

1 Chronicles

Chapter 12

The Mighty Men Join David

Now these are the men who came to David at Ziklag, while he could not move about freely because of Saul the son of Kish. And they were among the mighty men who helped him in war. 2 They were bowmen and could shoot arrows and sling stones with either the right or the left hand; they were Benjaminites, Saul's kinsmen. 3 The chief was Ahiezer, then Joash, both sons of Shemaah of Gibeon; also Jeziel and Pelet, the sons of Azmaveth; Beracah, Jehu of Anathoth, 4 Ishmaiah of Gibeon, a mighty man among the thirty and a leader over the thirty; Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, Jozabad of Gederah, 5 Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah, Shephatiah the Haruphite; 6 Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korahites; 7 And Joelah and Zebadiah, the sons of Jeroham of Gedor. 8 From the Gadites there went over to David at the stronghold in the wilderness mighty and experienced warriors, expert with shield and spear, whose faces were like the faces of lions and who were swift as gazelles upon the mountains: 9 Ezer the chief, Obadiah second, Eliab third, 10 Mishmannah fourth, Jeremiah fifth, 11 Attai sixth, Eliel seventh, 12 Johanan eighth, Elzabad ninth, 13 Jeremiah tenth, Machbannai eleventh. 14 These Gadites were officers of the army; the least was a match for a hundred men and the greatest for a thousand. 15 These are the men who crossed the Jordan in the first month, when it was overflowing all its banks, and put to flight all those in the valleys, to the east and to the west. 16 And some of the men of Benjamin and Judah came to the stronghold to David. 17 David went out to meet them and said to them, "If you have come to me in friendship to help me, my heart will be joined to you; but if to betray me to my adversaries, although there is no wrong in my hands, then may the God of our fathers see and rebuke you." 18 Then the Spirit clothed Amasai, chief of the thirty, and he said, "We are yours, O David, and with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, and peace to your helpers! For your God helps you." Then David received them and made them officers of his troops. 19 Some of the men of Manasseh deserted to David when he came with the Philistines for the battle against Saul. (Yet he did not help them, for the rulers of the Philistines took counsel and sent him away, saying, "At peril to our heads he will desert to his master Saul.") 20 As he went to Ziklag, these men of Manasseh deserted to him: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediahel, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai, chiefs of thousands in Manasseh. 21 They helped David against the band of raiders, for they were all mighty men of valor and were commanders in the army. 22 For from day to day men came to David to help him, until there was a great army, like an army of God. 23 These are the numbers of the divisions of the armed troops who came to David in Hebron to turn the kingdom of Saul over to him, according to the word of the LORD. 24 The men of Judah bearing shield and spear were 6,800 armed troops. 25 Of the Simeonites, mighty men of valor for war, 7,100. 26 Of the Levites 4,600. 27 The prince Jehoiada, of the house of Aaron, and with him 3,700. 28 Zadok, a young man mighty in valor, and twenty-two commanders from his own fathers' house. 29 Of the Benjaminites, the kinsmen of Saul, 3,000, of whom the majority had to that point kept their allegiance to the house of Saul. 30 Of the Ephraimites 20,800, mighty men of valor, famous men in their fathers' houses. 31 Of the half-tribe of Manasseh 18,000, who were expressly named to come and make David king. 32 Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command. 33 Of Zebulun 50,000 seasoned troops, equipped for battle with all the weapons of war, to help David with singleness of purpose. 34 Of Naphtali 1,000 commanders with whom were 37,000 men armed with shield and spear. 35 Of the Danites 28,600 men equipped for battle. 36 Of Asher 40,000 seasoned troops ready for battle. 37 Of the Reubenites and Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh from beyond the Jordan, 120,000 men armed with all the weapons of war. 38 All these, men of war, arrayed in battle order, came to Hebron with a whole heart to make David king over all Israel. Likewise, all the rest

of Israel were of a single mind to make David king. 39 And they were there with David for three days, eating and drinking, for their brothers had made preparation for them. 40 And also their relatives, from as far as Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, came bringing food on donkeys and on camels and on mules and on oxen, abundant provisions of flour, cakes of figs, clusters of raisins, and wine and oil, oxen and sheep, for there was joy in Israel.

12:1–7 Benjaminites (Saul’s tribe) join David at Ziklag. (TLSB)

12:1 *came to David.* An act of faith in the word of the prophet. Not until David gathered his kingdom and established his rule was their faith visibly rewarded. (TLSB)

The Chronicler assumes the reader’s knowledge of the events at Ziklag (1Sa 27); see vv. 19–20.(CSB)

could not move. Saul kept pursuing David and finally forced him to dwell among the Philistines (1Sm 27). (TLSB)

12:2 *Saul’s kinsmen.* Though not the first, they joined David when he was at Ziklag, not long before Saul’s death (cf 1Sm 27:2–6). Because these Benjaminites were Saul’s kinsmen, their defection to David was particularly noteworthy. Because of their common bloodline, they could be expected to remain faithful to the mad King Saul, yet they found his rule so intolerable that they joined the resistance movement against him. (TLSB)

12:3–4 *thirty.* Apparently a select group, different from the chain of command in ch 11. Cf v 18. (TLSB)

12:8–15 The men of Gad were from Transjordan. Melting snows to the north would have brought the Jordan to flood stage in the first month (March-April) at the time of their crossing (v. 15). The most appropriate time for this incident would have been in the period of David’s wandering in the region of the Dead Sea (1Sa 23:14; 24:1; 25:1; 26:1). (CSB)

12:8 *Gadites.* From east of the Jordan, where Saul’s son Ish-bosheth maintained himself for 7½ years after his father’s death. The desertion of Saul by his own tribesmen, followed by their immediate neighbors, reveals the extent of the dissatisfaction with his rule. (TLSB)

stronghold. Probably a reference to the cave of Adullam, where David fled soon after Saul ordered his arrest (cf 1Sm 22:1). (TLSB)

12:15 Dissident Gadites had great obstacles to overcome. For some reason, they had to cross the Jordan when it was at flood stage during the month of Nisan (our Mar/Apr). Additionally, they had to “put to flight” loyalist Benjaminites who tried to prevent their defection to David. (TLSB)

12:17 *friendship.* David tested the trustworthiness of this mixed contingent because he had learned during his flight from Saul to be careful whom he trusted. Cf 1Sm 23:19–29; 26. (TLSB)

12:18 *Spirit clothed.* The Spirit moved Amasai to give an assurance of their loyalty in lofty poetry. (TLSB)

Peace, peace to you. Hbr greeting. Cf Jgs 19:20. (TLSB)

12:19 *sent him away.* David “did not help ... the Philistines” in the battle of Gilboa because their rulers did not trust him (1Sm 29). (TLSB)

12:21 *raiders.* Amalekites who destroyed Ziklag when David left it unprotected. (TLSB)

12:22 *an army of God*. Like God's host of angels (cf Gn 32:1–2; Mt 26:53). At Hebron, troops from every tribe join David (vv 2–37). A total of 340,647 warriors gathered to support David (vv 24–37). (TLSB)

12:23–37 The emphasis remains on “all Israel” (v. 38). Though 13 tribes are named, they are grouped in order to maintain the traditional number of 12 (see note on 2:1–2). The northernmost and the Transjordan tribes send the largest number of men (vv. 33–37), reinforcing the degree of support that David enjoyed not only in Judah and Benjamin but throughout the other tribes as well. The numbers in this section seem quite high. Essentially two approaches are followed on this question: 1. It is possible to explain the numbers so that a lower figure is actually attained. The Hebrew word for “thousand” may represent a unit of a tribe, each having its own commander (13:1; see Nu 31:14, 48, 52, 54). In this case the numbers would be read not as a total figure, but as representative commanders. For example, the 6,800 from Judah (v. 24) would be read either as six commanders of 1,000 and eight commanders of 100 (see 13:1), or possibly as six commanders of thousands and 800 men. Reducing the numbers in this fashion fits well with 13:1 and with the list of commanders alone found for Zadok's family (v. 28) and the tribe of Issachar (v. 32). Taking the numbers as straight totals would require the presence of 340,800 persons in Hebron for a feast at the same time. 2. Another approach is to allow the numbers to stand and to view them as hyperbole on the part of the Chronicler to achieve a number “like the army of God” (v. 22). This approach would fit well with the Chronicler's glorification of David and with the banquet scene that follows. (CSB)

12:23 Before Saul's death and during his son's ill-fated regime (cf 2Sm 2:10), David received growing support from various volunteer groups. David became commander of Israel's national army, composed of divisions furnished from the various tribes (vv 23–40). (TLSB)

12:26–27 Priests and Levites could also serve as soldiers. (TLSB)

12:28 *Zadok*. Possibly the man who became high priest after Abiathar. (TLSB)

12:33 *seasoned troops*. Experienced warriors, fully trained, having unit cohesion. (TLSB)

weapons of war. Spears, shields, swords, bows and arrows, slings, and short swords. (TLSB)

12:38–40 The Chronicler's portrait of David is influenced by his Messianic expectations (see Introduction: Purpose and Themes). In the presence of a third of a million people David's coronation banquet typifies the future Messianic feast (Isa 25:6–8). The imagery of the Messianic banquet became prominent in the intertestamental literature (*Apocalypse of Baruch* 29:4–8; *Enoch* 62:14) and in the NT (see Mt 8:11–12 and Lk 13:28–30; Mt 22:1–10 and Lk 14:16–24; see also Mt 25:1–13; Lk 22:28–30; Rev 19:7–9). The Lord's Supper anticipates that coming banquet (Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:15–18; 1Cor 11:23–26). (CSB)

Coronation feast. Length and abundant provisions underscore the magnificence of this feast. David's son Solomon also celebrated his coronation with a tremendous feast (29:20–22). (TLSB)

12:38 *battle order*. Formally organized for the march as professionals, not a meandering militia. (TLSB)

12:39 *their brothers*. People of Judah, in which Hebron lay, assumed the main burden of providing for the visitors from other tribes. (TLSB)

12:40 *joy in Israel*. Spontaneous generosity and goodwill followed the news about David's coronation. (TLSB)

Ch 12 David wins support from throughout Israel, and his coronation is a great celebration. The feasts shared at David's coronation at Hebron and Solomon's coronation in Jerusalem, for all their joy, pale

when compared to the feast that awaits all believers (cf Is 25:6–8; Jer 3:18). The feast that will be celebrated at the end of time will bring together all God’s scattered children, not only those of Israel but those of the separated children of Adam as well (cf 1Ch 1:1). That eternal feast even now sustains the Church on earth. In every celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the gathered people of God look beyond the circumstances of life to an eternal day of joy for all nations (cf Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:15–18; 1Co 11:23–26; Rv 19:6–9). • “Gather us together, we pray, from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end.” Amen. (*LSB*, p 178) (TLSB)