

2 Samuel 8, Chapter Introduction

8:1-18. Chapter 8 is the 'near future' prophetic fulfilment of chapter 7. There God promised David, "*I will give you rest from all your enemies*" (7:11). Now the rest God promised we see fulfilled in David's victories over the surrounding nations. The structure of chapter 8 follows a geographical progression of conquests: 1) David's first conquest was to the west of Jerusalem (i.e., from the 'city of David'; v.1), his second to the east (v.2), the third was north, all the way to the Euphrates River (vv.3-12), and finally, his victory over Edom to the south (vv.13-14; EBC, Vol.3, p.902). On more than one level, David's victories in the "*Promised Land*" are reminiscent of and parallel to Joshua's earlier conquests in the land (cf. Joshua 1:5,9 with 2 Sam. 7:9; 8:6,14; et al).

8:1. The record of David's victories commence with the Philistines. This is not surprising since David's first victory after his *initial* anointing was to slay Goliath, the giant of Gath and the Philistine's uncontested champion! (1 Sam. 16,17). Now with David established as king the Philistines are further '*defeated and subdued*' (v.1). Reference in v.1 to "*Metheg-ammah*" is likely not the city's name, but rather its position as the Philistine's "*mother-city*" (taken from the words' literal meaning, EBC). In 1 Chronicles 18:1, a parallel passage, reference is made to the defeat of "*Gath and its villages*" (lit. daughters). In other words, David's conquest of the Philistines included their foremost city of Gath ('mother-city') along with its surrounding villages (i.e., daughters).

8:2. As David defeated the Philistines, he now defeats Moab. This is somewhat surprising because earlier there was clear indication of a favorable relationship with the king of Moab (1 Sam. 22:3-4; Ruth 4:13-22). However, this was not the case in an earlier period when Moab sought to destroy Israel as they came out of Egypt (Num. 22:1-6). Therefore, relations and circumstances must have significantly changed as David ascended to rule over Israel (Note: the Jewish tradition related to David's parents).

David's defeat of Moab contains some military decisions that are disturbing and difficult to understand: that is, David's method of Moabite executions. David made the captive men of war "lie down on the ground and then measuring them off with a length of cord, he [put] two-thirds of them to death," while allowing one-third to live (EBC, p.903). How are David's actions to be understood? On a human level it must be remembered, David was acting for God in his leadership of the nation as an instrument of Divine judgment (as did Joshua, see Gen 15:16; as does the Assyrian in Isaiah 10:5-16 and the Babylonian army in Hab. 1:2-12ff). Indeed, God was "casting out" the nations occupying His land for their abominable practices (Lev. 18:24-30). Moab, however, though not in the land, was still under Divine judgment for their hostility and opposition to God's people as they came out of Egypt. In this case, God's judgment was tempered with *mercy*, so that some were slain, but others spared. Thus God displayed for *all* people and nations that although He was severe in *judgment*, He was takes pleasure in *mercy* (cf. Rom. 11:22).

8:3-12. As Hadadezer, king of Zobah, journeyed north to secure his kingdom, David drove him back to the *Euphrates River* taking captives and military equipment. Note, the Euphrates River was a fixed boundary of the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18).

When Damascus heard the report, they sent a massive military contingency of Syrians to assist Hadadezer (*Hadad* was the most common personal name of the Canaanite storm-god, better known by the title ba'al; EBC,p.904). Over both the LORD God gave David great victories (see also v.14; the chapters clear emphasis!).

8:13-14. With the rise of the Davidic kingdom, government officials were needed to administrate the nation's affairs. Concluding the short list of selected officials are "*David's sons*" who also became the king's "*royal advisors*." (ESV; "*priests*;" i.e., 'special ministers' to the David). In 1 Chronicles 18:17 his sons are described as "*chief officials*."