither the author of Samuel nor that of the Chronicles (1 Chr 11:11-47) 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 Chr 11:11-47, the names can usually be equated. The Chronicler does, however, add names beyond the 37 listed 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.

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 to battle and the men of Israel had withdrawn.

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 to battle and the men of Israel had withdrawn.

9 Next was Dodai the Ahohite's son Eleazar. Eleazar, who also was one of the Three, was with David when they challenged the Philistines. When the Philistines had assembled in battle array, the Israeli army retreated,

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 that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away:

10 He rose up and struck the Philistines until his hand was weary and it clung to the sword, and the LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder *the dead*.

10 He arose and struck the Philistines until his hand was weary and clung to the sword, and the LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to strip *the slain*.

10 but Eleazar remained standing right where he was and fought so hard against the Philistines that he became exhausted—he couldn't even let go of his sword! The LORD magnificently delivered them that day. After Eleazar had won the battle, the other soldiers returned, but only to strip the weapons and armor from the dead.

10 He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.

**11** Now after him was Shammah the son of Agee, a Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered into an army where there was a plot of land full of lentils, and the people fled from the Philistines.

**11** Now after him was Shammah the son of Agee a Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered into a troop where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the people fled from the Philistines.

11 Next was Shammah, Agee the Hararite's son. One time the Philistines assembled to fight in a field where lentils had been growing. Israel's army retreated from the Philistines,

11 And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines.

12 But he took his stand in the midst of the plot, defended it, and struck the Philistines; and the LORD brought about a great victory.

12 But he took his stand in the midst of the plot, defended it and struck the Philistines; and the LORD brought about a great victory.

12 but Shammah stood his ground in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. And the LORD brought about a great victory.

12 But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory.

- Defending a patch of lentils doesn't seem like the most heroic act, but during this time Israel needed food

— The Philistines would typically wait until crops were ready to harvest, then they would come ravaging, plundering and robbing

— In this instance, all the Israelites fled except for Shammah. One man, with a sword, against a troop of Philistines..."and the LORD brought about a great victory!

**13** Then three of the thirty chief men went down and came to David at harvest time to the cave of Adullam, while the army of the Philistines was camping in the Valley of Rephaim.

**13** Then three of the thirty chief men went down and came to David in the harvest time to the cave of Adullam, while the troop of the Philistines was camping in the valley of Rephaim.

**13** One day while the Philistine army was camping in the valley of giants, three of the 30 leaders joined David at the cave of Adullam.

**13** And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim.

14 David was then in the stronghold, while the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

14 David was then in the stronghold, while the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

14 David was living in that stronghold at the time, while a Philistine garrison was then at Bethlehem.

14 And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

15 And David had a craving and said, "Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!"

15 David had a craving and said, "Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!"

15 David expressed his longing, "Oh, how I wish someone would get me a drink of water from the Bethlehem well that's by the city gate!"

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!

16 So the three mighty men forced their way into the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate, and carried *it* and brought *it* to David. Yet he would not drink it, but poured it out as an offering to the LORD;

16 So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which 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;

16 So the Three elite warriors broke through the Philistine ranks, drew some water from the Bethlehem well that was next to the city gate, and brought it back to David. But he refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out in the LORD's presence,

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.

17 and he said, "Far be it from me, LORD, that I would do this! *Should I drink* the blood of the men who went at *the risk of* their lives?" So he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.

17 and he said, "Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this. *Shall I drink* the blood of the men who went in *jeopardy of* their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.

17 and said, "The LORD forbid that I drink this—this is the blood of men who endangered their own lives!" The Three elite warriors did these things.

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.

**18** Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of the thirty. And he swung his spear against three hundred and killed *them*, and had a name as well as the three.

**18** Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of the thirty. And he swung his spear against three hundred and killed *them*, and had a name as well as the three.

**18** Zeruah's son Abishai, Joab's brother, was the lieutenant in charge of the platoons. He used his spear to fight and kill 300 men, gaining a reputation distinct from the Three.

**18** And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them, and had the name among three. - Included in the second rank were Abishai, son of Zeruah (and nephew of David, 1 Chr 2:15-16) who was chief of the second three (or "30," NIV margin) but not as exalted as the first three previously listed (v18-19; 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).

19 He was the most honored among the thirty, so he became their commander; however, he did not attain to *the reputation* of the three.

19 He was most honored of the thirty, therefore he became their commander; however, he did not attain to the three.

19 He was more well-known than the Three, and became their commander, but he never measured up to the Three.

19 Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the first three.

**20** Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done great deeds, killed the two *sons of Ariel* of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion in the middle of a pit on a snowy day.

**20** Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done mighty deeds, killed the two *sons of Ariel* of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion in the middle of a pit on a snowy day.

**20** Jehoiada's son Benaiah, who was a valiant man, accomplished great things. He was from Kabzeel. He killed two men named Ariel from Moab and then he also went down into a pit and struck down a lion during a snow storm one day.

**20** And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow:

21 And he killed an Egyptian, an impressive man. Now the Egyptian *had* a spear in his hand, but he went down to him with a club and snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear.

21 He killed an Egyptian, an impressive man. Now the Egyptian *had* a spear in his hand, but he went down to him with a club and snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear.

21 He also killed a soldier from Egypt. Of handsome appearance, the Egyptian carried a spear, but Benaiah attacked him with a staff, snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear.

21 And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.

22 These *things* Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and had a name as well as the three mighty men.

22 These *things* Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and had a name as well as the three mighty men.

22 Benaiah did things like this and gained a reputation comparable to the Three warriors.

22 These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men.

23 He was honored among the thirty, but he did not attain *the reputation* of the three. And David appointed him over his bodyguard.

23 He was honored among the thirty, but he did not attain to the three. And David appointed him over his guard.

23 He was well known among the platoons, but he didn't measure up to the Three. David placed him in charge of his security detail.

23 He was more honourable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three. And David set him over his guard.

**24** Asahel the brother of Joab was among the thirty; *and there was* Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem,

**24** Asahel the brother of Joab was among the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem,

**24** Among the Thirty were Joab's brother Asahel, Dodo's son Elhanan of Bethlehem,

**24** Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem,

- 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 *hashelowshiyim* ("the 30")

— Or perhaps two had died in battle (including Asahel and Uriah the Hittite, 2 Sam 11:14-17) and were replaced

25 Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite,

25 Shammah the Harodite, Elika the Harodite,  
25 Shammah from Harod; Elika from Harod,  
25 Shammah the Harodite, Elika the Harodite,

26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite,  
26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite,  
26 Helez the Paltite, Ikkesh's son Ira from Tekoa,  
26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite,

27 Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite,  
27 Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite,  
27 Abiezer from Anathoth, Mebunnai the Hushathite,  
27 Abiezer the Anethothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite,

28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite,  
28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite,  
28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai of Netophah,  
28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite,

29 Heleb the son of Baanah the Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai of Gibeah of the sons  
of Benjamin,  
29 Heleb the son of Baanah the Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai of Gibeah of the sons  
of Benjamin,  
29 Baanah's son Heleb from Netophah, Ribai's son Ittai from Gibeah of the descendants of  
Benjamin,  
29 Heleb the son of Baanah, a Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai out of Gibeah of the  
children of Benjamin,

30 Benaiah a Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash,  
30 Benaiah a Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash,  
30 Benaiah from Pirathon, Hiddai from the Gaash creeks area,  
30 Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash,

31 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite,  
31 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite,  
31 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth from Bahurim,  
31 Abialbon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite,

32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan,  
32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan,  
32 Eliahba from Shaalbon, Jashen's sons,  
32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, of the sons of Jashen, Jonathan,

33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Ararite,  
33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Ararite,  
33 Shammah's son from Harar, Sharar the Hararite's son Ahiam,  
33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite,

34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maacathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,  
34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maacathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,  
34 Ahasbai the Maacathite's son Eliphelet, Ahithophel the Gilonite's son Eliam,  
34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,

35 Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite,  
35 Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite,  
35 Hezro from Carmel, Paarai the Arbite,  
35 Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite,

36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite,  
36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite,  
36 Nathan's son Igal from Zobah, Bani the Gadite,  
36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite,

37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armor bearers of Joab the son of Zeruiah,  
37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armor bearers of Joab the son of Zeruiah,  
37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai from Beeroth (the armor-bearer for Zeruiah's son Joab),  
37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armourbearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah,

38 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite,  
38 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite,  
38 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, and Uriah the Hittite—for a total of 37.  
38 Ira an Ithrite, Gareb an Ithrite,

39 *and* Uriah the Hittite; thirty-seven in all.

39 Uriah the Hittite; thirty-seven in all.

39 *and* Uriah the Hittite—for a total of 37.

39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all.