

SECOND SAMUEL

Chapter 23

The Last Words of David

These are the last words of David: “The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel’s singer of songs: ²“The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue. ³The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me: ‘When one rules over men in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, ⁴he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings the grass from the earth.’ ⁵“Is not my house right with God? Has he not made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part? Will he not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire? ⁶But evil men are all to be cast aside like thorns, which are not gathered with the hand. ⁷Whoever touches thorns uses a tool of iron or the shaft of a spear; they are burned up where they lie.”

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 spoke through me.* David was conscious of God’s Spirit at work in him enabling him to speak under the Spirit’s guidance (see notes on 2Ti 3:16; 2Pe 1:21). (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)

Rock. See note on 22:2; see also 1Sa 2:2; Dt 32:4, 15, 18, 30–31. (CSB)

When one rules over men in righteousness. 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)

like the light of morning. See notes on Ps 27:1; 36:9. (CSB)

23:5 *Is not my house right 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 (see notes on 7:20, 28; Isa 55:3; see also Ps 89:3, 28, 34, 39; 132:11). (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)

bring to fruition. Through David’s promised descendants. (CSB)

23:6 *evil men ... cast aside.* 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 David's mighty men: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter. ⁹ Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty men, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at Pas Dammim for battle. Then the men of Israel retreated, ¹⁰ but he stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead. ¹¹ Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistines banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them. ¹² But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the LORD brought about a great victory. ¹³ During harvest time, three of the thirty chief men came down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. ¹⁴ At that time David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem. ¹⁵ David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" ¹⁶ So the three mighty men broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the LORD. ¹⁷ "Far be it from me, O LORD, to do this!" he said. "Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?" And David would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three mighty men. ¹⁸ Abishai the brother of Joab son of Zeruiah was chief of the Three. He raised his spear against three hundred men, whom he killed, and so he became as famous as the Three. ¹⁹ Was he not held in greater honor than the Three? He became their commander, even though he was not included among them. ²⁰ Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant fighter from Kabzeel, who performed great exploits. He struck down two of Moab's best men. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. ²¹ And he struck down a huge Egyptian. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. ²² Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty men. ²³ He was held in greater honor than any of the Thirty, but he was not included among the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard. ²⁴ Among the Thirty were: Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem, ²⁵ Shammah the Harodite, Elika the Harodite, ²⁶ Helez the Paltite, Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa, ²⁷ Abiezer from Anathoth, Mebunnai the Hushathite, ²⁸ Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, ²⁹ Heled son of Baanah the Netophathite, Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah in Benjamin, ³⁰ Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai from the ravines of Gaash,

³¹ **Abi-Albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, ³²Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan ³³son of Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite, ³⁴Eliphelet son of Ahasbai the Maacathite, Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, ³⁵Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, ³⁶Igal son of Nathan from Zobah, the son of Hagri, ³⁷Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, the armor-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah, ³⁸Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite ³⁹and Uriah the Hittite. There were thirty-seven in all.**

23:8–39 See note on 21:1–24:25. 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)

Tahkemonite. 1Ch 11:11 reads “Hacmonite” (see NIV text note here), derived from an unknown place-name. (CSB)

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.* See 11:1 and note. 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)

three. Not the same as the three mighty men of v. 9. (CSB)

thirty chief men. See vv. 23–24, 39. (CSB)

cave of Adullam. See 1Sa 22:1. *Rephaim.* See 5:18. (CSB)

23:14 *stronghold.* See note on 1Sa 22:4. (CSB)

23:15–16 See note on 1Ch 11:15–19. (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)

23:18 *Abishai*. See 10:10, 14; 18:2; see also note on 1Sa 26:6. (CSB)

Three. Presumably those referred to in vv. 13–17. (CSB)

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)

ariels. Perhaps means "lionlike men" or "altar." If the former, Abishai defeated two lionlike men, and then he killed a lion. If the latter, he destroyed two Moabite altars.

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)

Asahel. See 2:18–23. (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 (see note on v. 24). (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)