

The Bit of the Cubit:
or Dictating Terms
2 Samuel 8:1 - 6

Nutshell: King David now secures Israel's borders, subduing foes on all sides, enforcing his will on them. King Jesus makes us a safe-zone for righteousness, but He leaves us the enemy of the Old Man within us, for us to fight alongside Him.

I. Context: God choosing David's family for His kings and King.

II. Text

2 Sam 8:1 And it happened afterward, David struck the Philistines and subjugated them. And David took the bit of the cubit out of the hand of the Philistines.

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

- A. The Book of Kingdoms, our 1 & 2 Sam + 1 & 2 Kings, is the story of Israel's kings, beginning with the prophet Samuel, who anointed both of the first two kings, Saul and David
 - 1. Samuel warned Israel vs. having a king, 1 Sam 10:19, Hos 13:11
 - 2. **Saul** was apostate *man's* version of king. God previewed *His* version via **David**, 1 Sam 13:14
- ✿ B. 1 Kings 15:5 tells us that David kept God's commands *except* in the Bathsheba incident. This dramatically shapes our approach to each incident in David's life.
- C. The chronicler presents David as God's chosen king, a *picture* of Messiah, but *not* the Messiah; a *reference point* for all subsequent kings of Judah, e.g., 2 Kings 14:3
- D. David as king
 - 1. David was anointed king over **Judah**, 2 Sam 2. 2 Sam 2:12-32 showed that the split between Israel (the 9 northern tribes) and Judah (with Benjamin) would only bring harm.
 - 2. Saul's general, Abner, made Saul's son Ishbosheth king of

- Israel. David's general, Joab, wrongfully (but not criminally) killed Abner (avenging a relative)
- a. Assassins killed Ishbosheth, hoping to gain favor with David. He had them executed, 2 Sam 4.
 - b. Israel's elders anointed David KING, 2 Sam 5:1-5
3. David finally vanquished Jebus (Jerusalem), 2 Sam 5:6-10, where he had taken Goliath's head, 1 Sam 17:54
 - a. **David rebuffed 2 Philistine invasions**, 5:17-25
 - b. David retrieved the Ark from its 'wanderings', 6:1-19; first, ignoring God's instructions, leading to a death, then properly, with great joy
 4. Now David wants to build a **permanent** form for the Tabernacle. This will be the Temple, 7:1-3
 - a. God told David through Nathan that *He* was the one who was establishing *David*, 7:4-11
 - b. God will have David's **heir** build this house, whose kingdom God would permanently establish, 7:12-13
 - ★ 5. This was a **turning point in the history of Redemption**. God had chosen *Abraham* to make a nation from which Redemption would come.
 - a. That nation had been God's "son," Exod 4:22-23.
 - b. Now God said that **David's** son (& David) would be His "son," pointing to King Jesus to come, 7:14-17

Kid-speak: Who did God tell, "I'm going to make a **nation** starting with you"? Abraham. And who did God tell, "I'm going to make **kings**, starting with you"? David.

6. 7:18-29 is a deep, beautiful prayer in which David saw that God was bringing His own desires to pass. He therefore called on God to do so.
- E. Chapter 8 is a "striking" chapter, v 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 13, 18. David fights with the Philistines, Moab, Zobah, Damascus, Ammon, Amalek, and Edom
1. These battles took David east, then west; north, then south of Israel
 2. The Bible is a "striking" book (OT 501x). Sin has brought violence into the world.
 - a. Many of the blows "struck" in the Torah (100x) and Joshua & Judges (66x) were struck by God in answer

- to man's violence and sin in general, e.g., Gen 8:21
- b. Many were blows by the unrighteous, and many were blows by the righteous in answer
- 3. Jesus earned His kingdom, first by *not* striking (coming in peace), then by *being* struck (on the Cross), next, by striking down the Antichrist and his armies, Rev 19; 2 Thess 2, and finally by striking down Satan and the nations following him, Rev 20
- ☑ a. This lets us know that a king from David was *always* set for conflict with ungodly powers
- b. It is difficult for us to maintain a mental image of the warlike nature of Christianity, but it is right there in the Cross (albeit as a peace mission):
 - i. The most massive violence in history (by the Father)
 - ii. inflicted on the Innocent (Jesus)
 - iii. on behalf of combatants with God (us)
 - iv. in order to break the back of the one to whom we'd sold ourselves (Satan) and his power (our sin)
- 4. 2 Sam 8 doesn't tell us any specific conflict with any of these nations
 - a. But if we simply recall 1 Sam 14:47, we realize that there was apparently *continual* strife with surrounding countries, since they *didn't like Israel*
 - ★ b. And if we look to Psalm 2, we see that those nations' *hatred of God* (and therefore of His people) is 'baked-in'

Kid-speak: We're going to read about a lot of wars today. Why did all these nations hate David and his nation Israel? Because Israel was God's nation, and they hated God.

- 5. We will see in 2 Sam 8:6b that in all of these campaigns, God 'had David's back'
- F. 2 Sam 8:1, "Afterward"- After God made the epochal promises to David and his house
 - 1. Making the path to Redemption and the Redeemer narrower, limiting it from the seed of Abraham, which itself was narrowed down from all nations

All nations > Abraham/Israel > David > Messiah

- 2. 2 Sam 8 previews what will eventually happen through

Messiah. He will impose His will on all nations.

G. 2 Sam 8:1, Previously, David had blocked 2 major Philistine attempts to crush his new kingdom in its infancy. Now David went on the offensive.

1. David's previous victories had left Israel free, but Philistia was still independent and a threat.
2. Now David subjugated the Philistines.

Kid-speak: Who were the people Israel fought with the most in the Bible? The Philistines. Now David was going on the attack against them.

H. 1 Chron 18:1 says that David subjugated Gath, a capital city

1. Many translations transliterate Megeth-Ammah as a place name in 2 Sam 8:1
2. However, it means "bit of the cubit." Perhaps it is saying that the Philistines had held the "bit" (as in bit & bridle) of power before, able to dictate standards ("the cubit") of the relationship between them. (Ps 32:9 has "bit and bridle.")
 - a. Now David took that bit out of their hands, measuring (by the cubit, as it were) terms to *them*
 - b. (The root word of "cubit" is "mother," so some have "bridle of the mother *city*," meaning Gath)

I. Similar to David, Jesus' death allowed Him to dictate terms to Satan

1. Satan no longer holds the bridle of those who are in Christ
2. Satan no longer measures and dictates terms to us
3. If we sin, it is only because we want to. We have the authority *not* to, **Rom 6:11**

J. There is some closure on the Philistine front here. This is the last time any Philistines posed a major threat to Israel.

1. David had really taken the "bit of the cubit" (standard-enforcing authority) from them!
2. A forecast of a day when Christ will have taken the reins of power from all of earth's vain dictators! Rev 20.

Kid-speak: How bad did David beat the Philistines? He ran their country now!

2 Sam 8:2 And he struck Moab and measured them with a

rope, laying them on the ground. And he measured two rope *lengths* to kill and one full rope *length* to keep alive. And the Moabites were slaves to David, bearers of an offering.

- K. Philistia lived within the previously Canaanite territory promised to Israel
1. War with them might be justified on those grounds (*cherem*). (It was mostly justified by their aggression.)
 2. God had laid Moab *outside* of *cherem*- devotion to being undone. Moab was a gift to Lot's descendants, Deut 2:9
 3. David's conflict with Moab was therefore on other grounds
 - a. 1 Chron 11:22 gives us either an individual contest within the greater battle or a separate fight
 - b. Either way, adversarial relations with Moab are revealed
 - c. Of course, Balak of Moab had wanted to wipe Israel out, Num 22:6
 4. We are perhaps surprised, since David had left his parents in the king of Moab's care, 1 Sam 22:3-4
 - a. But this was when David was an outlaw from the king of Israel, Saul
 - b. When *David* became king, he was no longer 'the enemy of my enemy', but simply the enemy
- L. "Striking" Moab describes a decisive victory. This was partial fulfillment of Num 24:17.
1. After which, David had to decide how to reduce Moab to a non-threat
 2. This he did by having the prisoners lay on the ground, presumably in lines.
 - a. He alternately laid 2 lengths of rope across them, then 1 length. Those under the 2 lengths were executed. Those under the 1 length (measured more generously- "full") were spared.
 - b. This meant that about 2/3 would be killed and a good 1/3 would be spared
 - c. The measuring method was meant to evenly distribute survivors from their ranks (not all from the same bunch)
- M. The Moabites, unlike the Philistines, were left in charge of themselves; but they had to pay tribute.

Kid-speak: David beat the Moabites too. Why didn't he take their power too? Because they came from Abraham's nephew,

Lot, so God said not to take their land.

2 Sam 8:3 And David struck Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his hand at the River.

- N. Our first introduction to the kingdom of Zobah was 1 Sam 14:47 (Saul's previously mentioned wars)
1. Zobah was at Israel's northern border
 2. This is our first introduction to Hadadezer. We hadn't met his dad, Rehob, except as the city apparently named for him.
 3. "Hadad-ezer" means "Hadad is helper," likely of a god/idol. In that case, Hadad wasn't very helpful in this situation.
- O. "As he went to restore his hand [control/ upper hand] at the River"
1. "The River" is normally the Euphrates, whose northern half ran close by Zobah
 2. "He" could mean David grammatically, but David had no control near the Euphrates to restore
 3. David met a Hadad-ezer already in battle mode, but also when he was battle-ready

Kid-speak: Ever heard of Zobah? Me neither. But they were a big country north of Israel (like Canada to us). They were against Israel, but David beat them too.

2 Sam 8:4 And David captured from him 1,700 horsemen and 20,000 footmen. And David dismantled [lit., uprooted] all of the chariots. He only left 100 chariots of them.

- P. We don't have any indication that David killed any of these prisoners. Apparently, taking 900 of their 1,000 chariots left them unlikely to make war with Israel again.
1. (If Moab was mostly infantry, reducing her future threat required thinning her ranks)
 2. The captured soldiers of Zobah presumably returned to Israel as servants (with their families?)
- Q. "Uprooting" is used of destroying horses in Josh 11:6, 9, but our word is "chariots," not "horses" as in Joshua 11
1. David presumably left them 100 chariots so they would not be defenseless

2. Sounds like he dismantled all 1,000 and gave back the parts of 100 of them
- R. America hasn't experienced war close to home in some time. We are likely to focus on David's severity. The defeated nations saw David's mercies clearly.

Kid-speak: David left the people of Zobah some chariot parts so they could build 100 chariots. That way, their other enemies couldn't just come and kill them. So David was still merciful.

2 Sam 8:5 And Aram of Damascus came to give help to Hadadezer the king of Zobah. And David struck 22,000 men of Aram.

- S. Damascus was very near Zobah. "Aram" is literal, but is usually translated "Syria."
1. It stood to reason that David would be more vulnerable this far from home
 2. Again, no battle details. War is serious business, usually with losses on both sides. But David prevailed again.

2 Sam 8:6 And David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus. And Aram became servants to David, bearers of an offering. And Yahweh saved David in all *places in* which he went.

- T. But Israel needed military outposts in the region to keep a good eye on them
- U. "Bearers of an offering" is the same as of Moab in v 2. It could mean a 1-time offering, but "ones bearing an offering" (lit) probably connotes some standardized, ongoing tribute.
- V. Important summary statement: In all the previous encounters, Yahweh was watching over David
1. Whatever military prowess God gave David and Israel (which He did), it was still His personal intervention that kept David alive and kept any of his military plans from being upended (weather, etc.; not meaning weather, etc. did not interfere)
 2. It is God's personal presence and intervention that saves us every day
 - a. *That's* why we meditate on Scriptures day and night- to continue to hear His guiding, saving voice

- b. *That's* why we pray without ceasing. We need God's nearness.
- c. Can He watch over us *without* our effort?
- d. He *does* watch over us despite our poor effort, but pure laziness is already its own trap of godlessness

Kid-speak: The Bible says it was God helping David in all these fights. Who is it who helps us in fighting against sin every day?

V. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, "Uphold the strengthless")
We *are* weak. It's better to know that undeniably.

VI. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, "Convince, rebuke"): **What have I done wrong?**
How have I lost righteousness?
Do I assess my situation militarily daily?

VII. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, "Exhort/encourage"):
How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?
I will remember the wrestling matches I'm in, Eph 6, Rom 7.

VIII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How will I avoid the error and follow Christ?**
God helps those ~~who help themselves~~ who know they need help.

Wrap-up: Once sin entered the world, "striking" was going to be a major factor. We "struck" against God. It's not that we hurt Him; it's that the terms of our existence were violated. We now come into the world as active enemies of God, Rom 8:7.

Christ's cross has taken "the bit of the cubit" from Satan, sin, and the world. He now has "all authority." Our understanding of the enforcement of His dominion is crucial. We operate day by day based on it. That's why molding our thoughts Scripturally is so important.

Today perhaps we see better that we don't fully appreciate Christ's dominion over our sin. How will we correct that? Lord, teach us. (Rom 6:11 is a profitable factor.)