

1 Chronicles 11:10-12:40 “David and His Mighty Men” (September 11, 2011)

It can be useful at times to ask “where am I in this text?”

Pastors are often tempted to think of themselves as David –
and they are looking for their “mighty men” to support him...

Only one problem: *I* have no kingdom!
Only a king needs mighty men to support him in his kingdom.
Jesus is King – and therefore Jesus is the one who has his “mighty men”
who fight in his kingdom.

But how does the Chronicler position you?

As you hear this text, are *you* challenged to become mighty men?

Maybe.

There are *three* mighty men – and there are 30 chief men.
But then there are hundred, indeed thousands,
who leave everything to follow David.

What is your place in the kingdom of the Son of David?

You will not find out until you deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him.
Kingdom service can take many forms.
But the Chronicler challenges you to devote everything
to the furtherance of David’s kingdom!

1. The Three and the Thirty: David’s Mighty Men (11:10-47)

Now, I want to start with the word “Mighty Men” – *gibbor* –
and particularly the plural form, *gibborim*.

The word *gibbor* is used 160 times – so it is a common enough word.
It is first used in Genesis 6 to refer to the Nephilim –
the mighty warriors before the flood.

A *gibbor* is not just a run-of-the-mill soldier.
A *gibbor* is a great warrior!

It can be used of the regular army – but usually only for rhetorical effect:
in Joshua the army of Israel is referred to as the *gibborim* –
not because they are all such fantastic warriors,
but because God goes before them,
making their enemies flee!

It is curious that in Judges *gibborim* is used twice of Israel's enemies,
and Gideon is the only Israelite referred to as a *gibbor* –
(and that when he is hiding in a winepress!).

David is referred to as a *gibbor* by Saul's servants in 1 Samuel 16 – a curious reference,
given that this is *before* David kills Goliath!
And in David's famous cry after the death of Saul and Jonathan,
he says "How the *gibborim* are fallen" – how the mighty are fallen.

Deuteronomy 10:17 says that *God* is a *gibbor* – he is a Mighty Warrior –
who goes before Israel to defeat his and their enemies.
And the prophets often use this
(pretty much any time you see "mighty God" that is *gibbor* –
whereas *Almighty* God is El Shaddai).

Zephaniah 3:17 says
"The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a *gibbor* who gives victory."

So the *gibbor* – the Mighty Man – is a valiant warrior.

a. The Three: The Chiefs of the Mighty Men (11:10-19)

Chapter 11 follows rather closely the account in 2 Samuel 23.

Most of the chapter is taken verbatim from 2 Samuel 23,
with only a few alterations.

Shammah, the third of the mighty men, is simply omitted (2 Sam 23:11-12)
There is simply no reference to the third mighty man!

¹⁰ *Now these are the chiefs of David's mighty men, who gave him strong support in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel. ¹¹This is an account of David's mighty men: Jashobeam, a Hachmonite, was chief of the three.^[a] He wielded his spear against 300 whom he killed at one time.*

The three are called the "chiefs of David's mighty men,
who gave him strong support in his kingdom" (v10).
Jashobeam was the chief of the three –
and he demonstrated his prowess by killing 300 at one time!

¹² *And next to him among the three mighty men was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite.*
¹³ *He was with David at Pas-dammim when the Philistines were gathered there for battle. There was a plot of ground full of barley, and the men fled from the Philistines. ¹⁴But he took his^[b] stand in the midst of the plot and defended it and killed the Philistines. And the LORD saved them by a great victory.*

The second, Eleazar, took his stand in the midst of a plot of barley.

When “the men” fled from the Philistines,
Eleazar refused to budge.

But notice how the Chronicler says it,
“And the LORD saved them by a great victory.”

We are not given all the details,
but we are to see Eleazar as a hero of faith –
as one who believed that God would do as he had promised,
and so he took his stand.

Do you believe that God will do what he has promised
in bringing the gospel to the nations?
Then take a stand to do what God has called his people to do!

A beautiful example of this is found in verses 15-19 (a famous story from 2 Samuel 23):

¹⁵Three of the thirty chief men went down to the rock to David at the cave of Adullam, when the army of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. ¹⁶David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem. ¹⁷And David said longingly, "Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!" ¹⁸Then the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and took it and brought it to David. But David would not drink it. He poured it out to the LORD ¹⁹and said, "Far be it from me before my God that I should do this. Shall I drink the lifeblood of these men? For at the risk of their lives they brought it." Therefore he would not drink it. These things did the three mighty men.

There are two things that this story brings home:

First, the Three were utterly devoted to David.
His wish was for them a command!
They loved David and would do *anything* for him.

The Chronicler holds this forth for *you* as a challenge:
Do you love Christ and his kingdom in this way?

Second, in this story we see David’s humility.
There is no “repentance” here.
David does not express regret over what he said.
Rather, he says that he should not drink “their lifeblood” –
and he pours out the water before the LORD.

Now, if you were the three mighty men what would you think of this?
You might think that they would have been disappointed –
they risk their lives for him, and he doesn’t even drink it?
If David had simply dumped the water on the ground,

that would have been an insult to them.
But David poured out the water before the LORD –
an action that would have reminded them
of how the drink offering was poured out before the LORD.

But of course, what was poured out in the drink offering?
Wine.

David is not as great as Jesus.

Jesus *turned* water into wine.

But David *treats* the water from the well at Bethlehem –
the water that the Three risked their lives for –
as though it were wine.

b. The Thirty: David's Mighty Men (11:20-47)

²⁰Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, was chief of the thirty.^[c] And he wielded his spear against 300 men and killed them and won a name beside the three. ²¹He was the most renowned^[d] of the thirty^[e] and became their commander, but he did not attain to the three.

Verses 20-47 then go on to speak of David's Mighty Men – the “Thirty.”

While the Three were David's most valiant warriors,
the Thirty seem to have been a company of warriors
(think of Arthur's “Knights of the Round Table”).

Abishai (brother of Joab) was the chief of the Thirty, and won great fame.

Likewise, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, was a “doer of great deeds”

²²And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was a valiant man^[f] of Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds. He struck down two heroes of Moab. He also went down and struck down a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen. ²³And he struck down an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits^[g] tall. The Egyptian had in his hand a spear like a weaver's beam, but Benaiah went down to him with a staff and snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. ²⁴These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and won a name beside the three mighty men. ²⁵He was renowned among the thirty, but he did not attain to the three. And David set him over his bodyguard.

He struck down two heroes of Moab – and a lion – and a massive Egyptian warrior.

He was “renowned” (the word here is the word often translated “glory” – *kabod* – literally it means “weighty”)

He was glorious among the Thirty – he had weight among the Thirty,
but he did not attain to the Three.

The statement “he did not attain to the Three”

suggests that the Three were not limited by number;
if there was another man worthy of inclusion, they would have become the Four.

It also suggests that there may have been something of a competition –
that warriors sought the glory of being numbered among the Thirty –
or attaining even to the Three.

Is it appropriate to seek glory?

Is glory-seeking inconsistent with Christian humility?

That depends on what sort of glory you are seeking!

If the Three are any example,
the glory they sought was the glory of the kingdom of David.
Whatever would please their king – that is what they would do.
Whatever would bring honor to the house of David – they'd be there.

When *that* is the sort of glory and honor you seek,
then you are on the right path to glory!

Jeremiah points us in this direction, when he says,
“Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,
let not the mighty man [the *gibbor*] glory in his might,
let not the rich man glory in his riches,
but let him who glories glory in this,
that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD
who practice steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth;
for in these things I delight, says the LORD.” (Jer 9:23-24)

Paul says in Romans 2:7 that to those who by patience in well-doing
seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

That is simply another way of saying what Jesus said:

“seek first the kingdom of God, and *his* righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.” (Matt 6:33)

The Mighty Men were not merely interested in making a name for themselves –
they were particularly concerned with making a name for David –
though it is also true, that the more glorious David became,
the greater glory would accrue to them as well!

But their central concern was for the glory of David.

Verses 26-47 give a list of the mighty men.

²⁶*The mighty men were Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem,* ²⁷*Shammoth of Harod,* ^[h]*Helez the Pelonite,* ²⁸*Ira the son of Ikkesh of Tekoa, Abiezer of Anathoth,* ²⁹*Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite,* ³⁰*Maharai of Netophah, Heled the son of Baanah of Netophah,* ³¹*Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeah of the people of Benjamin, Benaiah of Pirathon,* ³²*Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite,*

³³Azmaveth of Baharum, *Eliabba the Shaalbonite*, ³⁴Hashem^[i] the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shagee the Hararite, ³⁵Ahiam the son of Sachar the Hararite, Eliphal the son of Ur, ³⁶Hepher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite, ³⁷Hezro of Carmel, Naarai the son of Ezbai, ³⁸Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Hagri, ³⁹Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai of Beeroth, the armor-bearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah, ⁴⁰Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, ⁴¹Uriah the Hittite, Zabad the son of Ahlai, ⁴²Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a leader of the Reubenites, and thirty with him, ⁴³Hanan the son of Maacah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite, ⁴⁴Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jeiel the sons of Hotham the Aroerite, ⁴⁵Jediael the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite, ⁴⁶Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai, and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite, ⁴⁷Eliel, and Obed, and Jaasiel the Mezobaite.

This list of mighty men has some parallels – but also some differences from 2 Samuel 23. Most importantly, the list in 2 Samuel ends at Uriah the Hittite (37 men) while in Chronicles there are 47 mighty men.

At first blush, it looks like a problem.

There are supposed to be 30 mighty men, but there are actually either 37 or 47.

The solution is easy – and has two parts.

First, some of these guys died in the middle of David's reign.

We know that Uriah the Hittite did!

So when Uriah died, he would need to be replaced,
and so you wind up with 31.

It doesn't take long to get to 37 or 47!

Second, there is no reason why we must insist that the number "30" was always strictly adhered to!

If for some reason there were 28 or 32 at any given time,
it would still be appropriate to speak of "the Thirty"!

In Samuel, the account of the mighty men, the Three and the Thirty comes at the end of the account of David's reign.

In Chronicles, the mighty men are listed first.

What does this do?

In Samuel it can look at times as though David did this all by himself – solely with the help of the LORD – through the ministry of Samuel the prophet.

But in Chronicles we see that David had a lot more help than we thought!

Yes, he was chosen by God and anointed by Samuel,

but he was also supported and established by a host of Mighty Men – *gibborim* – who gave everything to follow DAVID.

2. The Growth of David's Army (12:1-22)

a. The Benjaminites Follow David at Ziklag (1-7)

¹ 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 Gibeah; 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, ^[i] Jahaziel, Johanan, Jozabad of Gederah, ⁵ Eluzai, ^[k] 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.

David's time at Ziklag is documented in 1 Samuel 27 –
when Saul had chased him from the land,
and he was forced to take refuge among the Philistines.

Here we are told about the men who came to him.

“They were bowmen and could shoot arrows and sling stones
with either the right or the left hand.”

The book of Judges tells us about men with a similar talent!

They were fighting men from Benjamin –
men who had fought on behalf of the apostates of Gibeah,
and who had fought against Israel,
when Israel sought to bring justice to the wicked.

Now we are told that these men were also Benjaminites –
but they were not just Benjaminites –
they were of the house of Saul.

But these warriors of Benjamin are following David.

Jesus said that those who would follow him
must leave father, mother, wife, children, lands, and everything else!
That's precisely what these kinsmen of Saul do.
Their kinsman is the *king* of Israel.
And yet they leave him to follow the outcast in the wilderness.

b. The Gadites Follow David at the Stronghold (8-15)

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.*

11 warriors from Gad likewise went over to David at the stronghold in the wilderness.
These men were “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.” (v8)

Gad is on the east side of the Jordan – the far side,
with Reuben and the ½ tribe of Manasseh.
The Chronicler is beginning to speak of the geographical spread of David’s army.

c. Amasai Prophecies by the Spirit (v16-18)

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."*

We saw in Zephaniah 3:17 that the LORD is a *gibbor* – a mighty warrior – who gives victory;

But Zephaniah 3:17 goes on to say that the LORD
“will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.”

The *gibbor* – the mighty warrior – not only is a powerful warrior,
he is also a mighty singer!

You see this throughout the OT.

A real man (in the OT) is a mighty warrior who defeats his enemies.
But a real man is also a great poet who speaks wise and persuasive words.

There are many these days who are trying to urge men to be more “manly.”

But manliness (in biblical terms)
always includes both power *and* wisdom.

The *gibbor* – the most valiant of all men –
is also supposed to be a wise and persuasive speaker.

Do you know how to use your muscles?
Also learn how to use your vocabulary!

We need more warrior-poets!

(and especially since in the NT, our chief weapon is the scriptures –
the Word of God)

Do you know how to use the scriptures in your spiritual warfare?

If not, then we need to work on that!

Then David received them and made them officers of his troops.

d. Manasseh Abandons Saul to Follow David (19-22)

¹⁹Some 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.") ²⁰As he went to Ziklag, these men of Manasseh deserted to him: Adnah, Jozabad, Jedaiel, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai, chiefs of thousands in Manasseh. ²¹They helped David against the band of raiders, for they were all mighty men of valor and were commanders in the army. ²²For from day to day men came to David to help him, until there was a great army, like an army of God.

Verse 19 summarizes 1 Samuel 29,

when David had been pretending to serve the Philistines for a time,
and came to the brink of going to war against Saul –
but the Philistines refused to let David join them, for fear he might desert.

But then in verse 20, the Chronicler tells us that some of the men of Manasseh deserted Saul to follow David at the same time –
and they went to help David against the raiders
(1 Samuel 30 tells the story).

And then verse 22 says that they kept coming – day after day –
as men came to help David, until there was a great army –
like an army of God!

The army of God is then detailed in verses 23-40

3. The Army of Israel at Hebron (12:23-40)

²³These 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. ²⁴The men of Judah bearing shield and spear were 6,800 armed troops. ²⁵Of the Simeonites, mighty men of valor for war, 7,100. ²⁶Of the Levites 4,600. ²⁷The prince Jehoiada, of the house of Aaron, and with him 3,700. ²⁸Zadok, a young man mighty in valor, and twenty-two commanders from his own fathers' house. ²⁹Of the Benjaminites,

the kinsmen of Saul, 3,000, of whom the majority had to that point kept their allegiance to the house of Saul. ³⁰Of the Ephraimites 20,800, mighty men of valor, famous men in their fathers' houses. ³¹Of the half-tribe of Manasseh 18,000, who were expressly named to come and make David king. ³²Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command. ³³Of Zebulun 50,000 seasoned troops, equipped for battle with all the weapons of war, to help David^U with singleness of purpose. ³⁴Of Naphtali 1,000 commanders with whom were 37,000 men armed with shield and spear. ³⁵Of the Danites 28,600 men equipped for battle. ³⁶Of Asher 40,000 seasoned troops ready for battle. ³⁷Of the Reubenites and Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh from beyond the Jordan, 120,000 men armed with all the weapons of war.

This episode is spoken of in 2 Samuel 5 –

but the Chronicler wants us to see not just that “all Israel” came to Hebron –
but the numbers – and the heroes – the mighty men (v24, 28, 30),
the wise men – men who had understanding of the times (v32).

³⁸All these, men of war, arrayed in battle order, came to Hebron with full intent to make David king over all Israel. Likewise, all the rest of Israel were of a single mind to make David king. ³⁹And they were there with David for three days, eating and drinking, for their brothers had made preparation for them. ⁴⁰And 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.

So with several hundred thousand people gathered at Hebron,
all Israel gathered to celebrate their new king –

“for there was joy in Israel”

And when there is joy, there is a feast!

We saw this last time, that when Saul died,
the men of Jabesh-Gilead fasted seven days
Fasting is appropriate for corporate mourning or loss.
But feasting is also appropriate for times of great celebration.

Think of the question that Jesus is asked:
“why do not your disciples fast?”

His answer was that because they have the bridegroom with them, they do not fast –
but when the bridegroom is taken away, then they will fast.

We need to learn better how to be warrior poets
who will do mighty deeds for the kingdom of Jesus,
wielding the sword of his Spirit,
speaking glorious things of our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ.