

SECOND SAMUEL

Chapter 23

The Last Words of David

Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel: 2 “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by his word is on my tongue.
3 The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God,
4 he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. 5 “For does not my house stand so with God?
For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure.
For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?
6 But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away, for they cannot be taken with the hand;
7 but the man who touches them arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly consumed with fire.”

23:1–7 Luther wrote a treatise on this passage (AE 15:265–352), which teaches Christians to recognize prophecies about Christ and the Trinity in the OT. (TLSB)

23:1 *last words of David*. Probably to be understood as David’s last poetic testimony (in the manner of his psalms), perhaps composed at the time of his final instructions and warnings to his son Solomon (see 1Ki 2:1–10). (CSB)

Not the last words that David spoke, but his last will and testament. (TLSB)

anointed. Luth: “And what is it that he lauds so highly? He says: ‘In the first place it is that I am the man to whom God promised the Messiah [lit, “Anointed One”] of the God of Jacob, that the Messiah will descend from me’ ” (AE 15:271). (TLSB)

sweet psalmist. Luth: “To [saddened and wretched consciences], the Book of Psalms is a sweet and delightful song because it sings of and proclaims the Messiah” (AE 15:273–74). (TLSB)

23:2 *The Spirit of the LORD speaks y me*. David was conscious of God’s Spirit at work in him enabling him to speak under the Spirit’s guidance. (CSB)

Luth: “Here he begins to talk about the exalted Holy Trinity, of the divine essence. In the first place, he mentions the Holy Spirit” (AE 15:275). (TLSB)

23:3 *God of Israel*. Luth: “Which Person of the Godhead this Speaker is we Christians know from the Gospel of John. It is the Father who said in the beginning ... ‘Let there be light.’ And His Word is the Person of the Son, through which Word ‘all things were made.’ ... The same Son the Spirit by the mouth

of David here calls *tsur*, ‘Rock’ of Israel.... For if a carnal mind approaches these words here ... he will not think otherwise than that all these terms refer to God in one Person with a superfluity of words” (AE 15:276–78). (TLSB)

When one rules justly over men. In brief and vivid strokes David portrays the ideal theocratic king—to be fully realized only in the different sort of rule of David’s greater son, Jesus Christ. This prophetic utterance complements that of 7:12–16 and anticipates those of Isa 9:7; 11:1–5; Jer 23:5–6; 33:15–16; Zec 9:9. (CSB)

Luth: “Here he speaks of the eternal justice Messiah ushered into the world, whereby He redeemed us from sin and justified us. For in the words that follow David speaks of ‘the everlasting covenant’ ” (AE 15:345). (TLSB)

23:4 *like rain.* Luth: “But in the days of Messiah, says David, when the [Rock of Israel] Himself will reign to justify us and to save us by grace, it will be as enchanting as the most delightful time in spring in the wake of a refreshing, warm rain, that is, following the preaching of the comforting Gospel, immediately after which the Sun, Christ, rises in our hearts through true faith and devoid of Moses’ clouds and thunder and lightning” (AE 15:348). (TLSB)

23:5 *for does not my house stand so with God?* A rhetorical question recalling God’s covenant with him and his dynasty (see 7:12–16). (CSB)

Luth: “O, what am I and what is my house to God? After all, it is not a house which would be deserving of such inexpressible honors before God, a house from which Messiah, [the Rock of Israel], God’s Son, the just Ruler among men, should be born” (AE 15:349). (TLSB)

everlasting covenant. David expressly calls God’s promise to him a covenant that will not be abrogated. (CSB)

secure. Luth: “If you take a glimpse at history, it will seem to you that God has forgotten His covenant and not kept it.... After Messiah came, His kingdom, the church, when viewed externally, impresses one as more desolate and disordered.... [But] there always has been and always is a people that honors the name of Christ, that has His Word Baptism, the Sacrament, the Office of the Keys, and the Spirit against all the gates of hell” (AE 15:349–50). (TLSB)

23:6 *worthless men ... thrown away.* Godless people who have no interest in the righteous king will be destroyed (see Ps 2:9; 110:5–6). (CSB)

23:1–7 Inspired by the Holy Spirit, David speaks forth his last will and testament, prophesying of God’s eternal covenant, which would be fulfilled in the kingdom of Christ. In fact, all the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is God’s Word, and we cannot set it aside. In this Word, God sets forth His covenant of grace, an eternal covenant in which Christ rules us, justifies us, and brings us to eternal life. • O Spirit of the Lord, O God of Israel, O Rock of Israel, most Holy Trinity, rule us, save us, and bring us into Your heavenly kingdom. Amen. (TLSB)

David’s Mighty Men

8 These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite; he was chief of the three. He wielded his spear against eight hundred whom he killed at one time.
9 And next to him among the three mighty men was Eleazar the son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of

Israel withdrew. 10 He rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clung to the sword. And the LORD brought about a great victory that day, and the men returned after him only to strip the slain. 11 And next to him was Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the men fled from the Philistines. 12 But he took his stand in the midst of the plot and defended it and struck down the Philistines, and the LORD worked a great victory. 13 And three of the thirty chief men went down and came about harvest time to David at the cave of Adullam, when a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. 14 David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem. 15 And David said longingly, "Oh, that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!" 16 Then the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and carried and brought it to David. But he would not drink of it. He poured it out to the LORD 17 and said, "Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did. 18 Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruah, was chief of the thirty. And he wielded his spear against three hundred men and killed them and won a name beside the three. 19 He was the most renowned of the thirty and became their commander, but he did not attain to the three. 20 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was a valiant man of Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds. He struck down two ariels of Moab. He also went down and struck down a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen. 21 And he struck down an Egyptian, a handsome man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand, but Benaiah went down to him with a staff and snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. 22 These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and won a name beside the three mighty men. 23 He was renowned among the thirty, but he did not attain to the three. And David set him over his bodyguard. 24 Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, 25 Shammah of Harod, Elik of Harod, 26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh of Tekoa, 27 Abiezer of Anathoth, Mebunnai the Hushathite, 28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai of Netophah, 29 Heleb the son of Baanah of Netophah, Ittai the son of Ribai of Gibeah of the people of Benjamin, 30 Benaiah of Pirathon, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash, 31 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth of Bahurim, 32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan, 33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite, 34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai of Maacah, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, 35 Hezro of Carmel, Paarai the Arbite, 36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, 37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai of Beeroth, the armor-bearer of Joab the son of Zeruah, 38 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, 39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all.

23:8–39 This list of 37 (see v. 39) of David's most valiant warriors and the description of some of their exploits are paralleled in 1Ch 11:11–41. There the list is expanded by 16 names (1Ch 11:41–47). (CSB)

23:8 *mighty men*. David's elite soldiers. (TLSB)

Three. Two groups of three warriors (vv. 8–12 and 13–23) and one group of 30 warriors (vv. 23–39) are mentioned (see note on v. 39 for the total number of warriors). (CSB)

The three top soldiers. (TLSB)

23:9–10 *the men of Israel withdrew*. Suggests that Eleazar alone stood his ground, while all other soldiers retreated. (TLSB)

23:9 *Ahohite*. A descendant of Ahoah from the tribe of Benjamin (1Ch 8:4). (CSB)

23:13 *harvest time*. The circumstances of this event suggest that it happened shortly after David had fled from Saul, when men first began to gather to his cause (see 1Sa 22:1–4), or shortly after his conquest of Jerusalem (see 2Sa 5:17–18). (CSB)

23:16 *poured it out*. A sacrifice to the Lord. David felt guilty and acknowledged that the three men risked their lives performing this act of courage. (TLSB)

23:20 *Benaiah son of Jehoiada*. Commander of the Kerethites and Pelethites (8:18; 20:23; see v. 23 below) and of the division of troops for the third month of the year (1Ch 27:5). He supported Solomon's succession to the throne (1Ki 1–2) and eventually replaced Joab as commander of the army (1Ki 2:35). (CSB)

23:24 *Thirty*. Twenty-nine names are listed in vv. 24–39. Since the three of vv. 13–17 are also included in the thirty (see v. 13), the total number of warriors mentioned is 32. 1Ch 11:26–47 lists 16 additional names for this group, so it appears that the list includes the names of replacements for vacancies when a warrior either dropped out or died. (CSB)

23:25 *Harod*. Place near Mount Gilboa. Cf Jgs 7:1. (TLSB)

23:27 *Mebunnai*. Probably the same as Sibbecai (21:18). (TLSB)

23:28 *Zalmon*. Probably Ilai of 1Ch 11:29. (TLSB)

23:29 *Heleb*. Probably Heled (1Ch 11:30) or Heldai (1Ch 27:15). (TLSB)

Ittai. Not Ittai the Gittite (i.e., of Gath), who led a third of the army against Absalom (15:18–22; 18:2). (TLSB)

23:30 *Benaiah*. Not the Benaiah of vv 20–23. (TLSB)

Hiddai. Probably Hurai of 1Ch 11:32. (TLSB)

23:31 *Abi-albon*. Perhaps Abiel of 1Ch 11:32. (TLSB)

23:32 *the sons of Jashen*. Perhaps sons of Hashem. Cf 1Ch 11:34. (TLSB)

Jonathan. Not Saul's son. (TLSB)

23:33 *Shammah*. To be distinguished from Shammah, son of Agee, also a Hararite (vv 11–12). (TLSB)

23:34 *Eliphelet*. Perhaps identified with Eliphaz son of Ur in 1Ch 11:35. (TLSB)

Eliam. Father of Bathsheba (see 11:3) and son of David's counselor Ahithophel, who joined in Absalom's conspiracy (see 15:12, 31, 34; 16:20–23; 17:1–23). (CSB)

Ahithophel of Gilo. Cf 15:12, 31; 16:23; 17:23. (TLSB)

23:35 *Carmel*. Perhaps of the Judean Carmel. Paarai. Perhaps Naarai of 1Ch 11:37. (TLSB)

23:37 *Naharai*. His inclusion on the list makes Joab's exclusion all the more conspicuous. David evidently considered Naharai, the armor-bearer of Joab and not a member of the 12 tribes of Israel, more honorable and worthy of special recognition than Joab, a close relative of David. (TLSB)

Beeroth. A Hivite city. (TLSB)

23:38 *Ira*. Not the Ira of 1Ch 11:28. Cf 1Ch 11:40. (TLSB)

23:39 *Uriah*. Husband of Bathsheba (see 11:3–27). (CSB)

thirty-seven. The total number of warriors referred to in vv. 8–39, including the Three of vv. 8–12, the Three of vv. 13–17, Abishai (vv. 18–19), Benaiah (vv. 20–23) and the 29 whose names are recorded in vv. 24–39. (CSB)

Joab is conspicuously absent from this list. Cf vv 18, 24, 37; 1Ki 2:5–6. (TLSB)

23:8–39 Though David certainly makes honorable mention of those who fought bravely alongside him, the faithfulness and loyalty of a warrior seems to be the deciding factor in whether he is included in David’s list of mighty men. Joab, a general perceived as disloyal, is excluded from the list. In Heb 11, faith is the qualification for being included on the list. The saints in Heb 11 lived “by faith,” believing God’s Son would ransom them from bondage to hell and death. • Father, through faith in Christ, make me one of Your mighty saints. Amen. (TLSB)