

the other giant killers

2 Sam. 21:15-22:2

21:15 Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint. **21:16** And Ishbibenob, which was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight, he being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David. **21:17** But **Abishai** the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

21:18 And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then **Sibbechai** the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant.

21:19 And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where **Elhanan** the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

21:20 And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant. **21:21** And when he defied Israel, **Jonathan** the son of Shimea the brother of David slew him.

21:22 These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

22:1 And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul: **22:2** And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;

other Davids?

As most Sunday school children know, David killed Goliath. (See First Samuel chapter 17.) But there were four other giants* related to Goliath who were killed later by other Israelites. Many have never heard of these other giants or the brave men who fought against them. Therefore vital lessons on trusting God rather than relying on natural strength and ability are being missed. **Some translations just call the giants "Rephaim."*

1 Chr. 20:4-21:2

20:4 And it came to pass after this, that there arose war at Gezer with the Philistines; at which time **Sibbechai** the Hushathite slew Sippai, that was of the children of the giant: and they were subdued.

20:5 And there was war again with the Philistines; and **Elhanan** the son of Jair slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear staff was like a weaver's beam.

20:6 And yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of great stature, whose fingers and toes were four and twenty, six on each hand, and six on each foot: and he also was the son of the giant. **20:7** But when he defied Israel, **Jonathan** the son of Shimea David's brother slew him.

20:8 These were born unto the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

21:1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. **21:2** And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; . . .

negatives

The giants and the Philistines were evil, of course, since trying to kill David (2 Sam. 21:15-17) was fighting against the Lord's anointed. In addition, the unnamed fourth giant is said to have mocked Israel much like Goliath did earlier. Otherwise, the two passages in today's study do not say much about how sinful these other giants were. Far more is recorded about Goliath.

If the victories over these four other giants from Gath were significant, why are we told so little about the actual fighting and those who killed

the giants? The longest report is about Abishai's victory over Ishi-Benob which is covered in three verses (2 Sam. 21:15-17). But for some reason this report is not included in the Chronicles account. Moreover, in general, we are only told the basics. Maybe if we knew more about these warriors they would seem more like David.

Probably the main reason we are not told much about the other giant killers is because the details about them would not fit well with the themes of the following chapters. *(See the C and F section lines.)*

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

A	() The giants and the Philistines were evil.
A-1	() The Philistines opposed Israel.
A-2	() The giants were abnormal (1 Chr. 20:6).
A-3	() The giants acted proudly (2 Sam. 21:21, 1 Chr. 20:7).
B	() The “giant killers” were not much like David.
B-1	() They did not become kings.
B-2	() They did not use slings and stones.
B-3	() No songs of praise were written about them.
B-4	() Nothing is reported about their faith or character.
B-5	() The two passages do not present them as great heroes.
B-6	() The Goliath story is long and detailed; their accounts are not.
C	() It is sinful to depend on people rather than on God.
C-1	() The Philistines depended on giants (1 Chr. 20:4).
C-2	() David was too dependant on Abishai (2 Sam. 21:15-17).
C-3	() David forgot about God when he took the census (1 Chr. 21).

positives

The four giant killers must have been appreciated. Otherwise their exploits would not have been mentioned at all. Notice that they are named in Second Samuel before David's mighty men, who are not listed until two chapters later.

Ishbi-Benob was not able to kill David because God had placed Abishai nearby. David himself appointed Abishai to be his general in place of Joab (at least for a while, 2 Sam. 20:6), but God had guided in that decision. The Lord was at work in 2 Sam. 20:15-22, even though he is not directly mentioned.

Perhaps the most important lines on the two worksheets in this study are in sections C and F. It is always important to depend on God. And conversely it is sinful to depend on human heroes instead of on the Lord.

Therefore it is good that we are not told much about Sibbechai, Elhanan, and David's cousin, Jonathan. Likewise, it also would have been far better if David did not know the number of soldiers in his army (1 Chr. 21:4-8). His kingdom was secure because of the Lord, not because he had a large army.

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

D	() The giants were limited by God.
D-1	() Ishbi-Benob was unable to kill David.
D-2	() God protected David (2 Sam. 21:17, 22:1-51).
D-3	() The Israelite heroes were stronger than the Gentile giants.
E	() The “giant killers” were on David’s team.
E-1	() They were called David’s servants.
E-2	() They did not act independently from David.
E-3	() They were Israelites (2 Sam. 21:21, 1 Chr. 21:1).
E-4	() David himself helped kill the giants (2 Sam. 21:22).
E-5	() They did what was needed to be done to protect Israel.
E-6	() The need to work together is stressed in 2 Sam. 21:15-22.
F	() It is always important to depend on God.
F-1	() God is mentioned directly several times in 2 Sam. 21:15-22.
F-2	() If we knew more about the giant killers, it might distract from God.
F-3	() David praised God (not his servants) in Second Samuel chapter 22.

conclusions

worksheet answers

Most lines on both worksheets are either correct or partly correct. Line F-1, however, falsely claims that God is directly mentioned in connection with the giant killers in 2 Sam. 20:15-22. He is not. The power of the Lord is stressed in the next chapter rather than in chapter 20.

The four Israelites each overpowered a Gentile giant, but the passages do not clearly say that they were stronger than the giants that they killed (D-3 and F-3). So neither Samuel nor Chronicles presents them as “great heroes” (B-5). They did what needed to be done (E-5), of course, and that made them heroes to some extent humanly speaking. Yet, the Scriptures refer to them as servants (E-1) rather than as heroes (B-5). Moreover, none of them acted independently from David whom they served (E-2) and nothing is directly stated about their faith or character (B-4).

Finally, the point in 2 Sam. 21:17 is that David was too important to be endangered on the battle field. The fighting was better left to others, including Abishai (C-2). The stress in the verse is on the importance of David as Israel's spiritual leader, “the lamp of Israel,” rather than on David working with Abishai (E-6).

key points

Obviously, the worst individuals in today's two passages were the giants from Gath. In addition, it was natural but bad for the Philistines to depend on them (C-1). Their champion was killed every time. (Maybe “the Giants” is not a good name for a sports team.)

That said, the context of the passage in Chronicles shows that trusting in superior numbers can be just as sinful and harmful as depending on giants. When David sought to know the size of his army by taking a census, many lives were lost.

The other giant killers show that God can use a few little-known individuals to save his people from powerful enemies. (A similar point was made earlier by Jonathan in 1 Sam. 14:6 as well.) So David should have known better than to rely upon numerical superiority. Yet he acted rashly and ordered the census to be taken anyway.

Finally, the great stature of the giants from Gath (in contrast to David and his servants) reminds us of King Saul. The first king of Israel was much taller than anyone else in the nation. Yet, he was a great failure. God seems to delight in using ordinary people.

applications

Apply the points which you believe are most important or seem most needful.
