

David Mourns Saul and Jonathan's Death

1 Samuel 30 & 2 Samuel 1

In our lesson today we will go back and revisit the events of Saul and Jonathan's death. David had been living among the Philistines and was called by King of Achish of Gath to report to the battle lines against Israel. Other Philistine rulers were concerned about David's presence amongst them, fearing that David and his men would turn against them in the midst of battle. David and his men were sent back to Zicklag. If you recall, the battle between the Philistines and Israel occurred simultaneously with David's pursuit of the Amalekites upon his return to Zicklag. These events are recorded in 1 Samuel 29:1-7 and 30:1-20.

The timing of David's return to Zicklag and the pursuit of the Amalekites seems more than coincidental in its occurring at exactly the same time as the battle at Mt. Gilboa between the Philistines and Israel. I think we see the divine hand of God at work in the timing of these two events. In God's timing there is no such thing as coincidence. I believe everything he does is timed to the benefit of his plans for those who love him. Romans 8: 28 tells us "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*"

I believe it is a safe assumption that the timing of these events was orchestrated by the Lord for a very specific purpose. I don't know that it was God's plan for David to serve the Philistines as he did. I believe that was a course of action that David pursued of his own initiative because he feared Saul. Remember back at that brief reconciliation between Saul and David at the end of Chapter 26 and beginning of 27? At the beginning of 27 we are told: "*But David thought to himself, "One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.*" But just because David went off on his own plan does not mean God cannot intervene and alter the course of David's plans.

I believe the Lord orchestrated these events in such a way as to maneuver David away from a precarious situation and bring him back in alignment with the Lord's sovereign plan. We have discussed previously and seen evidence in our homework that the period of time David spent in the Philistine territory coincided with a very low point in his relationship with God.

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1 Samuel 29: 1-7

Going back to 1 Samuel 29 and the attack of the Amalekites, we see a turning point in the life of David as this event unfolds. The Lord orchestrated these events to protect David's future and to restore David to Himself. First he removes David from a situation where he would be fighting his own future subjects. While the events of the battle on Mount Gilboa were taking place, David was pursuing the Amalekites who had attacked Ziklag and carried off all of the women, children and livestock of the settlement. As you recall from homework, this was a hard battle. David's men had been with the Philistine King in Aphek by the Spring of Jezreel (1 Sam 29:1-2). David and his men were sent back to Ziklag more than 40 miles away. (They would have had to march some distance possibly from Ziklag or elsewhere to meet up with the Philistines in Aphek to begin with.) By the time of the battle at Mt. Gilboa, David and his men are more than 3 days march away. (1 Sam 30:1) There is a great physical distance between location of David's pursuit of the Amalekites and the location of the battle where Saul dies at Mt. Gilboa. David cannot be linked to Saul's death as geographically he is nowhere near Mt. Gilboa, he is a good four to five day's march to the south of Judah.

By removing David from the scene of battle, David is extricated from a predicament of fighting for either the Philistines or in close proximity to Saul. Had David been present for this battle, he would have either had to raise his sword against the anointed King of Israel in a battle, most certainly defining himself as a true enemy and traitor to Israel. If on the other hand David turns against the Philistines and fights on the side of Israel, just as the Philistine ruler's feared, he risked battle with Saul who still wanted to kill him. David would still find himself in a perilous situation – in battle against two potential enemies, the Philistines and Saul. In either scenario David risks raising his sword in battle against the anointed King of Israel. David cannot gain the throne of Israel by killing the king, even in battle. God deftly removes David from this predicament.

By returning David to Ziklag, the Lord effectively places him in a situation to bring David to his knees. Before David can become king, his relationship with the Lord, as well as his relationship with his own men, must be repaired. The events at Ziklag reveal that his men are not firmly behind him. 1 Sam 30: 3-6 tells us that upon returning to Ziklag, the men want to stone David. Later, after the battle there is dissension among the ranks regarding the distribution of the spoils of war. David must repair and restore his position as the godly leader of his men and re-engender the loyalty and respect the men had previously held toward David. The men's perception of David's loyalties has been distorted over the last several months serving the Philistine king.

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Before David can restore a right relationship with his men, he has to return and submit to the authority of the Lord. We see this happen by the end of verse 6, “*...David found strength in the Lord his God.*” In verse 8 we see David inquiring of the Lord as to what he should do. He doesn’t come up with a strategy on his own. He would likely have had trouble with his men questioning his authority. They are already distraught, exhausted, and ready to stone him. They are ready to turn against him. If David visibly seeks the counsel of the Lord, and is seen to submit himself to the authority of the Lord, and obey the Lord in his actions, he may have a chance with his men.

David obeyed the Lord which is evidenced in the written account of Chapter 30. God instructs David to pursue the Amalekites. At the Besor ravine, 20 miles south of Ziklag, they leave behind 200 men who are exhausted. They finally arrive at the Amalekite encampment and battle the Amalekites (after marching over 20 miles!) from dusk until the evening of the next day. Remember also their emotional state upon discovering their loved ones missing and their settlement burned to the ground. 1 Sam 30:4 says “*So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep*”. Talk about being exhausted! These men had been marching the length of Israel, possibly twice, then pursuing the Amalekites, going into a battle that lasted 24 hours, only to march over 20 miles back to Ziklag which is where we find David when he receives the news of Saul’s death. David was successful in this encounter. It was a hard earned victory. It was grueling and exhausting, but he and his men were successful because they obeyed the command of the Lord.

David remembers from where his strength comes and to whom he belongs. This event seems to be a turning point for David. He is no longer playing the servant to King Achish. He is again God’s anointed servant, obedient to instruction. We see at the end of the Ziklag episode that David shares the plunder taken from the Amalekites with the people of Judah, not with the Philistines as he had been doing. He seems to have remembered from where his strength comes and to whom he belongs.

The Lament of the Bow



2 Samuel 1:1- 27

Just days after his victory, David is faced with the account of Saul and Jonathan’s death:

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¹ After the death of Saul, David returned from defeating the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days. ² On the third day a man arrived from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and with dust on his head.

David receives the account of their death from an Amalekite who had “witnessed” the battle. In any event, the report is true regarding the death of the King and his son. David deals with the Amalekite’s story, which we will look at more closely in this week’s homework.

David’s first response was not “*Great! Old Saul is dead now I’m King; let’s go get the crown, throne and kingdom.*” Ruling Israel seems furthest from his mind. David is overcome by emotion, not victorious joy at the death of his arch rival, the man who had pursued him for nearly 15 years, driving him to the furthest reaches of Israel’s wilderness and into the enemy territory of the Philistines. He is overcome by a different emotion. Notice David’s response in verse 11:

¹¹ Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them.

¹² They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

David’s heart is with Israel! He is grieving the loss of the anointed king. He is grieving the loss of a friend who was his spiritual brother and soul mate. He is grieving the devastating loss of an untold number of Israel’s army.

David and his men are genuinely grief stricken over the loss of their king, their friend, and the soldiers of Israel. What a juxtaposition to Saul’s value system. Saul did not value the lives of his children, his subjects, his priests, or his soldiers, not anyone except himself. Even his dying moments were in fear of being taken captive alive and being mocked. He chose to raise his hand against himself, God’s anointed ruler. Very ironic after nearly 15 years of pursuing God’s other anointed and future ruler.

David’s heart is in the right place in commemorating Saul’s victories and his life. David grieved for Saul because of his respect for Saul’s position – a respect stemming from the fact that Saul was chosen by God to be Israel’s king – and for the good that Saul had accomplished on behalf of Israel. David’s grief for Jonathan requires no explanation. We know the depth of emotion that David carried for Jonathan. In his grief David wrote a lament to be sung by all Israel to commemorate the great deeds of Israel’s first King and his valiant sons. David either composed himself, or had composed (I’m guessing he composed it!) a lament to honor both David and Saul. It is recorded in verses 19-27. David chose to lift up the good deeds of Saul’s reign to be remembered. He did not bring up a laundry list

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of all the terrible things his predecessor did in order to show Israel what a bad king Saul was and what a terrific person David is by comparison. His lament exalts the first anointed King of Israel as a courageous and powerful King. He joins the northern tribes in their loss and shares their grief.

Lament of the Bow

<p><i>19 "Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen!</i></p>	<p>Israel's glory is its anointed king and his valiant warrior sons</p>
<p><i>20 "Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice.</i></p>	<p>David warns Philistines returning home from battle to the great cities of Gath & Ashkelon not to speak of the tragedy that befell Israel in battle, lest they defile the reputations of Israel's king and the king's sons, bringing shame upon themselves in the eyes of God.</p>
<p><i>21 "O mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, nor fields that yield offerings [of grain]. For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul--no longer rubbed with oil.</i></p>	<p>Now addressing Israel, particularly the land where Saul & Jon died, he says let not water flow to give life to the fields where S&J's life was poured out. As anointed by God, the "shield" or "protector" of Israel was defiled by the Philistines. Saul was once anointed with oil, that time of anointing has ended.</p>
<p><i>22 From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied.</i></p>	<p>David recounts S & J's mighty victories, their skill, bravery and fearlessness not weakening before strong and mighty enemies</p>
<p><i>23 "Saul and Jonathan-- in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.</i></p>	<p>David chooses not to dwell on Saul's evil tendencies, instead immortalizes him as he once was; Where v. 22 praised their skill in battle, here they are praised for their speed and strength</p>
<p><i>24 "O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with</i></p>	<p>In contrast to Philistia's daughters warned to be silent, Israel's daughters were to mourn the first King of Israel who through military might pushed back their enemies</p>

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<p><i>ornaments of gold.</i></p> <p>25 <i>"How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights.</i></p> <p>26 <i>I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.</i></p>	<p>and brought peace, prosperity and security to Israel embodied in the “scarlet and finery” and “garments with ornaments of gold”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David’s focus shifts to Jonathan, now it is <i>he</i> who weeps, recalling the strength and encouragement he received from David. • The ties of friendship were often stronger than the relationship between husband and wife whose marriage was often arranged for advantages and alliances, not love. A wife was not necessarily a friend, confidant or social peer, hence, David’s relationship with Jonathan would be more intense than with his own wives.
<p>27 <i>"How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!"</i></p>	<p>Weapons of war refer to S&J, they were as mighty and deadly as the weapons they used in protecting and defending Israel against her enemies</p>