

## **The Ideal United Kingdom (1 Chronicles 9:35 – 2 Chronicles 9:31)**

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<h3 style="margin: 0;">David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem: David's Distinguishing Blessings (1 Chronicles 14:1-17)</h3>
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#### *David's Distinguishing Blessings (14:1-17)*

Having ended the previous section with David's failure to bring the ark to Jerusalem, the Chronicler moved quickly to cast positive light on David's kingdom. In all likelihood he recognized that the preceding narrative could raise serious questions among his readers. If David failed so terribly, what made his dynasty different from the cursed line of Saul? Why was David's family not rejected as well? The Chronicler responded to this question by reminding his readers of several blessings David had received. These blessings demonstrated that David's kingship was special in the eyes of God.

#### *Comparison of 14:1-17 with 2 Samuel 5:11-25*

In this chapter the Chronicler depended heavily on 2 Samuel 5:11-25 (see figure 14). Several differences, however, should be noted.

First, the most significant variation in Chronicles is a large scale shift of sequence. In the book of Samuel, 2 Sam 5:11-12 appears before David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:1-11). The Chronicler broke with this historical sequence and placed these earlier events after David's failure. For this reason, it would be appropriate to translate the main verbs in this entire section as pluperfects: "... had sent messengers ..." (14:1), "...had taken more wives" (14:3), "...had heard..." (14:8), "...had raided..." (14:13), "...had spread..." (14:17).

Second, several variations in the list of David's progeny result from combining names from 1 Chr 3:1-9 with 2 Sam 3:2-5 and 5:13-16. As a result, Chronicles lists thirteen sons, while the book of Samuel lists only eleven.

Third, in 14:8 the Chronicler replaced "Israel" (2 Sam 5:17) with his characteristic **all Israel**. This shift continued the Chronicler's focus on the extent of David's ideal reign.

Fourth, the Chronicler changed "and David and his men carried them [Philistine gods] off" (2 Sam 5:21) to **and David gave orders to burn them in the fire** (14:12). Some textual witnesses of Samuel read exactly as 1 Chr 14:12. It is therefore possible that 2 Sam 5:21 originally read the same as Chronicles (*Introduction: Translation and Transmission*). If this variation came from the Chronicler's hand, it simply specified more clearly that David treated the Philistine gods according to Mosaic Law.

Fifth, the Chronicler's additional comment in 14:17 demonstrated that David's victories (14:8-16) were so great that the nations feared him.

### *Structure of 14:1-17*

This chapter divides into three sections (see figure 14). Simple narratives describe several blessings which David received: international recognition and successful construction (14:1-2), a large progeny (14:3-7), and victories resulting in widespread international fame (14:8-17). As the comments below will demonstrate, these blessings established important contrasts between David and Saul. The first episode ends with the assertion that God had made David king over Israel (14:2). This fact contrasts with the Chronicler's assertion that God killed Saul (see 10:14). The second episode focuses on David's growing progeny (14:3-7). Although Saul's house had died (see 10:6), David's house grew. The third episode concerns David's victories over the Philistines (14:8-17). As we will see, these victories contrasted with Saul's failures in a number of ways.

### *David Acknowledged by Hiram (14:1-2)*

The first contrast between David and Saul built on Hiram's acknowledgment of David. This simple narrative divides into two parts: Hiram's honor (14:1) and David's realization (14:2).

### *Hiram Honors David (14:1)*

**Hiram king of Tyre** (a Phoenician coastal city) sent men to help with David's palace construction (14:1). Hiram is best known for the similar assistance he gave Solomon in temple construction (see 2 Chr 2:3-16). By sending his men to David, Hiram demonstrated great respect and affection for the king of Israel.

The mention of David's **palace** construction in a context exalting David fit well with the ancient Near Eastern environment of this book. In the cultures surrounding Israel,

successful building projects were often offered as proof of divine favor toward a king. This theme appears many times in the book of Chronicles (see *Introduction: 24) Building and Destruction*).

#### *David's Realization (14:2)*

As a result of Hiram's recognition and his own palace construction, **David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel** (14:2). Although this passage appears in Samuel, it added to the Chronicler's emphasis that God, not human effort, had exalted David (see 10:13-14; 11:3,9-10,14; 12:18,23; see also *Divine Involvement in History*).

This passage also repeats the Chronicler's emphasis on the benefit of David's kingship to the nation of Israel (see 11:10; see also *Introduction: 4-9) King and Temple*). God exalted David **for the sake of his people Israel** (14:2). David's line was established to bring blessing to the nation.

Beyond this, David's realization that God had established him as king displayed a marked contrast between David and Saul. The preceding chapter reported how David seriously violated the worship of God and brought divine wrath against Israel (see 13:7-14). This negative event raised the possibility that David's kingship was on the same level as Saul's. For this reason, the Chronicler explained that God did not treat David and Saul in the same manner. God had destroyed the kingdom of Saul (see 10:13-14), but he had established David and his dynasty to benefit the people of Israel.

#### *David Blessed with Many Sons (14:3-7)*

The Chronicler moved to another set of blessings which distinguished David from Saul. He first reported that David **took more wives** and had **more sons** (14:3). Following this general statement, the Chronicler listed the names of David's sons (14:4-7). This list is larger than its parallel in 2 Sam 5:14-16. The Chronicler added the names **Elpelet** and **Nogah** (14:5). Large numbers of descendants frequently appear in Chronicles as an indication of divine favor (see *Introduction: 25) Increase and Decline of Progeny*).

In this case, the dissimilarity with Saul is evident. God had not only killed Saul, but **all his house** (10:6). Thus Saul's family was no longer a violable royal line. David's house, however, increased greatly. His family was to be Israel's royal house in all ages.

*David's Victories over Philistines (14:8-17)*

Two episodes of warfare with the Philistines close the contrasts between David and Saul. The Chronicler had already reported how the Philistines killed Saul's sons and terrified Saul into suicide. The Philistines won a spectacular victory over Israel and desecrated Saul's body before their gods (see 10:1-10). David's encounters with the Philistines stood in stark contrast with those earlier events.

*Structure of 14:8-17*

This material consists of two five-step episodes surrounded by a balancing introduction and conclusion (see figure 14). The two episodes of David's battles with the Philistines are enclosed by an introductory report that the Philistines pursued David (14:8) and by a conclusion that David was secure against his enemies (14:17). The intervening episodes are parallel with each other in several important ways. 1) Both passages concern Philistine aggression in the **Valley of Rephaim** (14:9 and **once more** in 14:13). 2) David **inquired of God** in both battles (14:10 and **again** in 14:14). 3) God assured David that divine power would win both conflicts (14:10b,15). 4) David obeyed the word of the Lord in both situations (14:11a,16). 5) Tremendous victory came to David both times (14:12,16).

*David Meets Pursuing Philistines (14:8)*

This story opens with the Philistines coming against David because he **had been anointed king** (14:8). As such, this episode opens with a Philistine challenge directly against David's safety, much like the Philistines had pursued Saul and his family earlier (see 10:1-14). Unlike the days of Saul, however, Israel did not flee from the Philistines. Instead, **David ... went out to meet them** (14:8).

*First Victory over the Philistines (14:9-12)*

The first battle between David and the Philistines divides into five symmetrical steps (see figure 14). This episode begins with a raid by the Philistines (14:9) and ends with rituals of victory (14:12). The turning point of the story is David's utter defeat of the Philistines (14:11a). Prior to David's victory, he inquired of God and received assurances (14:10). In balance with these assurances, David praised God after the battle (14:11b).

*Philistines Raid Valley (14:9)*

The initiating event in this and the next episode (see 14:13) is a Philistine raid in the **Valley of Rephaim** (14:9). This act of aggression depicts David as the object of his enemy's pursuit.

*David Inquires and God Answers (14:10)*

In striking contrast to Saul (see 10:14), David fulfilled one of the Chronicler's highest ideals when he "sought" or **inquired of God** (14:9-10a; see *Introduction: 19 Seeking*). It was common in Israel's history to consult with God before battle. Often such inquiries were made through prophets (see 2 Chr 11:1-4; 20:1-30; 25:5-13; 1 Kgs 20:13-34; 2 Kgs 3:4-27; 2 Chr 18:1-34 // 1 Kgs 22:2-38; 2 Chr 32:1-22 // 2 Kgs 18:17-19:37; see *Introduction: 15 Prophets*). David acknowledged that the outcome of battle was in God's hand (14:10a) and God encouraged the king to fight, promising him victory (14:10b).

*David Defeats Philistines (14:11a)*

The narrative swiftly reports that David **defeated** the Philistines (14:11a). The simplicity of this scene recalls the opposite scenario in the earlier Philistine encounter in Saul's day (see 10:1-14). There the Philistine army defeated Israel with hardly any resistance. In this passage, David conquered these same enemies with ease. By this means, the Chronicler contrasted David and Saul once again.

*David Praises God (14:11b)*

Not only does this episode idealize David in his inquiry (14:10) and victory (14:11a). It also points out that David appropriately honored God for his victory (14:11b).

David's praise focused on the words **break out**. He called the place of the battle **Baal Perazim**, ("Baal of Outbreaks"). In a generic sense, **Baal** merely meant "master" or "lord." Before the worship of Baal became a great problem within Israel, the term was often used as a title for Yahweh. For this reason, David explained his name for the place by saying, "**God has broken out against my enemies**" (14:11). The allusion to the preceding chapter is evident. Although God had broken out against Israel at Uzzah's death (see 13:11), he now came against the Philistines **as waters break out** (14:11). This allusion to the tragedy of Uzzah's death demonstrated that God's anger over David's desecration of the ark had come to an end.

*David Finalizes Victory over Philistines (14:12)*

Finally, the Philistines fled from David and left behind **their gods** (14:12). David ordered his men **to burn them in the fire** (14:12). The book of Samuel simply reads, "and his men carried them off" (2 Sam 5:21). The Chronicler noted more specifically that David obeyed Mosaic legislation for the treatment of foreign gods (see Deut 7:5,25; 12:3).

The contrast between David and Saul is evident once again. Saul was defeated and his head was taken to the temple of the Philistine gods (see 10:9-10). David, however, defeated the Philistines and destroyed their gods. This event made it plain that Saul and David were not treated equally by God.

*Second Victory over Philistines (14:13-16)*

The story of David's second victory divides into five symmetrical steps (see figure 14). The opening step of this episode reports that the Philistines attacked David again (14:13). This event is balanced by David's defeat of the Philistines (14:16b). The middle portion of the story divides into David's inquiry before God (14:14a) which balances with David's compliance with the word he received from God (14:16a). The turning point between these events is God's response to David (14:14b-15).

*Philistines Raid Valley Again (14:13)*

The text explicitly connects this battle with the preceding conflict (see 14:9-10) noting that the Philistines attacked **once more** (14:13). The similarities between these accounts has the effect of echoing the same themes a second time.

*David Inquires (14:14a)*

David followed his pattern of seeking and receiving divine guidance **again** (14:14a). The repetition of the theme of "inquiring" or "seeking" indicates that this kind of action was characteristic of David. Unlike Saul (see 10:14), David demonstrated his loyalty to God by humbly seeking help from God (see *Introduction: 19) Seeking*).

*David Receives God's Response (14:14b-15)*

God responded to David's inquiry with a particular strategy. David was to **circle around** (14:14b) and wait for **the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees** (14:15). The sound of the trees blowing in the wind would demonstrate that **God has gone out in front of** David (14:15). This divine strategy exemplified a point of view that appears throughout the Old Testament. When Israel fought her holy wars, God went before her with the heavenly armies (see Exod 14:10-31; Num 21:1-3; Deut 4:26-36; Josh 6:1-21; 10:6-15; Judg 7:1-25; 2 Kgs 7:6-7; 2 Kgs 19:35; see also *Introduction: 13) Divine Presence and Help*). Miraculous divine presence was an essential part of all holy war. David's battle with the Philistines was no ordinary conflict; it was a battle in which the Lord and his heavenly armies fought for Israel.

*David Obeys God (14:16a)*

The text observes in a straightforward manner that David **did as God commanded him** (14:16a). As we expect in this context, David followed the directives of God just as he should have. Once again, David stood in contrast with Saul who **did not keep the word of the Lord** (10:13).

*David Defeats Philistines (14:16b)*

David's compliance with God's instructions yielded the expected outcome. **He struck down the Philistine army** (14:16b). The grandeur of this victory is highlighted by the notice that the Philistines were destroyed **all the way from Gibeon to Gezer** (14:16b). David's enormous victory stands in stark contrast with Saul's terrible defeat at the hands of the Philistines (10:1-14).

*David Secure Against Enemies (14:17)*

The Chronicler added an authorial comment to the end of this section. David's **fame spread through every land** so that **all the nations** surrounding Israel would **fear him** (14:17). The Chronicler pointed to several times when foreign nations feared Israel's king and God. These examples of Israel's international security represented a key element in the hopes of post-exilic Israel. So long as Israel remained dependent on God, the nations around her offered no serious threat (see *Introduction: 3) International Relations*). The contrast with Saul is evident for a final time. In Saul's battle, Israel fled in fear from the Philistines (10:1,7);

Saul himself feared (10:4). The Chronicler pointed here to the very opposite condition for David; every nation feared him.

Throughout this section of his record, the Chronicler effectively contrasted Saul and David time and again. Although David had failed in his first attempt to transfer the ark, he was not to be set on par with Saul. On the contrary, David was to be contrasted with Saul as the faithful and blessed king of Israel. For this reason, post-exilic Israel should have viewed David's reign as their model and David's dynasty as their only royal line.