

1 Chronicles 14 • Quality Leadership

Introduction

The sad truth is that we live in a time where most of the public faces of Christianity are, at best, nominal representations of faith if not outright misrepresentations. There are now hundreds of websites and entire ministries devoted to identifying and documenting the “wolves in sheep’s clothing” who are misleading the flock. While we definitely need to know how to identify the false leaders among us, we equally need to know how to identify the biblical leaders present. David is unique among the kings of Israel in this regard and is held up by God as the standard by which all leaders to come after him are measured. In the books of Kings and Chronicles, every future king will be assessed as to the degree to which he was more or less like David. He provides the basis by which we can discern who is attaining to God’s standards of good leadership.

¹Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David with cedar trees, masons and carpenters, to build a house for him. ²And David realized that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that his kingdom was highly exalted, for the sake of His people Israel.

³Then David took more wives at Jerusalem, and David became the father of more sons and daughters. ⁴These are the names of the children born to him in Jerusalem:

Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon,

⁵Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet,

⁶Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia,

⁷Elishama, Beeliada and Eliphelet.

[Read v.1-7]

Q: How long has it been since David was anointed by Samuel as King over Israel?

A: It has probably been about 20 years.

Q: So what might be significant about David’s physical house being built?

A: The physical house visibly affirms what God has been doing all along in establishing “*the house of David*”, a common biblical term which doesn’t just establish David’s earthly identity, but his greater spiritual one.

Q: Why might it be surprising that it says “David realized that the Lord had established him”?

A: David was anointed by Samuel when quite young, but wasn’t actually crowned king by the people until a great deal later. In fact, he first appears to have been crowned king just by the tribe of Judah at the age of 30 and reigned as king over them in Hebron for 7-1/2 years before the whole of Israel crowned him as king and he subsequently ruled from Jerusalem. It has been a very long and gradual process.

Application: We may be conscious of our calling in Christ, of spiritual gifts, of a particular ministry or area of need to which we are drawn, but the fulfillment of such things isn’t automatically accomplished overnight. The fact that the Lord’s faithfulness to complete such things is accomplished in small increments over a long period of time might not cause us to readily see how it is all coming together. How has the Lord worked like this in your life in the past? Is it possible that this is how He is working now? How might this affect your attitude about what God is doing in your life at the moment?

Q: What are probably the most important aspects of David’s character as a leader revealed in v.2?

1. “...David realized that **the LORD** established him...” He is painfully conscious that he is **NOT** a “self-made man” or that anything has come about because of his own abilities, but that it is 100% attributable to God alone.
2. “...David realized...that his kingdom was highly exalted **for the sake of His people Israel**”. He is painfully aware that everything provided to him personally by God is actually for the benefit of God’s people, not for himself personally.

Point: This is why the many examples of good leaders provided throughout Scripture are often humble and don’t hold themselves in very high regard. They are acutely aware that their position is a result of God’s working and provided so that they may be a servant to God’s people. This is why the most repeated

example in Scripture describing a good spiritual leader is a shepherd. God gives the shepherd command of the flock in order to guide and protect the flock, but it is **not** the shepherd's flock.

⁸When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up in search of David; and David heard of it and went out against them. ⁹Now the Philistines had come and made a raid in the valley of Rephaim. ¹⁰David inquired of God, saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? And will You give them into my hand?"

Then the LORD said to him, "Go up, for I will give them into your hand."

¹¹So they came up to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there; and David said, "God has broken through my enemies by my hand, like the breakthrough of waters." Therefore they named that place Baal-perazim. ¹²They abandoned their gods there; so David gave the order and they were burned with fire.

[Read v.8-12]

Q: Why would someone being "anointed king over all Israel" be alarming to the Philistines? How might this signal a change in Israel over the recent past?

A: For a very long time Israel has been divided by various levels of civil war between Saul and David and various tribes as they've chosen one side over the other. As an enemy of Israel the Philistines were content to allow Israel to self-destruct. But should Israel become united as a whole under a single leader, the Philistines would have to once again fear that instead of fighting within, Israel could be focused on its real, external enemies. David's recent success taking Jerusalem might indicate to the Philistines that Israel is ready to turn against them. They might also be concerned about his relationship with Hiram king of Tyre. It looks like Israel is a united, national force again.

Observation: *There may be an application here that before a true spiritual leader can lead God's people out against the true enemies of God, that all the internal issues of personal faithfulness must first be resolved within the body of Christ.*

Q: Is there anything significant about the fact that the Philistines attacked "in the valley of Rephaim"?

A: "Rephaim" is the name of the former giants who lived in the land, the last of which was King Og. (Dt. 3:11) It paints the picture of the Philistines as being a kind of larger-than-life enemy overwhelming in size and spiritual influence.

Q: If the Philistines are the known and established enemy of God's people, and they're attacking God's people in their own land, why would David have to ask God if he should go up against them?

A: God chooses the tool He will use to execute judgment for sin. He did this time and again during the past several hundred years during the times of the Judges. David knows that if there is an issue of sin or God's judgment at work, that it must first be reconciled to God before proceeding.

For instance, if Joshua had done this prior to the battle of Ai, he would most certainly learned that sin had caused Israel to fall out of favor with God before learning so through their humiliating defeat.

Q: So why does David follow up with specifically inquiring, "And will You give them into my hand?"

A: The first question is really a spiritual inquiry to establish the nation's relationship with God; the second establishes whether or not there are **personal** spiritual issues outstanding between **David** and God.

Application: *Just because a given situation is the very biblical definition of "evil" does not automatically mean we are to enter into it without first establishing that we ourselves are spiritually reconciled and prepared fully in accordance with God's Word and ways. What happens when backslidden or unfaithful Christians take up a cause without first being reconciled spiritually?*

Q: What does David's renaming of the battle site indicate about the greater spiritual issues at work?

A: David recognizes that "**God** has broken through my enemies by my hand".

Application: Good spiritual leaders always defer the credit to God the True Source of victory.

Q: What is particularly ironic that the Philistines "abandoned their idols"?

A: At one time it was Israel who, without consulting God and taking matters into their own hands, went out against the Philistines and lost the Ark of the Covenant to them. Now, finally in alignment with God's will, it is the Philistines who have lost their idols to Israel.

Q: What is also ironic about what happened to the Philistines idols versus the Ark of the Covenant?

A: The Ark of the Covenant, something belonging to and representing the One True God, could not be kept by the Philistines and had to be returned intact; the Philistines' idols, representations of their false and powerless gods, were destroyed. The earthly event is a representation of the greater spiritual, heavenly reality.

Application: In reality, although leaders of God's people engage in a host of earthly activities, they are actually tied to greater, spiritual issues. Such leaders are an extension of what God is doing, not an independent enterprise of their own.

¹³The Philistines made yet another raid in the valley. ¹⁴David inquired again of God, and God said to him, "You shall not go up after them; circle around behind them and come at them in front of the balsam trees. ¹⁵It shall be when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then you shall go out to battle, for God will have gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines."

¹⁶David did just as God had commanded him, and they struck down the army of the Philistines from Gibeon even as far as Gezer. ¹⁷Then the fame of David went out into all the lands; and the LORD brought the fear of him on all the nations.

[Read v.13-17]

Q: So given that David was already granted a resounding victory by God, why would he need to bother inquiring yet again of God?

A: Same answer as before. He is making sure that nothing spiritually has happened in the mean time to cause either the nation in general or himself personally to have fallen out of favor with God. His first concern is personal faithfulness.

Note: The Jewish historian Josephus says that the Philistines came this second time with an army that was three times larger than the previous one.

Application: A good spiritual leader is constantly concerned with the spiritual standing of God's people. Such leaders know that the first priority is always the spiritual health of God's people and the quality of their walk so that they're properly prepared for whatever comes their way.

Q: Why does God instruct David to wait for "the sound of marching troops in the balsam trees"?

A: In this case God is going to personally initiate the attack, going out before Israel's army actually begins to engage the enemy. David's army will follow up and finish what God supernaturally begins by His own hand.

Application: God's leaders never act on their own but in concert with and as an extension of His will.

Q: What does "from Gibeon to Gezer" mean?

A: It means the enemy was completely driven from Israel ("Gibeon" being located within the borders of Benjamin) back to their own country ("Gezer" being located on the border with Philistia).

Q: So when did David's personal status resonate with "all the lands"?

A: **After** he established himself in the course of obedience to God's Word and ways.

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

– Luke 16:10

Application: *Our earthly identity is established in the course of obedience to God in every spiritual matter where earthly events are concerned.*

Overall Application

Quality spiritual leaders are not established by their own hand but in concert with God's hand. They are first and foremost concerned that they and the flock entrusted to them are walking in full obedience to God's Word and ways before engaging in life's spiritual battles. One of the true characteristics of biblical love is love "does not rejoice in unrighteousness". (1 Cor. 13:6) They know that no matter how right the battle seems or how just the cause, if personal faithfulness first and foremost to Christ is not present, there will be no victory. True spiritual leaders are established by God as a result of the pursuit of personal faithfulness.