

David's Victories

What a title for this chapter!

And don't we all like winning?

When your cricket team, netball team or football team gets up with a good win you experience a great feeling even though you were only a spectator.

When your first child is born, or your first grandchild comes along, What a feeling!

In fact, I personally have many memories of winning games and sadly a number of losses as well. One season ended up in a winning team in a First Grade premiership Grand Final, this happened in a game where my team won and I scored 3 tries! In the words of the Toyota add "What a feeling"

As you can guess I will never forget that and even today the memory gives me a warm glow. I don't mention this to beat an old well-worn drum but to help you assume that winning elated mental attitude when everything is great as we examine David's victories!

So you can Imagine how the Israelites felt with all these great victories. At last they had a king who won great battles and took control of all the Israelite

territories and as the bible tells us, became a fair and just king

So we start this chapter with those interesting words “in the course of time”. I say interesting because this first verse is referring to his defeat of the Philistines and goes on to say he subdued them. Interesting also, because we are aware that David fought and defeated the philistines previously, so chronologically this seems out of order (but let’s press on). This time he takes control, of Metheg Ammah, for those with a map of the area, this is the community we previously knew as Gath to where David fled at one stage, and it appears to be the capital of the area controlled by Philistines.

Now in the time we are looking at, where David won his victories, defeating Israel’s enemies, their custom often meant killing all the enemy and their families, and on one occasion but note he only defeated and took control of their capitol. So perhaps in this instance David did not slaughter thousands of the enemy population as happened elsewhere.

Remember in 1 Samuel when the Philistine commander Achish referred to David’s prowess in conflicts saying Saul has slain thousands but David has slain tens of thousands, the slaying of defeated communities was the norm and on one occasion

required of Saul by God . This chapter makes it clear David has taken control of the Philistine land west of Judah.

The Lord encouraged David to attack the Philistines!

As we go forward, the bible tells us David defeated the Moabites another traditional enemy of the Israelites and in this case, he laid them on the ground, measured them and slaughtered two thirds of them. We obviously live in a world far removed from these conflicts and the brutality of the actions of all the peoples of those times. Here we have David killing the Moabites who temporarily sheltered him and his family when Saul pursued him. In our days even if one of our soldiers accidentally kills civilians from an enemy nation even in a war zone, the most drastic action is loaded onto that soldier's head. Apart from the brutality of the slaughter, this chapter indicates that David has taken over Moab, the area South of Judah and describes the next step in his victories in the process of establishing his kingship over all Israel.

David's next foray is to wage war against Hadadezer son of Rehob who was king of Zobah this occurred in David's drive to restore control along the Euphrates river and with good reason, Saul had previously fought against the kings of Zobah or Aram Zobah these deities

being the equivalent of the Canaanite Baal (These are big communities in those days). At this stage there is no mention of lives being taken but David did capture a thousand chariots, seven thousand charioteers and twenty thousand-foot soldiers, not only this but he hamstrung all but a hundred of the chariot horses. If you or a horse is totally hamstrung you can no longer walk normally!!

While to most of us this would seem extremely cruel and perhaps unnecessary and our first reaction is to wonder why this happened. There are some questions we find difficult to solve in the bible, but we do know there is no mention of Israelites using chariots, so this was King David's method of disabling the armies of Zobah to prevent future attacks.

Also those who have worked with horses in droving camps in the Australian Outback or worked with horse trainers will be aware that there was a common practise of hamstringing horses that tended to stray, this did not totally disable the horse as the hamstring was only damaged and after some time would heal and during this time the horse would not stray, could be tamed and trained, so quite possibly this was David's intent. However, we also know through other parts of the script that Israelites were well, behind their

enemies such as the Philistines in their knowledge, use and ability to work with steel.

As it became likely that David would succeed against Hadadezer, king of Zobah, the Arameans of Damascus came to aid Hadadezer's army. These allies of Hadadezer made up a formidable force occupying the large expanse known as Aram-Zobah. but David put down the Aramean army and slayed twenty two thousand of them and established garrisons in the kingdom of Damascus and the Arameans became subject to his rule making him king over Aram Zobah!.

The Lord gave victory to David!

Even though the Israelites seem to lack the knowledge or skill to work with steel, David took Gold and Bronze in large quantities from the towns of Tebah and Berothai, and took it all home to Jerusalem.

David's success was so important that Tou the king of Hamath which is the large tract of land adjoining Aram-Zobah sent his son Joram to greet and congratulate David and he brought articles of Silver ,Gold and Bronze. These articles, David dedicated to God !!

So here we have the Israelites greatest most successful King. But stop.

How many people has he killed?

Doesn't Moses' tablet tell us in the Ten Commandments among other things, "Thou shall not kill?"

So, is not David sinful having commanded armies that killed tens of thousands of men, in fact after his victory at Zobar Arram it is said his army killed another eighteen thousand Edomites, bringing the known total to fifty thousand.

What of David's association and later marriage to Bathsheba (wife of Uriah a member of his elite guard) with whom he, in our terms committed adultery and then, after a little attempt at cover up, sent Uriah back into battle ordering his commander (Joab) to expose him to the very battle front where he was subsequently killed. Then was it God's punishment that Bathsheba's and David's baby died at a very young age?

As we think through all this it is not easy to feel elated as winners or to feel that David, even after his great victories could feel that way, having been involved in so many deaths, BUT

As we read through Samuel we find David always turned to God for help and advice, he also thanked God for every blessing he received and he also made

regular sacrifices seeking forgiveness of sins, are you familiar with David's Psalm of thanksgiving?

Psalm 18. Some scholars say he wrote it because David fought 18 wars some say he wrote it in his youth, after Saul's death, some say he wrote it in his old age after his men would no longer let him go onto the battle field any longer, but when you wish to worship God think of his words and particularly the first verse.

I love thee O Lord, my strength.

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
my, God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my
stronghold.

I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,
And I am saved from my enemies.

What an opening!

As the bible strongly indicates that in all these warring efforts David had God's help and support in regard to the killings, and he must have enjoyed God's mercy and forgiveness, we know he made sacrifices to atone for his sins.

So the message for us from this reading is how great God's love is for us, how wonderful is his ability to

forgive the sins of believers and his steadfast and enduring and never ending support for believers in everything we do.

In David we have the greatest King of Israel who reigned over his people for forty years, as a true theocratic king his reign was characterised by adherence to God's rule and standards but he was a man and as such was just like us sinful.

Today we have rulers all over the world who act as the kings of old, we have Donald Trump of the USA who very few of us understand and who attracts much criticism. However, compared to previous presidents of the USA has never involved his country in wars, and now has engineered the first peace in the Middle East in fifty years. We have our Queen who has reigned over Great Britain since 1953 in the most part in peace time apart from a short skirmish in The Falkland Islands. Even our Australian leaders have avoided conflicts wherever possible. So as compared to David's era we can thank our God for our peaceful existence and pray that it continues.

Going back to David's time, we move forward and come across some forty kings good bad and indifferent who ruled over Israel and Judah, then looking to the New Testament where we find our reading from Romans

where Paul advises how King Jesus taught the importance of submission to authority, because the authorities that exist have been established by God and this is still true today.

Our laws are still based on the ten commandments, briefly "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not Steal." Plus that summing up commandment given us by King Jesus "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Let us behave decently as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

That short summation of some of the teaching of King Jesus shows us the difference between a Warrior King in the old testament and a loving king in the New Testament. David who was man and sinful by nature and Jesus, God's only son whose every teaching was based on love and who came and lived as a man to show us many things illustrating once again God's forgiveness and granting believers eternal life.

How complex was God's plan that he knew the modern Israelites (Jews) would not accept a peace loving king but yearned for a warrior to lead them and the

Pharisees out of jealousy and misunderstanding would turn the people against Jesus so badly that the people gave Jesus to the Romans and demanded He be crucified. This complex plan gave definite proof that Jesus did die on the cross and after three days we know he arose from the dead showing God's forgiveness of sins, resurrection and eternal life is his gift to believers.

Amen Let pray.