

1 Chronicles 11:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Abishai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three: for lifting up his spear against three hundred, he slew them, and had a name among the three.

Analysis

Theological Analysis: This passage falls within the section on David established as king and mighty men. The Hebrew term בְּרִית (berit) - covenant is theologically significant here, pointing to God's sovereign choice of leadership. The Chronicler's narrative, while paralleling Samuel-Kings in places, offers a distinct theological perspective emphasizing temple worship, Levitical service, and covenant faithfulness.

Chronicles presents David not primarily as warrior-king but as worship organizer and temple planner. This verse contributes to that portrait by highlighting the spiritual dimensions of Israel's national life. The text demonstrates that true prosperity comes through proper worship and covenant obedience rather than merely military or political success.

Doctrinally, this passage teaches about God's sovereign choice of leadership. Cross-references throughout Chronicles connect David's reign to the broader redemptive narrative, showing how God's covenant promises advance through faithful human leadership while ultimately depending on divine grace and power. The messianic implications are profound: David as type of Christ, the Messianic King.

Historical Context

Historical Background: This section describes events from David's reign (c. 1010-970 BCE) but was written centuries later during the Persian period (c. 450-400 BCE). The Chronicler's selectivity in retelling David's story serves his theological purposes—he omits David's sins (Bathsheba, Absalom's rebellion) while emphasizing David's worship reforms and temple preparations.

The historical setting of David established as king and mighty men occurred during Israel's united monarchy, when the nation reached its territorial and political zenith. Archaeological evidence from this period shows significant building projects and administrative development. However, the Chronicler writes for a much smaller, struggling post-exilic community, using David's golden age to inspire hope for restoration.

Ancient Near Eastern parallels show that temple construction and royal sponsorship of worship were common across cultures. However, Israel's understanding of worship centered on covenant relationship with the one true God rather than manipulation of capricious deities. This theological distinctiveness shapes the Chronicler's presentation.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does this verse's emphasis on God's sovereign choice of leadership challenge or affirm your current spiritual priorities and practices?
2. What does David as type of Christ, the Messianic King teach you about Jesus Christ and His redemptive work?
3. In what practical ways can you apply the principles of covenant faithfulness and proper worship demonstrated in this passage?

Interlinear Text

וַאֲבִשַׁי יֵ	אָחִי	יֹאָב ב	ה וּא	הָהָה	רֹאשׁ	בְּשָׁלוּשָׁה:
And Abishai	the brother	of Joab	H1931	H1961	he was chief	against three
H52	H251	H3097			H7218	H7969
וְהוּא	עֹלֶה ר	אֶת	חֶבֶרֶת ו	עַל	בְּשָׁלוּשָׁה:	מֵאֹת
H1931	for lifting up	H853	his spear	H5921	against three	hundred
	H5782		H2595		H7969	H3967
וְלֹא	וְשֵׁם	בְּשָׁלוּשָׁה:				
H3808	them and had a name	against three				
	H8034	H7969				

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 26:6 (Parallel theme): Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee.