

I came across a great phrase this week: “*Ascension Deficit Disorder*”

Ascension Deficit Disorder occurs when you forget that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father.  
When Jesus ascended on high, he took captivity captive, and he gave gifts to men.

We often act as though the ascension never happened.

If the ascension never happened, then we would be like the Chronicler’s generation –  
a people without a king –  
a people without the Spirit of God.

Because if the ascension never happened, then the Spirit would never have been poured out.

Paul says in Romans 8 that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

I often use that for the declaration of pardon,  
because that is such a great and comforting statement of our justification.  
Jesus has done what we could not do.

But Paul goes on in Romans 8 to talk about sanctification:

<sup>8</sup>Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit,  
if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

<sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin,  
the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

<sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,  
he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies  
through his Spirit who dwells in you.

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

<sup>13</sup>For if you live according to the flesh you will die,  
but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

<sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

<sup>15</sup>For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,  
but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry,  
“Abba! Father!”

<sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,  
<sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,  
provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

The ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father

results in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church –

which means that the resurrection life of Jesus

now continues in his servants – who now become children of God,

with the life and power of the Son of God now present *in you!*

*That’s* what 1 Chronicles 18-20 is all about!

In these three chapters, the Chronicler will cover a period of David's life that takes 14 chapters in the book of Samuel.

The story of David and Bathsheba, together with the resulting troubles with Amnon and Tamar, and Absalom, are all omitted from Chronicles.

If you were writing the life story of David, then these episodes should be included. But Chronicles is not a biography of David! The Chronicler only tells us part of the story – the part that most directly relates to his message to Israel.

And that message is that when David ascends the throne, then God gives victory to his people.

### **1. The Tribute of the Nations (chapter 18)**

#### **a. David Defeated the Philistines, the Moabites, the Syrians and the Edomites (v1-13)**

*<sup>1</sup> After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and he took Gath and its villages out of the hand of the Philistines. <sup>2</sup> And he defeated Moab, and the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute.*

The focus in chapter 18 is on how the nations bring tribute to David.

Some are forced to pay tribute (like Moab in verse 2, or Syria in verse 6); while others do so voluntarily (like Tou of Hamath in verse 11) – though it is worth pointing out that “voluntary” tribute is usually a way of saying, “please don't attack me! I'll be your friend!”

Psalm 2 is especially relevant here:

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way.” (v12)  
If you do not yield to the Son of God –  
then you will surely perish.

We have noted before that there were many Gittites (men of Gath) in David's retinue.

Apparently some of the men of Gath were faithful to Goliath's promise that if David killed him, they would be his servants.

And so the city of Gath went over to David.

David also defeated Moab and forced them to pay tribute.

This is somewhat curious – since Moab had been a refuge for David's family, when Saul was pursuing him.

After all, David's father, Jesse, was the grandson of Ruth, the Moabitess!  
So what happened to David's family?

2 Samuel records an unusual punishment that David meted out against Moab.  
He made them lie down on the ground in three lines.  
Two lines he killed, and one he spared.

Many have wondered why he did this.

Some have speculated that the Moabites did not protect his family –  
there is an old Jewish tradition that says that the Moabites killed his family  
and that only one brother escaped and fled to Ammon.

But here we are simply told that he forced them to pay tribute.

*<sup>3</sup>David also defeated Hadadezer king of Zobah-Hamath, as he went to set up his monument<sup>[a]</sup> at the river Euphrates. <sup>4</sup>And David took from him 1,000 chariots, 7,000 horsemen, and 20,000 foot soldiers. And David hamstringed all the chariot horses, but left enough for 100 chariots. <sup>5</sup>And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down 22,000 men of the Syrians. <sup>6</sup>Then David put garrisons<sup>[b]</sup> in Syria of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David and brought tribute. And the LORD gave victory to David<sup>[c]</sup> wherever he went. <sup>7</sup>And David took the shields of gold that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup>And from Tibhath and from Cun, cities of Hadadezer, David took a large amount of bronze. With it Solomon made the bronze sea and the pillars and the vessels of bronze.*

Verses 3-8 turn to the far north, to the city of Damascus in Syria,  
and even further to the river Euphrates – the eastern edge of Syria's power.

We happen to know that during David's time  
both the Assyrians and the Babylonians were weak;  
there was something of a power vacuum in the Middle East.

And so, in the providence of God,  
it was possible for a petty outlaw from the hill country of Judah  
(because that's what David *was* during the reign of Saul!)  
to become one of the most powerful kings in the region.

Now, if you think about it in terms of world history,  
this has happened many times.

A charismatic warrior draws together some capable fighters –  
he takes advantage of the disorganization of his enemies,  
seizes power and is able to get his son enthroned –

but a generation or two later, it all falls apart.

It's a familiar story.

And that's what happens here.

There's a period of about 50-60 years where David and Solomon rule the region.  
But after the death of Solomon, it all falls apart –

and the house of David becomes an insignificant backwater.

The Chronicler keeps repeating that the LORD gave David the victory wherever he went.

The popular view is that David defeated the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Amalekites, the Edomites, and the Syrians.

It would be more accurate to say that David defeated the Philistines and the Moabites, and the Amalekites, and the Philistines, and the Ammonites, and the Syrians, and the Philistines, and the Syrians, and the other Syrians, and the Philistines, and the Ammonites, and the Philistines...

Indeed, in chapter 20, verse 1, we hear how it goes:

“In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle...”

In the book of Samuel, this is used to introduce the story of Bathsheba – and the great failure of David.

In the book of Chronicles, this is used to introduce yet another of David’s victories!

The narrative might lead you to believe that once David wins a victory, and imposes tribute on a nation,

therefore that nation is now pacified,  
and will submit to David for the rest of his life.

Of course, as soon as I say that,  
you will no doubt realize what is happening!

The Chronicler (as Samuel-Kings had done earlier)  
doesn't tell you *everything* that happens.

They are focusing on the *good things* that David did.

David may have left a garrison in Damascus,  
but that doesn't mean that Damascus remained under David's rule.

So if you read the text carefully  
you quickly realize that from a world-historical perspective  
David was an impressive flash-in-the-pan.

But it is only when you read the text from a redemptive-historical perspective  
that you see his true importance!

Because all this tribute that pours into Jerusalem will be used by his son, Solomon,  
to build the temple (v8).

And some of the nations begin to get it.

<sup>9</sup>When Tou king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, king of Zobah, <sup>10</sup>he sent his son Hadoram to King David, to ask about his health and to bless him because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him; for Hadadezer had often been at

*war with Tou. And he sent all sorts of articles of gold, of silver, and of bronze. <sup>11</sup>These also King David dedicated to the LORD, together with the silver and gold that he had carried off from all the nations, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and Amalek.*

Tou, the king of Hamath, blesses David and sends him tribute.

God had told Abraham, “those who bless you will be blessed.”

Hiram of Tyre had been the first king to bless David.

Tou makes it two!

*<sup>12</sup>And Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, killed 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. <sup>13</sup>Then he put garrisons in Edom, and all the Edomites became David’s servants. And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.*

Samuel attributes the victory over the Edomites to David –

but the Chronicler says that Abishai, his nephew, was the general who led the troops.

You could summarize this section by saying,

“because David did all things for the glory of the LORD and the salvation of his people, therefore the LORD gave David the victory”

Verses 14-17 then turn to the internal administration of Israel (read verse 14).

#### **b. Justice and Equity in the Land (v14-17)**

*<sup>14</sup>So David reigned over all Israel, and he administered justice and equity to all his people.*

*<sup>15</sup>And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; <sup>16</sup>and Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were priests; and Shavsha was secretary; <sup>17</sup>and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David’s sons were the chief officials in the service of the king.*

Justice and equity.

We saw when we went through Genesis

that when you talk about righteousness and justice in a civil context:

“righteousness” has to do with the “right ordering” of society,  
and “justice” with the administration of that “right order.”

So when it says that David administered *justice* to all his people,

it has to do with the implementation of justice;

David did what was *right*.

He judged the people *justly*.

But what does *equity* mean?

Equity is an important legal concept.

Because it is possible to judge *justly* in an inequitable way!

Let me give you an example:

two men are pulled over for driving 50 miles an hour in a 25 MPH zone;  
one was speeding because he was late for work,  
the other was speeding because his son was bleeding profusely  
and he needed to get him to the hospital.

As a matter of justice, both men should be ticketed.

But as a matter of equity,

a judge (or even a police officer) might well determine  
that the second man should not be penalized.

Equity is the idea of fairness.

Too often we think that treating everyone “fairly” means treating everyone the same.

But the equitable administration of justice  
means doing what is right and fair *in this case*.

No one has ever devised a code of justice that covers every possible situation.

So the question for the judge is this:

given the law,

how do we *apply* the law rightly?

How do we apply the law equitably to the case before us?

In the modern world, we don’t trust our judges.

And so we pass lengthy statutes to make sure that our judges do what we want.

But then the laws get so cumbersome that judges can twist them around  
to do what they want anyway!

While it is a good thing to have good laws,

it is an even better thing to have good judges!

(We saw this illustrated in 1 Timothy this morning –

with how elders are called to exercise authority on behalf of Christ)

The ascended Christ rules in his church by his Word –

through the pastors and elders he has called to lead the church.

You see an OT example of this applied to foreign policy in chapter 19:

## **2. The Ammonite-Syrian Alliance (19:1-20:3)**

### **a. The Shaming of David (v1-5)**

<sup>1</sup> Now after this Nahash the king of the Ammonites died, and his son reigned in his place. <sup>2</sup> And David said, "I will deal kindly with Hanun the son of Nahash, for his father dealt kindly with me." So David sent messengers to console him concerning his father. And David's servants came to the land of the Ammonites to Hanun to console him.

David demonstrates his justice and equity by his kind dealing with Hanun  
after the death of his father, Nahash.

Nahash was the one who had shamed the men of Jabesh-Gilead in 1 Samuel 11.

He had told besieged the city, and told them that he would only make a treaty with them if he could gouge out their right eyes.

Then Jabesh-Gilead sent for help to all Israel,  
and Saul (who had just been anointed king) came and rescued them.

We saw that David entrusted his family to the king of Moab when Saul was chasing him.

There is a tradition that the Moabites slaughtered David's family,  
and only one brother escaped and fled to Nahash the Ammonite.

That would certainly explain David's good feelings for Nahash,  
but there could be other reasons as well.

The text provides us with no explanation.

The princes of the Ammonites, however, have a different explanation for David's actions:

*<sup>3</sup>But the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun, "Do you think, because David has sent comforters to you, that he is honoring your father? Have not his servants come to you to search and to overthrow and to spy out the land?" <sup>4</sup>So Hanun took David's servants and shaved them and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away; <sup>5</sup>and they departed. When David was told concerning the men, he sent messengers to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, "Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown and then return."*

Hanun has foolish counselors who urge him to shame David's servants.

They lack justice or equity in their treatment of David's messengers.

The point they make is clear:

if you want to know what is going on in Ammon,  
come yourself – and come with an army!

Do you remember the other half of what God said to Abraham about the nations?

Those who curse you will be cursed.

**b. "May the LORD Do What Seems Good to Him": Joab Defeats the Syrians (v6-15)**

*<sup>6</sup>When the Ammonites saw that they had become a stench to David, Hanun and the Ammonites sent 1,000 talents<sup>[d]</sup> of silver to hire chariots and horsemen from Mesopotamia, from Aram-maacah, and from Zobah. <sup>7</sup>They hired 32,000 chariots and the king of Maacah with his army, who came and encamped before Medeba. And the Ammonites were mustered from their cities and came to battle. <sup>8</sup>When David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army of the mighty men. <sup>9</sup>And the Ammonites came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the city, and the kings who had come were by themselves in the open country.*

So the Ammonites provoke a war with David –

and they hire allies from Mesopotamia,

from Maacah (a kingdom on the east side of Galilee –  
within the territory of Manasseh),

and from Zobah (one of the Syrian cities that David had defeated in chapter 18).

I'm not going to talk about the numbers in the book of Chronicles every time,  
but the 32,000 chariots mentioned here  
are one of the reasons why you have to be careful with numbers in Chronicles.

Samuel tells us that the Ammonites hired 32,000 foot soldiers –  
together with the king of Maacah and his army (of 1,000).  
Somehow this winds up being called 32,000 chariots.

It would probably be best to understand this as 32,000 soldiers (including chariots).

(Just for context, the largest chariot battle ever documented had 5-6,000 chariots –  
the Battle of Kadesh in 1274 BC between the Egyptians and the Hittites)

Samuel tells us that David's troops killed 700 charioteers –  
and since each chariot had 2-3 men in it,  
that would produce a very reasonable number of around 300 chariots.

The Chronicler says that they killed 7,000 charioteers  
(for some reason the Chronicler frequently, but not always,  
adds an extra zero to his numbers!)

David sent Joab and the mighty men to lead the army against the Ammonite-Syrian host.

*<sup>10</sup>When Joab saw that the battle was set against him both in front and in the rear, he chose some of the best men of Israel and arrayed them against the Syrians. <sup>11</sup>The rest of his men he put in the charge of Abishai his brother, and they were arrayed against the Ammonites. <sup>12</sup>And he said, "If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will help you. <sup>13</sup>Be strong, and let us use our strength for our people and for the cities of our God, and may the LORD do what seems good to him." <sup>14</sup>So Joab and the people who were with him drew near before the Syrians for battle, and they fled before him. <sup>15</sup>And when the Ammonites saw that the Syrians fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, Joab's brother, and entered the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem.*

And Joab and his brother Abishai divided their troops and trusted the LORD,  
and the LORD gave them a great victory.

You can see hear that not only does David trust the LORD,  
his generals also have confidence in Yahweh.

We are called to do what God commands of us.  
We do not control the outcome.

Remember that as you go forth daily into your spiritual battle!  
The Bible is very clear that if the LORD had not been with David and his troops,



then they would not have won so many battles.  
Joab does not say that the result is a foregone conclusion.  
He does not say, “The LORD is with David, therefore this will be a piece of cake!”

Rather, he says, Let’s work together – help each other out as needed –  
and let us “use our strength for our people and for the cities of our God,  
and may the LORD do what seems good to him.”

I don’t know what is going to happen with our Bible study at IUSB.  
Will it become a place where the God defeats his enemies and subdues them to himself?  
Or will we go down in flames?

We know that God is with our King – the Son of David, our Lord, Jesus Christ.  
Therefore we may go into battle knowing that whether we live or die  
we belong to him.  
Let him do what seems good to him.

Do you have that confidence?

**c. David Defeats the Syrians (v16-19)**

*<sup>16</sup>But when the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they sent messengers and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the Euphrates, with Shophach the commander of the army of Hadadezer at their head. <sup>17</sup>And when it was told to David, he gathered all Israel together and crossed the Jordan and came to them and drew up his forces against them. And when David set the battle in array against the Syrians, they fought with him. <sup>18</sup>And the Syrians fled before Israel, and David killed of the Syrians the men of 7,000 chariots and 40,000 foot soldiers, and put to death also Shophach the commander of their army. <sup>19</sup>And when the servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with David and became subject to him. So the Syrians were not willing to save the Ammonites anymore.*

But Israel’s victory over the Syrians simply led to another conflict with even more Syrians!  
Hadadezer – the same king who had been defeated in the previous chapter –  
now tries again, this time with a bigger army;

and this time with a bigger defeat!

David himself came from Jerusalem and led Israel into battle against the Syrians.

And so the Syrians sued for peace “and became subject to him.”

“Became subject to him” does not mean that they came under David’s rule.  
It means – like verse 19 says –  
that when the Ammonites offered silver and gold to come help them,  
they said, “No! Been there, done that, and lost thousands of troops.  
Not again! You’re on your own!”

But the Ammonites haven't learned their lesson yet!

#### **d. David Remained at Jerusalem (20:1-3)**

<sup>1</sup> *In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, Joab led out the army and ravaged the country of the Ammonites and came and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. And Joab struck down Rabbah and overthrew it.* <sup>2</sup> *And David took the crown of their king from his head. He found that it weighed a talent<sup>[e]</sup> of gold, and in it was a precious stone. And it was placed on David's head. And he brought out the spoil of the city, a very great amount.* <sup>3</sup> *And he brought out the people who were in it and set them to labor<sup>[f]</sup> with saws and iron picks and axes.<sup>[g]</sup> And thus David did to all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.*

And so Joab goes to teach them their lesson!

Notice that the way that the Chronicler tells the story  
it appears that it was simply David's practice to stay at home in Jerusalem,  
while Joab and the army did their work.  
David would only come to inspire the troops for a difficult battle,  
or to despoil the captured city.

In other words, David is moving from tribal chieftain to great king!

A chieftain needs to be on the field of battle himself to prove that he is a great warrior.  
A great king is secure in his power and has no need to risk himself on the field.

Our closing episode, in verses 4-8 of chapter 20, testifies to this.

At the beginning of David's rise to power was the story of Goliath.  
David slew the giant – thereby demonstrating that he was the LORD's anointed.

Now at the end of David's reign, giant killers proliferate throughout Israel!

#### **3. The Mighty Men vs. the Philistine Giants (20:4-8)**

<sup>4</sup> *And after this there arose war with the Philistines at Gezer. Then Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Sippai, who was one of the descendants of the giants, and the Philistines were subdued.* <sup>5</sup> *And there was again war with the Philistines, and Elhanan the son of Jair struck down Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.* <sup>6</sup> *And there was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number, and he also was descended from the giants.* <sup>7</sup> *And when he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David's brother, struck him down.* <sup>8</sup> *These were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.*

Notice again that we have a city (Gath) that was once subdued by David  
that now needs subduing once more!

There are at least three distinct "wars" with the Philistines referenced in these five verses!

The war at Gezer (v4)

The war with the Philistines (v5)

The war at Gath (v6)

But the point is that in the days of Saul,  
no one could be found to fight the giants.

And as we saw when we looked at the story of David and Goliath,  
there was good reason for that!

Goliath was too big – too powerful – too strong.  
No one in all Israel was big enough and strong enough to take down Goliath.  
Only the LORD's anointed (only the Messiah) could defeat Goliath.

If anyone else in all Israel had tried to fight Goliath, he would be squashed like a bug  
(even Saul himself – because the Spirit of the LORD had departed from him).  
The lesson of the story of David and Goliath is that *you* cannot defeat Goliath.  
Only the Christ – only the LORD's anointed – can defeat the giants!

But 1 Chronicles 20 shows us what happens when the LORD's anointed defeats his enemies!  
“They fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.”  
With the triumph of the Messiah,  
the strength and power of the Messiah comes upon his servants.

And so those who are in Christ go forth in the power of Christ  
against his and their enemies.

Goliath is dead – Jesus has crushed the head of the serpent on the cross.  
Therefore, as Paul says in Romans 16:20,  
“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”

I recently read a very good review of Dave Harvey's book,  
“When Sinners Say I Do.”

Harvey does a great job of showing how deeply sin has affected us,  
and helps reveal our pride and folly in marriage.

My friend, Mark Sumpter, says  
“My biggest negative about the book circles around Harvey's bringing the reader's knowledge of his sin to a boil. The pan is on the stove, the water is boiling—so very good; but I was waiting for the pasta to be added, and then the browning of the meat, the simmer of the butter and veggies, with the seasoning mix of the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is Lord and Savior. I wanted him to prepare a winsome, biblical dish with the doctrine of the sinner's union and communion with Jesus. We get the chapter on STUBBORN GRACE, Harvey's work on Titus 2:11-14; but where's Being Raised in Him, Being a Sinner Seated w/ Christ and more.... When Sinners Say I Do calls for counter-balance of When the Savior Said I Did.”

<http://rivercitypastor.blogspot.com/2011/09/quick-take-on-when-sinners-say-i-do.html>

As Sumpter puts it, the church today suffers from “Ascension Deficit Disorder.”

If all you read is the story of David and Goliath,  
then you will say, “ah, no one can defeat sin and death except Jesus.”  
And that is true.

But what has Jesus done?

He has defeated sin and death.

He has been raised up to the right hand of the Father.

And he has seated us in him in the heavenly places.

So that we are no longer slaves to sin and death.

When David the giant-killer ascends the throne,

then David’s servants start killing giants.

How much more is it true that when the Son of David,

the slayer of sin, death, and the devil

ascends the throne of the Ancient of Days,

then Jesus’ servants start slaying the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The dominion of sin has been overthrown in the ascension of Christ.

Sin is not your master – so do not let it master you!

It is true that Jesus’ idea of “the victorious life” is not exactly a life of pure bliss!

The victorious life in Jesus is a life of suffering – a life of denying self,

taking up your cross, and following Jesus.

But don’t you dare *ever* say that sin is too strong for you!

The ascended Lord – the Suffering Servant – our glorious King Jesus –

has crushed the head of the serpent;

therefore, the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The Spirit of the resurrected Christ rests upon you.

And so you may go forth into battle every day, saying with Joab,

“Be strong, and let us use our strength for our people and for the cities of our God,

and may the LORD do what seems good to him.”