

# CHAPTER 12

What the mighty men did towards making David king we read in the foregoing chapter. Here we are told what the many did towards it. It was not all at once, but gradually, that David ascended the throne. His kingdom was to last; and therefore, like fruits that keep longest, it ripened slowly. After he had long waited for the vacancy of the throne, it was at two steps and those above seven years distant, that he ascended it. Now we are here told,

**I.** What help came in to him to Ziklag, to make him king of Judah (v. 1-22).

**II.** What help came in to him in Hebron, to make him king over all Israel, above seven years after (v. 23-40).

## 1 CHRONICLES 12:1-22

### DAVID'S ARMY

We have here an account of those that appeared and acted as David's friends, upon the death of Saul, to bring about the revolution. All the forces he had, while he was persecuted, was but 600 men, who served for his guards; but, when the time had come that he must begin to act offensively, Providence brought in more to his assistance. Even while he *kept himself close, because of Saul* (v. 1), while he did not appear, to invite or encourage his friends and well-wishers to come in to him (not foreseeing that the death of Saul was so near), God was inclining and preparing them to come over to him with seasonable succours. Those that trust God to do his work for them in his own way and time shall find his providence outdoing all their forecast and contrivance. The war was God's, and he found out helpers of the war, whose forwardness to act for the man God designed for the government is here recorded to their honour.

**I.** Some, even of Saul's brethren, of the tribe of Benjamin, and a-kin to him, came over to David, v. 2. What moved them to it we are not told. Probably a generous indignation at the base treatment which Saul, one of

their tribe, gave him, animated them to appear the more vigorously for him, that the guilt and reproach of it might not lie upon them. These Benjamites are described to be men of great dexterity, that were trained up in shooting and slinging, and used both hands alike — ingenious active men; a few of these might do David a great deal of service. Several of the leading men of them are here named. See ~~1216~~Judges 20:16.

**II.** Some of the tribe of Gad, though seated on the other side Jordan, had such a conviction of David's title to the government, and fitness for it, that they *separated themselves from their brethren* (a laudable separation it was) to go to David, though he was *in the hold in the wilderness* (v. 8), probably some of his strong holds in the wilderness of Engedi. They were but few, eleven in all, here named, but they added much to David's strength. Those that had hitherto come in to his assistance were most of them men of broken fortunes, distressed, discontented, and soldiers of fortune, that came to him rather for protection than to do him any service, ~~1217~~1 Samuel 22:2. But these Gadites were brave men, *men of war, and fit for the battle*, v. 8. For,

- 1.** They were *able-bodied men*, men of incredible swiftness, not to fly from, but to fly upon, the enemy, and to pursue the scattered forces. In this they were *as swift as the roes upon the mountains*, so that no man could escape from them; and yet they had *faces like the faces of lions*, so that no man could out-fight them.
- 2.** They were disciplined men, trained up to military exercises; they could handle shield and buckler, use both offensive and defensive weapons.
- 3.** They were officers of the militia in their own tribe (v. 14), so that though they did not bring soldiers with them they had them at command, hundreds, thousands.
- 4.** They were daring men, that could break through the greatest difficulties. Upon some expedition or other, perhaps this to David, they swam over the Jordan, when it *overflowed all its banks*, v. 15. Those are fit to be employed in the cause of God that can venture thus in a dependence upon the divine protection.
- 5.** They were men that would go through with the business they engaged in. What enemies those were that they met with in the valleys, when they had passed Jordan, does not appear; but they put them to flight with their

lion-like faces, and pursued them with matchless fury, both *towards the east and towards the west*; which way soever they turned, they followed their blow, and did not do their work by halves.

**III.** Some of Judah and Benjamin came to him, v. 16. Their leader was Amasai, whether the same with that Amasa that afterwards sided with Absalom (<sup>1075</sup>2 Samuel 17:25) or no does not appear. Now here we have,

**1.** David's prudent treaty with them, v. 17. He was surprised to see them, and could not but conceive some jealousy of the intentions of their coming, having been so often in danger by the treachery of the men of Ziph and the men of Keilah, who yet were all men of Judah. He might well be timorous whose life was so much struck at; he might well be suspicious who had been deceived in so many that he said, in his haste, *All men are liars*. No marvel that he meets these men of Judah with caution. Observe,

**(1.)** How he puts the matter to themselves, how fairly he deals with them. As they are, they shall find him; so shall all that deal with the Son of David.

**[1.]** If they be faithful and honourable, he will be their rewarder: "*If you have come peaceably unto me, to help me, though you have come late and have left me exposed a great while, though you bring no great strength with you to turn the scale for me, yet I will thankfully accept your goodwill, and my heart shall be knit unto you; I will love you and honour you, and do you all the kindness I can.*" Affection, respect, and service, that are cordial and sincere, will find favour with a good man, as they do with a good God, though clogged with infirmities, and turning to no great account. But,

**[2.]** If they be false, and come to betray him into the hands of Saul, under colour of friendship, he leaves them to God to be their avenger, as he is, and will be, of every thing that is treacherous and perfidious. Never was man more violently run upon, and run down, than David was (except the Son of David himself), and yet he had the testimony of his conscience that there was no wrong in his hands. He meant no harm to any man, which was his rejoicing in the day of evil, and enabled him, when he feared treachery, to commit his cause to him that judges righteously. He will not be judge in his own cause, though a wise man, nor avenge himself, though a man of valour; but let the righteous God, who hath said, *Vengeance is mine*, do both. *The God of our fathers look thereon and rebuke it.*

(2.) In this appeal observe,

[1.] He calls God the *God of our fathers*, both his fathers and theirs. Thus he reminded them not to deal ill with him; for they were both descendants from the same patriarchs, and both dependents on the same God. Thus he encouraged himself to believe that God would right him if he should be abused; for he was the *God of his fathers* and therefore a blessing was entailed on him, and a God to all Israel and therefore not only a Judge to all the earth, but particularly concerned in determining controversies between contesting Israelites.

[2.] He does not imprecate any fearful judgement upon them, though they should deal treacherously, but very modestly refers his cause to the divine wisdom and justice: The Lord *look thereon*, and judge as he sees (for he sees men's hearts), and *rebuke it*. It becomes those that appeal to God to express themselves with great temper and moderation; for the wrath of man *works not the righteousness of God*.

2. Their hearty closure with him, v. 18. Amasai was their spokesman, on whom the *Spirit of the Lord came*, not a spirit of prophecy, but a spirit of wisdom and resolution, according to the occasion, putting words into his mouth, unpremeditated, which were proper both to give David satisfaction and to animate those that accompanied him. Nothing could be said finer, more lively, or more pertinent to the occasion. For himself and all his associates,

(1.) He professed a very cordial adherence to David, and his interest, against all that opposed him, and a resolution to stand by him with the hazard of all that was dear to him: *Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse*. In calling him *son of Jesse* they reminded themselves that he was lineally descended from Nahshon and Salmon, who in their days were princes of the tribe of Judah. Saul called him so in disdain (<sup>1</sup>Samuel 20:27; 22:7), but they looked upon it as his honour. They were convinced that God was on his side; and therefore, *Thine are we, David, and on thy side*. It is good, if we must side, to side with those that side with God and have God with them.

(2.) He wished prosperity to David and his cause, not drinking a health, but praying for peace to him and all his friends and well-wishers: "*Peace, peace, be unto thee, all the good thy heart desires, and peace be to thy helpers, among whom we desire to be reckoned, that peace may be on us.*"

**(3.)** He assured him of help from heaven: “*For thy God helpeth thee;* therefore we wish peace may be, and therefore we doubt not but peace shall be, to thee and thy helpers. God is thy God, and those that have him for their God no doubt have him for their helper in every time of need and danger.” From these expressions of Amasai we may take instruction how to testify our affection and allegiance to the Lord Jesus. His we must be without reservation or power of revocation. On his side we must be forward to appear and act. To his interest we must be hearty well-wishers: “Hosanna! prosperity to his gospel and kingdom;” for his God helpeth him, and will till he shall have put down all opposing rule, principality, and power.

**3.** David's cheerful acceptance of them into his interest and friendship. Charity and honour teach us to let fall our jealousies as soon as satisfaction is given us: *David received them*, and preferred them to be *captains of the band*.

**IV.** Some of Manasseh likewise joined with him, v. 19. Providence gave them a fair opportunity to do so when he and his men marched through their country upon this occasion. Achish took David with him when he went out to fight with Saul; but the lords of the Philistines obliged him to withdraw. We have the story, ~~<B294>~~ 1 Samuel 29:4, etc. In his return some great men of Manasseh, who had no heart to join with Saul against the Philistines struck in with David, and very seasonably, to help him *against the band of Amelekites* who plundered Ziklag; they were not many, but they were all mighty men and did David good service upon that occasion, 1 Samuel 30. See how Providence provides. David's interest grew strangely just when he had occasion to make use of it, v. 22. Auxiliary forces flocked in daily, *till he had a great host*. When the promise comes to the birth, leave it to God to find strength to bring forth.

## ~~<B123>~~ 1 CHRONICLES 12:23-40

### DAVID'S ARMY

We have here an account of those who were active in perfecting the settlement of David upon the throne, after the death of Ishbosheth. We read (~~<B100>~~ 1 Chronicles 11:1, and before ~~<A001>~~ 2 Samuel 5:1) that *all the tribes of Israel came*, either themselves or by their representatives, to Hebron, to

make David king; now here we have an account of the quota which every tribe brought in *ready armed to the war*, in case there should be any opposition, v. 23. We may observe here,

**I.** That those tribes that lived nearest brought the fewest — Judah but 6800 (v. 24), Simeon but 7100 (v. 25); whereas Zebulun, that lay remote, brought 50,000, Asher 40,000, and the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan 120,000. Not as if the next adjacent tribes were cold in the cause; but they showed as much of their prudence in bringing few, since all the rest lay so near within call, as the others did of their zeal in bringing so many. The men of Judah had enough to do to entertain those that came from afar.

**II.** The Levites themselves, and the priests (called here the *Aaronites*), appeared very hearty in this cause, and were ready, if there were occasion, to fight for David, as well as pray for him, because they knew he was called of God to the government, v. 26-28.

**III.** Even some of the kindred of Saul came over to David (v. 29), not so many as of the other tribes, because a foolish affection for their own tribe, and a jealousy for the honour of it, kept many of them long in the sinking interest of Saul's family. Kindred should never over-rule conscience. Call no man *Father* to this extent, but God only.

**IV.** It is said of most of these that they were *mighty men of valour* (v. 25, 28, 30), of others that they were *expert in war* (v. 35, 36), and of them all that they *could keep rank*, v. 38. They had a great deal of martial fire, and yet were governable and subject to the rules of order — warm hearts but cool heads.

**V.** Some were so considerate as to bring with them arms, and all instruments for war (v. 24, 33, 37), for how could they think that David should be able to furnish them?

**VI.** The men of Issachar were the fewest of all, only 200, and yet as serviceable to David's interest as those that brought in the greatest numbers, these few being in effect the whole tribe. For,

**1.** They were men of great skill above any of their neighbours, men that *had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do*. They understood the natural times, could *discern the face of the sky*, were

weather-wise, could advise their neighbours in the proper times for ploughing, sowing reaping, etc. Or the ceremonial times, the times appointed for the solemn feasts; therefore they are said to *call the people to the mountain* (<sup><133></sup>Deuteronomy 33:19), for almanacs were not then so common as now. Or, rather, the political times; they understood public affairs, the temper of the nation, and the tendencies of the present events. It is the periphrasis of statesmen that they *know the times*, <sup><1013></sup>Esther 1:13. Those of that tribe were greatly intent on public affairs, had good intelligence from abroad and made a good use of it. They knew *what Israel ought to do*: from their observation and experience they learned both their own and others' duty and interest. In this critical juncture they knew Israel ought to make David king. It was not only expedient, but necessary; the present posture of affairs called for it. The men of Issachar dealt mostly in country business, and did not much intermeddle in public affairs, which gave them an opportunity of observing others and conversing with themselves. A stander-by sees sometimes more than a gamester.

2. They were men of great interests; for *all their brethren were at their commandment*. The commonality of that tribe having *bowed their shoulder to bear* (<sup><1495></sup>Genesis 49:15), the great men had them at their beck. Hence we read of *the princes of Issachar*, <sup><1065></sup>Judges 5:15. They knew how to rule, and the rest knew how to obey. It is happy indeed when those that should lead are intelligent and judicious, and those who are to follow are modest and obsequious.

**VII.** It is said of them all that they engaged in this enterprise *with a perfect heart* (v. 38), and particularly of the men of Zebulun that they were *not of double heart*, v. 33. They were, in this matter, *Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile*. And this was their perfection, that they were of one heart, v. 38. None had any separate interests, but all for the public good.

**VIII.** The men of Judah, and others of the adjacent tribes, prepared for the victualling of their respective camps when they came to Hebron, v. 39, 40. Those that were at the least pains in travelling to this convention, or congress of states, thought themselves obliged to be at so much the more charge in entertaining the rest, that there might be something of an equality. A noble feast was made (was *made for laughter*, <sup><2109></sup>Ecclesiastes 10:19) upon this occasion, for there was *joy in Israel*, v. 40. And good reason; for *when the righteous bear rule the city rejoices*. Thus, when the throne of Christ is set up in a soul, there is, or ought to be, great joy in that

soul: and provision is made for the feasting of it, not as here for two or three days, but for the whole life, nay, for eternity.