

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The last words of David, 2 Samuel 23:1-7. The names and exploits of has thirty-seven worthies, vv. 8-39.

Verse 1

These be the last words of David - I suppose the last poetical composition is here intended. He might have spoken many words after these in prose, but none in verse. Other meanings are given; this I prefer. The words of this song contain a glorious prediction of the Messiah's kingdom and conquests, in highly poetic language.

The sweet psalmist of Israel - This character not only belonged to him as the finest poet in Israel, but as the finest and most Divine poet of the whole Christian world. The sweet psalmist of Israel has been the sweet psalmist of every part of the habitable world, where religion and piety have been held in reverence.

Verse 2

The Spirit of the Lord spake by me - Hence the matter of his writing came by direct and immediate inspiration.

His word was in my tongue - Hence the words of this writing were as directly inspired as the matter.

Verse 3

The Rock of Israel - The Fountain whence Israel was derived.

He that ruleth over men must be just - More literally, מֹשֶׁל בְּאָדָם צַדִּיק (moshel baadam tsaddik), He that ruleth in man is the just one; or, The just one is the ruler among men.

Ruling in the fear of God - It is by God's fear that Jesus Christ rules the hearts of all his followers; and he who has not the fear of God before his eyes, can never be a Christian.

Verse 4

He shall be as the light of the morning - This verse is very obscure, for it does not appear from it who the person is of whom the prophet speaks. As the Messiah seems to be the whole subject of these last words of David, he is probably the person intended. One of Dr. Kennicott's MSS. Supplies the word מֹשֶׁל (Yehovah); and he therefore translates, As the light of the morning ariseth Jehovah (see below) He shall be the Sun of righteousness, bringing salvation in his rays, and shining - illuminating the children of men, with increasing splendor, as long as the sun and moon endure.

As the tender grass - The effects of this shining, and of the rays of his grace, shall be like the shining of the sun upon the young grass or corn, after a plentiful shower of rain.

Verse 5

Although my house be not so with God - Instead of כִּנּוּן (ken), so, read כִּנּוּן (kun), established; and let the whole verse be considered as an interrogation, including a positive assertion; and the sense will be at once clear and consistent: Is not my house (family) established with God; because he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all, and preserved? For this (He) is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it (or him) not to spring up. All is sure relative to my spiritual successor, though he do not as yet appear; the covenant is firm, and it will spring forth in due time. See the observations at the end of the chapter, 2 Samuel 23:39 note).

Verse 6

But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns - There is no word in the text for sons; it is simply Belial, the good-for-nothing man, and may here refer - first to Saul, and secondly to the enemies of our Lord.

As thorns thrust away - A metaphor taken from hedging; the workman thrusts the thorns aside either with his bill or hand, protected by his impenetrable mitten or glove, till, getting a fair blow at the roots, he cuts them all down. The man is fenced with iron, and the handle of his bill is like the staff of a spear. This is a good representation of the dubbing-bill, with which they slash the thorn hedge on each side before they level the tops by the pruning-shears. The handle is five or six feet long. This is a perfectly natural and intelligible image.

Verse 8

These be the names of the mighty men - This chapter should be collated with the parallel place, 1 Chronicles 11:11-47; and see Kennicott's First Dissertation on the printed Hebrew text, pages 64-471.

The Tachmonite that sat in the seat - Literally and properly, Jashobeam the Hachmonite. See 1 Chronicles 11:11.

The same was Adino the Eznite - This is a corruption for he lift up his spear. See 1 Chronicles 11:11.

Eight hundred, whom he slew at one time - Three hundred is the reading in Chronicles, and seems to be the true one. The word $\text{x}—\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{o}\text{e}$ (chalal), which we translate slain, should probably be translated soldiers, as in the Septuagint, $\text{ifl}, \text{l}\text{o}\text{f}\text{l}, \text{l}\text{o}\text{f}\text{l}, \text{l}\text{o}\text{f}\text{l}$, ; he withstood three hundred Soldiers at one time. See the note on David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan, 2 Samuel 1:21 (note), and Kennicott's First Dissertation, p. 101. Dr. Kennicott observes: "This one verse contains three great corruptions in the Hebrew text:

1.The proper name of the hero Jashobeam is turned into two common words, rendered, that sat in the seat.

2.The words, he lift up his spear, x"x•x•xçx•x"x" x•xa x—x xTMxa• (hu orer eth chanitho), are turned into two proper names wholly inadmissible here: x"x•x• xçx"xTMx• x"xçxix xTM (hu Adino haetsni), he was Adino the Eznite; it being nearly as absurd to say that Jashobeam the Hachmonite was the same with Adino the Eznite, as that David the Beth-lehemite was the same with Elijah the Tishbite.

3.The number eight hundred was probably at first three hundred, as in 1 Chronicles 11:11.â€

See Kennicott, ubi supr.

Verse 9

When they defied the Philistines that were there gathered - This is supposed to refer to the war in which David slew Goliath.

Verse 11

A piece of ground full of lentils - In 1 Chronicles 11:13 it is a parcel of ground full of barley. There is probably a mistake of ~~אדש~~ "אדש" (adashim), lentils, for ~~סור~~ "סור" (seorim), barley, or vice versa. Some think there were both lentils and barley in the field, and that a marauding party of the Philistines came to destroy or carry them off, and these worthies defeated the whole, and saved the produce of the field. This is not unlikely.

Verse 13

And three of the thirty - The word **שָׁלִישִׁים** (shalishim), which we translate thirty, probably signifies an office or particular description of men. Of these (shalishim) we have here thirty-seven, and it can scarcely be said with propriety that we have thirty-seven out of thirty; and besides, in the parallel place, 1 Chronicles 11:11-47, there are sixteen added. The captains over Pharaoh's chariots are termed **שָׁלִישִׁים** (shalishim), Exodus 14:7.

The Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim - This is the same war which is spoken of 2 Samuel 5:17, etc.

Verse 15

The water of the well of Bethlehem - This was David's city, and he knew the excellence of the water which was there; and being near the place, and parched with thirst, it was natural for him to wish for a draught of water out of that well. These three heroes having heard it, though they received no command from David, broke through a company of the Philistines, and brought away some of the water. When brought to David he refused to drink it: for as the men got it at the hazard of their lives, he considered it as their blood, and gave thereby a noble instance of self-denial. There is no evidence that David had requested them to bring it; they had gone for it of their own accord, and without the knowledge of David.

Verse 16

Poured it out unto the Lord - To make libations, both of water and wine, was a frequent custom among the heathens. We have an almost similar account in Arrian's Life of Alexander: "When his army was greatly oppressed with heat and thirst, a soldier brought him a cup of water; he ordered it to be carried back, saying, I cannot bear to drink alone while so many are in want, and this cup is too small to be divided among the whole." • Tunc poculo pleno sicut oblatum est reddito: Non solus, inquit, bibere sustineo, nec tam exiguum dividere omnibus possum. - Arrian, lib. vi.

The example was noble in both cases, but David added piety to bravery: he poured it out unto the Lord.

Verse 20

Two lion-like men of Moab - Some think that two real lions are meant; some that they were two savage gigantic men; others, that two fortresses are meant. The words $\text{שְׁנֵי אֲרִיִּל מוֹאָב}$ (sheney ariel Moab) may signify, as the Targum has rendered it, $\text{יָאֵת תֵּרֵינ רַבְרֵבַי מוֹאָב}$ (yath terein rabrebey Moab), *â€œThe two princes of Moab.â€*

Verse 21

He slew an Egyptian - This man in 1 Chronicles 11:23 is stated to have been five cubits high, about seven feet six inches.

He went down to him with a staff - I have known men who, with a staff only for their defense, could render the sword of the best practiced soldier of no use to him. I have seen even a parallel instance of a man with his staff being attacked by a soldier with his hanger; he soon beat the weapon out of the soldier's hand, and could easily have slain him with his own sword.

We have a good elucidation of this in a duel between Dioxippus the Athenian and Horratas a Macedonian, before Alexander: *â€œThe Macedonian, proud of his military skill, treated the naked Athenian with contempt, and then challenged him to fight with him the ensuing day. The Macedonian came armed cap-a-pie to the place; on his left arm he had a brazen shield, and in the same hand a spear called sarissa; he had a javelin in his right hand, and a sword girded on his side; in short, he appeared armed as though he were going to contend with a host. Dioxippus came into the field with a chaplet on his head, a purple sash on his left arm, his body naked, smeared over with oil, and in his right hand a strong knotty club, (dextra validum nodosumque stipitem praeferibat). Horratas, supposing he could easily kill his antagonist while at a distance, threw his javelin, which Dioxippus, suddenly stooping, dexterously avoided, and, before Horratas could transfer the spear from his left to his right hand, sprang forward, and with one blow of his club, broke it in two. The Macedonian being deprived of both his spears, began to draw his sword; but before he could draw it out Dioxippus seized him, tripped up his heels, and threw him with great violence on the ground, (pedibus repente subductis arietavit in terram). He then put his foot on his neck, drew out his sword, and lifting up his club, was about to dash out the brains of the overthrown champion, had he not been prevented by the king.â€* - Q. Curt. lib. ix., cap. 7.

How similar are the two cases! He went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hands, and slew him with his own spear. Benaiah appears to have been just such another clubsman as Dioxippus.

Verse 23

David set him over his guard - The Vulgate renders this, *Fecitque eun sibi David auricularium a secreto*, *â€œDavid made him his privy counsellor;â€* or, according to the Hebrew, He put him to his ears, i.e., confided his secrets to him. Some think he made him a spy over the rest. It is supposed that the meaning of the fable which attributes to Midas very long ears, is, that this king carried the system of espionage to a great length; that he had a multitude of spies in different places.

Verse 24

Asahel - was one of the thirty - Asahel was one of those officers, or troops, called the (shalishim). This Asahel, brother of Joab, was the same that was killed by Abner, 2 Samuel 2:23.

Verse 25

Shammah the Harodite - There are several varieties in the names of the following (shalishim); which may be seen by comparing these verses with 1 Chronicles 11:27.

Verse 39

Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all - To these the author of 1 Chronicles 11:41 adds Zabad son of Ahlai.

1 Chronicles 11:42 - Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a captain of the Reubenites, and thirty with him.

1 Chronicles 11:43 - Hanan the son of Maachah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite,

1 Chronicles 11:44 - Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jehiel the sons of Hothan the Aroerite,

1 Chronicles 11:45 - Jediahel the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite,

1 Chronicles 11:46 - Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai, and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite,

1 Chronicles 11:47 - Eliel, and Obed, and Jasiel the Mesobaite.

The 4th and 5th verses are very obscure; L. De Dieu gives them a good meaning, if not the true one: -

â€œThe perpetuity of his kingdom David amplifies by a comparison to three natural things, which are very grateful to men, but not constant and stable. For the sun arises and goes down again; the morning may be

clear, but clouds afterwards arise; and the tender grass springs up, but afterwards withers. Not so, said he, is my kingdom before God; it is flourishing like all these, but perpetual, for he has made an everlasting covenant with me, though some afflictions have befallen me; and he has not made all my salvation and desire to grow.â€•

De Dieu repeats כִּי (ke), the note of similitude, thrice; and the following is his version: -

â€œThe God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake unto me, (or concerning me): The just man ruleth among men; he ruleth in the fear of God. And, as the sun ariseth with a shining light; as the morning is without clouds by reason of its splendor; as, from rain, the tender grass springeth out of the earth; truly so is not my house with God: because he hath made an everlasting covenant with me; disposed in all things, and well kept and preserved in that order. Although he doth not make all my deliverance and desire to grow, i.e., though some adversities happen to me and my family; yet, that always remains, which, in the covenant of God made with me, is in all things orderly, disposed, and preserved.â€•

See Bishop Patrick on the place.

Once more I must beg the reader to refer to the First Dissertation of Dr. Kennicott, on the present state of the printed Hebrew text; in which there is not only great light cast on this subject, several corruptions in the Hebrew text being demonstrated, but also many valuable criticisms on different texts in the sacred writings. There are two Dissertations, 2 vols. 8 vo.; and both very valuable.