

1 Chronicles Chapter 20

In verses 1-8: David's wars. Though the Lord will severely correct the sins of his believing people, he will not leave them in the hands of their enemies. His assistance will overcome all advantages of number and strength of those that defy his Israel. All that trust in Christ, shall be made more than conquerors through him that loves them.

Verses 1-3: (See notes on 2 Sam. 11:1; 12:29-31). The chronicler was not inspired by God to mention David's sin with Bath-sheba and subsequent sins (recorded in 2 Sam. 11:2 – 12:23). The adultery and murder occurred at this time, while David stayed in Jerusalem instead of going to battle. The story was likely omitted because the book was written to focus on God's permanent interest in His people, Israel, and the perpetuity of David's kingdom.

Fuller details of this campaign can be found (in 2 Sam. 12:26-31). For David's treatment of the Ammonites (see the note on 2 Sam. 12:31).

1 Chronicles 20:1 "And it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the time that kings go out [to battle], Joab led forth the power of the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried at Jerusalem. And Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it."

"After the year was expired ... David tarried at Jerusalem;" (2 Sam. 11:2 – 12:25). Kings often went to war in the spring because the weather was more favorable and the men had more time after harvesting their crops.

It appears that the army that was besieged in the city was never destroyed in the last lesson. David had led the army against the Syrians and defeated them, but the Ammonites had not been destroyed. A year had passed and in the spring, the army led by Joab, attacked the Ammonites who were scattered throughout the country side. Then Joab attacked Rabbah. It appears, there was victory over the city as well.

1 Chronicles 20:2 "And David took the crown of their king from off his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and [there were] precious stones in it; and it was set upon David's head: and he brought also exceeding much spoil out of the city."

"The crown of their king": Or, "of Milcom" or "Moloch," their god. The Hebrew: malkâm, "their Melech" (i.e., king), occurs in this sense (Zeph. 1:5; compare Amos 5:26). The same title is applied by the prophets to Jehovah (Isa. 6:5; 44:6), "Jahweh, the king [melech] of Israel" (compare Zeph. 3:15, and John 1:49; 12:15; 2 Sam. 12:12; Psalms 5:2; 89:18; Isa. 8:21; and Jer. 10:10). The LXX here has "Molchom, their king"; Vulgate, "Melchom"; Arabic, "Malcha, their god;" all confirming our rendering.

"A talent of gold": The Arabic Version says one hundred pounds. Modern scholars consider the "talent of gold" as about one hundred and twenty five pounds troy. If the weight was anything like this, the crown was obviously more suited for the head of a big idol than of a man.

"And there were precious stones in it": Samuel includes their weight in the talent.

"And it was set (Hebrew, became), upon David's head": Vulgate, "he made himself a crown out of it." This may be the meaning; or else the weighty mass of gold and jewels may have been held over the king's head by his attendants on the occasion of its capture.

"Exceeding much spoil": Compare the continual boast of the Assyrian conquerors: "spoils without number I carried off."

We know from the last lesson; these people were wealthy. They had sent 3,000,000 shekels of silver to hire soldiers to fight for them. A talent is speaking of 125 pounds. It is also too heavy for a person to wear on his head. I would think that several of his men held it on his head. The crown was probably on a statue, or idol, of some kind. The main message here, is that there was great wealth in this city which David and his men took as spoil.

1 Chronicles 20:3 "And he brought out the people that [were] in it, and cut [them] with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon. And David and all the people returned to Jerusalem."

Better, "And the people that were in it he brought out, and sawed with the saw, and with the iron threshing drags (Isa. 41:15), and with the axes."

"Sawed": The Hebrew is an old word, only found here. Samuel reads, by change of one letter, "set them in," or "among," the saws, etc.

"With the axes": So Samuel. Our Hebrew text repeats the word "saw" in the plural, owing to a scribe's error. The two words differ by a single letter. Samuel adds, "and made them pass through the brick-kiln," or "Moloch's fire" (2 Kings 23:10).

"Even so dealt David": Literally, and so David used to do. These cruelties were enacted again at the taking of every Ammonite city. There needs no attempt to palliate such revolting savagery; but according to the ideas of that age it was only a glorious revenge. As David treated Ammon, so would the Ammonites have treated Israel, had the victory been theirs. Compare their behavior to the Gileadites (Amos 1:13); and also the atrocities of Assyrian conquerors (Hosea 10:14); and of the Babylonians (Psalm 137:7-9).

The Ammonites were so cruel themselves, is possibly the reason for the cruelty of David here. They brutally killed these people is enough to say about this. The Ammonites had caused their own children to be killed by walking through the fire in sacrifice to their false god.

Verses 4-8: Several differences between the account here and that of (2 Sam. 21:15-22), can be observed:

- (1) In 2 Samuel, the place of battle is listed as Gob, rather the "Gezer";

- (2) In 2 Samuel, the slain giant's son was Saph, rather the "Sippai";
- (3) "Goliath's" slain "brother, Lahmi" (verse 5), is unnamed in the account in 2 Samuel;
- (4) Abishai's slaying of the giant Ishbi-benob goes unnoticed in the chronicler's record.

However, the differences are minimal:

- (1) Gob was located close to Gezer; therefore, the later author of Chronicles may simply have used the more familiar name, particularly Saph and Sippai are mere variants;
- (2) The latter two problems are simply cases of each author's own particular selection of the details on which he wished comment. The two accounts are supplementary, not contradictory.

The chronicler chose not to write of some of the darker days in David's reign especially the revolt of David's son Absalom, for the same reason the iniquity of the king with Bath-sheba was left out.

1 Chronicles 20:4 "And it came to pass after this, that there arose war at Gezer with the Philistines; at which time Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Sippai, [that was] of the children of the giant: and they were subdued."

Compare notes on (1 Chron. 18:1; 19:1). The chronicler has omitted, whether by accident or design, the account with which (in 2 Sam. 21:15-17), this fragmentary section begins, and which tells how David was all but slain by the giant Ishbi-benob.

"There arose war": Literally, there stood, a unique phrase, which perhaps originated in a misreading of that which appears (in 2 Sam. 21:18), "there became again."

"Gezer": Samuel, "Gob," an unknown place. Each word (spelling Gôb fully), has three consonants in Hebrew, of which the first is common to both, and the other two are similar enough to make corruption easy. For "Gezer," (see Joshua 16:3). The Syriac and Arabic here read "Gaza"; but Gezer (so LXX. and Vulgate), seems right.

"Sibbechai the Hushathite" (see 1 Chron. 11:29; 27:11).

"Sippai": Samuel, "Saph."

"Of the children of the giant": Render, Sippai, of the offspring; a special term, yêlîdê (see Num. 13:22; Joshua 15:14), of the Rephaites. "Rapha" was doubtless the collective tribal designation of the gigantic Rephaim (Gen. 14:5).

"And they were subdued" (added by chronicler).

Gezer in other places, is spoken of as Gob, and in another place as Gath. It was located about 18 miles northeast of Jerusalem. The Philistines were constantly an enemy. Sibbechai was a prominent family of Judah, the Zarhites. Sippai was from the family of giants. He was a Philistine. Sippai is the same as Saph. The message here is that Sibbechai killed Sippai.

1 Chronicles 20:5 "And there was war again with the Philistines; and Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear staff [was] like a weaver's beam."

The parallel account in (2 Sam. 21:18-20), confirms that this was "the brother of Goliath." For the story of the battle between David and Goliath (see 1 Sam. 17:32-57; see the note on 1 Sam. 17:50).

The giant Goliath, was a huge man, but it took only one stone from the sling of David to topple him. The fact that a man of great stature gets in a battle with a small man, does not necessarily mean the giant will win. We see Elhanan killing the brother of Goliath here. We may assume he was great in size as well. The strength of Almighty God in David and in Elhanan, was what killed the giants. A small man full of the LORD, had great power. Physical strength is not what wins battles. It is not the size of the man in the battle, but the size of the heart in the man that wins.

1 Chronicles 20:6 "And yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of [great] stature, whose fingers and toes [were] four and twenty, six [on each hand], and six [on each foot]: and he also was the son of the giant."

"Man of great stature": Samuel has a slightly different form.

"Whose fingers": The Authorized Version here agrees with the Hebrew text of Samuel. The Hebrew text of Chronicles is abridged: "And his digits six and six - twenty and four."

"Was the son of the giant": Was born to the Rephaite: i.e., the clan so named.

Not only was he unnatural, with his 24 fingers and toes, but was possibly clumsy as well. Great size makes it difficult to move around very quickly. He was frightening to look at, but not very agile in battle.

1 Chronicles 20:7 "But when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea David's brother slew him."

"Jonathan" (see 1 Sam. 13:3, 32; 1 Chron. 27:32; compare also 1 Chron. 2:13), where it is probable that "nephew" should be read for "uncle". It is to be noticed that the name of this child of the giant, of twelve fingers and twelve toes, is not mentioned. We are not compelled, therefore, to regard it as remarkable that he of the fifth verse should not be named.

Jonathan was the nephew of David and probably had heard many times how David had slain the giant. This probably gave him the courage to come against the giant. This giant defied Israel as Goliath had done, and David's nephew, Jonathan, killed him.

1 Chronicles 20:8 "These were born unto the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants."

Again “giant” is the Heb. “Rapha.” The meaning is that these belonged to a branch of the Rephaim which was settled in Gath (see the note on 2 Sam. 21:15-22).

The giant, and all 4 of his sons, were slain by David and those who served David. Jonathan was mentioned in particular, as killing one of them. We do not know whether David actually killed any of the sons, or whether his men did it. Either way, it would be credited to David.

1 Chronicles Chapter 20 Questions

1. How much time elapsed from the last lesson to the time of this lesson?
2. Who had defeated the Syrians?
3. What time of year was this speaking of?
4. Who smote Rabbah?
5. How much did the king of Ammon's crown weigh?
6. How many pounds is that?
7. Whose head was it placed on?
8. David and his men brought _____ spoil out of the city.
9. What terrible death was inflicted upon the people?
10. What terrible thing had these Ammonites done to their own children?
11. There arose war at Gezer with the _____.
12. Who did Sibbechai kill?
13. What are some other names for Gezer?
14. Where was it located?
15. What family was Sibbechai from?
16. Sippai was from what family?
17. Sippai was the same as _____.
18. Who slew Lahmi?
19. Verse 5, says Lahmi was whom?

20. Goliath was toppled by what?

21. How many fingers and toes did the giant, in verse 6, have?

22. Who killed the giant in verse 7?

23. The family of the giant fell by whom?