

Born to Win

The Book of Kings #1

by Ronald L. Dart

Abraham—the father of the faithful—is obviously the greatest figure in the Old Testament, but the greatest man in the history of *Israel* has to be King David. He was not only a king; he was a prophet. David was not a priest—he never attempted to usurp the office of the priesthood as Saul did—but he was a man after God’s own heart. He was a *man’s* man, a fighter, a man men could admire; men would follow him. And he was also a direct ancestor, in the direct line, of the Messiah to come. He was, simply put, a *type* of Christ.

The last two chapters of Samuel appear to contain appendices to David’s life and career. They are in no special order, but seem to have been copied on to the end of the scroll before it was finally considered finished. In 2 Samuel 23, we have what are said to be the last words of David. We’ll hear from him after this, but this seems to be what David wanted to be kind of a legacy.

2 Samuel 23

KJ2000

¹ Now these are 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,

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

³ The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, He that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

⁴ And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.

What a beautiful, clean statement of what God expects of a man who leads a people. And you can feel yourself almost *yearning* to have that kind of leadership. And yet one wonders, if we had it, if we would kill him. David, for his part, was *painfully* aware of his shortcomings. He added this addendum to that. He said:

2 Samuel 23

KJ2000

⁵ Although my house be not so with God; [...]

He said, “I’m sorry. I know that I don’t measure up to that statement, ‘he that rules over man must be just ruling in the fear of God.’”

2 Samuel 23

KJ2000

⁵ Although my house be not so with God; yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he makes it not to grow.

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

⁷ But the man that shall touch them must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place.

One category of leader, and another that can even be *touched* he is so thorny.

Now, what follows is a roster of a group of the greatest fighting men the world has ever seen. These were men who had to do their fighting man-to-man in hand-to-hand combat. They had to fight all day and, on occasion, all night as well. They were *strong* men; they were in *superb* condition. The term “mighty men”, as you see it in the Old Testament, designates fighters of the first order. As you read the names and the exploits of these men, you want to consider what kind of man you would have to be to *lead* these men, to command their loyalty, and even earn their love. The scripture lists them for us.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

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.

Now, I don't know that he is suggesting to us at all that this man was one man against 800 men and won the battle. I think what he is saying is that, in a battle in which all kinds of people were involved, he killed 800 opponents in that one battle. This man was a bull of the woods. He was #1. He was respected and probably feared, as well.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

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:

Now, this is a little different situation. There were three guys and David, and everybody else had run for their lives.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

¹⁰ He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword: [...]

When the battle was over they had to pry his fingers off that sword one at a time to get the thing out of his hand, he had held it *so tight* for so long.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

¹⁰ [...] and the LORD worked a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.

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 lentils: and the people fled from the Philistines.

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

That's an interesting thing about these guys: they are strong, they fight hard, they are brave, but the *real* reason why these great victories are won is because they trusted and looked to God.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

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

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

Which must have really galled these men—particularly David, because it was his hometown.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

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!

You know how it is. You're camped out with your bunch of buddies and you start talking about old times and good times and say, "Oh man, that was good! I wish I had some of that today." Well, these three mighty men, when David said, "I'd like to have some of that water":

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

¹⁶ [...] broke 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: [...]

They just went in and *got it*. That's the kind of men they were and it's also the kind of *regard* they had for David.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

¹⁶ [...] nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out to the LORD.

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.

You want to talk about war stories? Never forget these guys. And what a great example of leadership on the part of David. There is no swagger here; there's no bravado here; there's deep and profound responsibility. He realizes that, just sitting around a campfire and saying something that you wish you had, that these are the kind of men that would go get it. It carried an awful responsibility and he didn't want to encourage that kind of behavior in the future.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

¹⁸ And Abishai, [*We've heard of him.*] 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.

¹⁹ Was he not most honorable of three? therefore he was their captain: however, he attained not to the first three.

It's a little confusing as you read through as to who's who and what three is "three", but one thing is clear: you've got some fighting men in here that you really wouldn't want to mess with.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

²⁰ And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lion like men of Moab: [...]

Now, these apparently were very unusual, probably quite large, and very strong men.

2 Samuel 23

²⁰ he went down also and slew a lion in the middle of a pit in time of snow:

²¹ And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; [...]

And this *is* a story. He runs up against an Egyptian—a good fighter, a strong man who had a spear—and he didn't have anything with him except a staff.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

²¹ [...] 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.

These were not men to be trifled with.

2 Samuel 23

AKJV

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

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

30! Now you realize that we're getting to the place where we've got a lot of men in this category. There follows in the book a long list: apparently the top three, followed by four, and then the 30. 37 men in all named in this list of David's chief fighters. And there's one sad note. It almost hurts to read the last name on the list of these *loyal men*. His name: Uriah the Hittite—husband of Bathsheba—whose death David arranged. Uriah was no ordinary foot soldier; he was one of David's best.

2 Samuel, chapter 24 records another occasion, and it's kind of puzzling. Scholars, for generations, have wondered about some of the things they read in this chapter, but we'll just take a look at what's here.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

¹ And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah

Now, it's interesting—what it says is that he's angry against *Israel*, not necessarily against David. He said, "I want you to go number them." Now, why that's a big deal is a puzzle. It's one of those passages where we lack certainty about *what* happened in the first place, and "why" in the second place.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

² For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number you the people, that I may know the number of the people.

³ And Joab said to the king, Now the LORD your God add to the people, how many soever they be, an hundred times, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?

Somehow Joab sensed that this was a bad idea. It seems to have been kind of like a census, and some of have suggested that, rather than trust God for his salvation, David concluded he needed a draft of soldiers. However, the king's word prevailed over Joab and against the captains of the host who apparently didn't think it should be done, either.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

⁴ [...] And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.

They said, "We'll go do the job—but we don't think it's a good idea." Mind you, these are the men who *fought the wars* and they saw no reason to do the census.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

⁵ And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city that lies in the middle of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer:

All this is instructive if you have a good enough atlas to sit down and trace these place names. It'll give you a feeling for distances and the directions people were going. Some of the place names are probably unknown.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

⁶ Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtimhodshi; and they came to Danjaan, and about to Zidon,

⁷ And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah, even to Beersheba.

⁸ So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

It took them nearly ten months to do this census.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

⁹ And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people to the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

Now, it's interesting at this early time there was already a distinction being drawn between the men of Israel and the men of Judah. We'll probably see a lot more that later. Apparently though, at this point David could have fielded an army of 1,300,000 men. *We aren't told what for.* Well, David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people. When he saw that, he realized he had done something wrong.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

¹⁰ [...] And David said to the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech you, O LORD, take away the iniquity of your servant; for I have done very foolishly.

Again, we look at it and we say, “Why? What’s the big deal?” And, generally speaking, scholars look at this and think that it had to do with the fact that he was looking to *his armies*. Up until this point, he didn’t need to count his men; he just needed to consult God. Now he’s got to check on the number of men in the army.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

¹¹ For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David’s seer, saying,

¹² Go and say to David, Thus said the LORD, I offer you three things; choose you one of them, that I may do it to you.

¹³ So Gad came to David, and told him, and said to him, Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? or will you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? or that there be three days’ pestilence in your land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me.

¹⁴ And David said to Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

¹⁵ So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.

A three-day pestilence. You know what this sounds something like? It sounds something like a great influenza epidemic that killed off a bunch of people. We’ve become very familiar with how many millions can die from influenza in the great pandemic that happened early in the last century.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

¹⁶ And when the angel stretched out his hand on Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now your hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing place of Araunah the Jebusite.

¹⁷ And David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, [...]

Oh, David was allowed to *see* this great angel.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

¹⁷ [...] and said, See, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let your hand, I pray you, be against me, and against my father’s house.

¹⁸ And Gad came that day to David, and said to him, Go up, raise an altar to the LORD in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

¹⁹ And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded.

Now, this is a really important moment in history.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

²⁰ And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face on the ground.

²¹ And Araunah said, Why is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshing floor of you, to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people.

²² And Araunah said to David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood.

²³ All these things did Araunah, as a king, give to the king. [...]

Apparently, he was king among the Jebusites.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

²³ [...] And Araunah said to the king, The LORD your God accept you.

²⁴ And the king said to Araunah, No; but I will surely buy it of you at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God of that which does cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

There's a real lesson buried in that, and it's obvious—what's the value of giving something to God that didn't cost you anything. And so your offering should be something that *you personally* are giving up.

2 Samuel 24

AKJV

²⁵ And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

You know, if you have ever visited Israel in Jerusalem, you may very well have trod upon this threshing floor. We now call it the Temple Mount. It's the site of the Dome of the Rock. Now, this end 2nd Samuel, but the story doesn't end here. It continues on in the 1st Book of Kings.

1 Kings 1

AKJV

¹ Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he got no heat.

He's just an old man, the body functions are all going south on him, and he is so *cold* and there's nothing they can do.

1 Kings 1

AKJV

² Why his servants said to him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in your bosom, that my lord the king may get heat.

Well, you know, that's a pretty good bed-warmer, I guess. They didn't have the bed-warmers, didn't have electric heating pads or anything of the like, so they went out and got a young woman who was awfully good looking and they tucked her into bed with the king to see if they could warm him up. They finally found a girl; her name was Abishag the Shunammite and they brought her to the king. And the damsel was not just fair, she was:

1 Kings 1

AKJV

⁴ [...] very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not.

And, I think, by that it doesn't mean he didn't know who she was; it meant he did not know her, sexually.

1 Kings 1

AKJV

⁵ Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

⁶ And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why have you done so? and he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bore him after Absalom.

Oh, now the picture begins to become clear. I don't know what it was about this boy's mother—her name was Haggith. She was the mother of him and of Absalom, and *both* these boys were apparently spoiled rotten. David doted on them and wouldn't tell them, "No", about anything; whatever he wanted, he got it.

1 Kings 1

AKJV

⁷ And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him.

Well, you know, they thought, "Okay, he's the king's son and the brother of Absalom, and there's a very good chance, maybe, he's going to be the king", and they thought, "Well, why not? We can be one of his right-hand men."

1 Kings 1

AKJV

⁸ But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which belonged to David, were not with Adonijah.

And right off the bat, that should have told him that he was on *very dangerous ground*. Joab was a great man and a great fighter, but he wasn't enough.

1 Kings 1

AKJV

⁹ And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zohemoth, which is by Enrogel, and called all his brothers the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants:

¹⁰ But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not.

We have another attempt at a palace coup.

1 Kings 1

KJ2000

¹¹ Therefore Nathan spoke unto Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith does reign, and David our lord knows it not?

You know, with David becoming weaker there's a power vacuum and somebody is trying to step into it.

1 Kings 1*AKJV*

¹² Now therefore come, let me, I pray you, give you counsel, that you may save your own life, and the life of your son Solomon.

This sounds odd, maybe, but what he's talking about is simply this: "If Adonijah becomes king, your life will become worthless. He will kill you and he will kill Solomon because he can't leave you hanging around the edges of his kingdom, threatening it."

1 Kings 1*AKJV*

¹³ Go and get you in to king David, and say to him, Did not you, my lord, O king, swear to your handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne? why then does Adonijah reign?

I don't know how many times a king or a ruler or a president or a governor will hear this from people: "Didn't you say that this was so? Now, why then, is this happening?"

1 Kings 1*AKJV*

¹⁴ Behold, while you yet talk there with the king, I also will come in after you, and confirm your words.

¹⁵ And Bathsheba went in to the king into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite ministered to the king.

¹⁶ And Bathsheba bowed, and did obeisance to the king. And the king said, What would you?

¹⁷ And she said to him, My lord, you swore by the LORD your God to your handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne.

¹⁸ And now, behold, Adonijah reigns; and now, my lord the king, you know it not:

¹⁹ And he has slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, [...]

They're having a giant feast down there.

1 Kings 1*AKJV*

¹⁹ [...] and has called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon your servant has he not called.

²⁰ And you, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, that you should tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.

Everyone wants to know who your successor is going to be; they are looking to you to tell them.

1 Kings 1*AKJV*

²¹ Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders.

²² And, see, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in.

Right according to plan, according to script.

1 Kings 1

AKJV

²³ And they told the king, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground.

²⁴ And Nathan said, My lord, O king, have you said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne?

²⁵ For he is gone down this day, and has slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep [...]

We've got a big ol' feast going on down there—eating and drinking before him, before Adonijah. And they're saying:

1 Kings 1

AKJV

²⁵ [...] God save king Adonijah.

²⁶ But me, even me your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon, has he not called.

²⁷ Is this thing done by my lord the king, and you have not showed it to your servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?

Quite a speech, isn't it. And, of course, it confirmed everything that Bathsheba was saying. And David really needed this kind of help at this time of his life. So he said:

1 Kings 1

²⁸ [...] Call me Bathsheba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king.

²⁹ And the king swore, and said, As the LORD lives, that has redeemed my soul out of all distress,

³⁰ Even as I swore to you by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day.

³¹ Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

³² And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. [...]

(Benaiah, who is a fighting man.) They came before the king and got their instructions:

1 Kings 1

AKJV

³³ [...] Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon[.]

This may sound small to you and I, but riding the king's mule was an *extremely* important and significant thing to do in that age, in that time.

I'll have more next time.

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