

**How The Mighty Have Fallen (1 Sam. 31 – 2 Sam. 1)**

**Disastrous Battle on Mount Gilboa (1 Sam. 31:1)**

*1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.*

- Contrast: the Philistines strike, Israel flees; David strikes, the Amalekites flee.
- The Philistines’ presence has been felt throughout the entire First Book of Samuel. Here again, God is judging the leadership of Israel.
- This was no minor skirmish, but perhaps the largest battle since that day Israel had lost the Ark: *“So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers.”* (1 Sam. 4:10)

**The Large *Inclusio* of First Samuel**

- These two disasters form an *inclusio*. An *inclusio* is like a set of frames or bookends that mark out a theme. **Example:** In John 1:12 we read, *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name...* Then, all the way down in John 20:30-31, we read, *And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

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- The two disasters of losing the Ark and the defeat at Mount Gilboa form bookends that tell us what the story is from God’s perspective: the story of failed human leadership.
  - The human leadership of Eli and the priests, and the human leadership of Saul. The Battle of Gilboa means this phase is over and God has been at work to bring something new to pass.
  - The writer has been emphasizing David learning to inquire of the Lord. Leadership without **God’s** leading will result in God’s people being defeated and having to flee.

**The End Of Saul (1 Sam. 31:2-6)**

*2 Then the Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul’s sons. 3 The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers. 4 Then Saul said to his armorbearer, “Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me.” But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it. 5 And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword, and died with him. 6 So Saul, his three sons, his armorbearer, and all his men died together that same day.*

- Apparently, Saul’s three sons die first, and then the archers find Saul, as the Hebrew literally says.
- Saul had seen enough of war to know that he was about to die.

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**Territory Lost; The Philistines Abuse Saul’s Remains (1 Sam. 31:7-10)**

*7 And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, and those who were on the other side of the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them. 8 So it happened the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9 And they cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and sent word throughout the land of the Philistines, to proclaim it in the temple of their idols and among the people. 10 Then they put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.*

- Several things happen here, none a surprise in the ancient world:
  - First, the Israelites for many miles around become refugees.
  - Second, the Philistines find Saul’s body and it becomes their trophy.
  - The armor ended up in the temple of the Ashtoreths. It seems likely that this took place at Beth Shan also. A temple there to a fertility goddess dates to the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C., which is our timeframe.
  - Then, the bad news gets published in all the temples of the Philistines.
  - Finally, Saul’s body was also fastened to the wall of the city.
- Beth Shan became known as Scythopolis, and was one of the ten cities in Galilee where Jesus ministered. Beth Shan exists today, called Beit She’an.

**The Men Of Jabesh Gilead (1 Sam. 31:11-13)**

*11 Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all the valiant men arose and traveled all night, and took the body of Saul and*

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*the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth Shan; and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. 13 Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.*

- Remember that Jabesh Gilead had been saved by Saul from the Ammonites.
- It seems unusual that they would burn the bodies, but this might have prevented any further desecration.
- In 2 Samuel 21, David would cause the bones of Samuel and Jonathan to be reinterred in the tomb of Kish, Saul's father, in the land of Benjamin.
- God's commentary on Saul? *So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the LORD; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.* (1 Chron. 10:13-14)

### **A Terrible Report (2 Sam. 1:1-12)**

*1 Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had stayed two days in Ziklag, 2 on the third day, behold, it happened that a man came from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. So it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself. 3 And David said to him, "Where have you come from?" So he said to him, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel." 4 Then David said to him, "How did the matter go? Please tell me." And he answered, "The people have fled from the battle, many of the people are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also." 5 So David said to the young man who told him, "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?"*

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6 Then the young man who told him said, “As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa, there was Saul, leaning on his spear; and indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. 7 Now when he looked behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I answered, ‘Here I am.’ 8 And he said to me, ‘Who are you?’ So I answered him, ‘I am an Amalekite.’ 9 He said to me again, ‘Please stand over me and kill me, for anguish has come upon me, but my life still remains in me.’ 10 So I stood over him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord.”

11 Therefore David took hold of his own clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. 12 And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

- This is the doctored version of the story, told by a resident alien who was trying to gain favor with David, because he suspects David will be the next king.
- What we take away from this is that David and his men are not rebels, but true and patriotic Israelites, and so we see them in grief.

### **Swift Justice (2 Sam. 1:13-16)**

13 Then David said to the young man who told him, “Where are you from?” And he answered, “I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite.” 14 So David said to him, “How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the LORD’s anointed?” 15 Then David called one of the young men and said, “Go near, and execute him!” And he struck him so that he died. 16 So David said to him, “Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, ‘I have killed the LORD’s anointed.’”

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- David executes justice on this man for killing Saul. As a resident alien, he was subject to the laws of Israel, and so Saul was his king also.

**David’s Lament: The Song Of The Bow (2 Sam. 1:17-18)**

*17 Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, 18 and he told them to teach the children of Judah the Song of the Bow; indeed it is written in the Book of Jasher:*

- One of the most famous — and beautiful — songs in the Old Testament. Despite David’s personal history with Saul, we’re going to see that he will nonetheless lament for him.
- This song was called *The Song of the Bow*, although others say David wanted them to learn the **use** of the bow.
- There are no known copies of the Book of Jasher.

**How The Mighty Have Fallen (2 Sam. 1:19-27)**

*19 “The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen!*

*20 Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon — lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.*

*21 “O mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew nor rain upon you, nor fields of offerings. For the shield of the mighty is cast away there! The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.*

*22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, and the sword of Saul did not return empty.*

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23 *“Saul and Jonathan were beloved and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.*

24 *“O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury; who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.*

25 *“How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan was slain in your high places.*

26 *I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women.*

27 *“How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!”*

- Saul’s shield is now useless, with no one to carry it, and it is not anointed with oil. Shields could be covered with leather and they had to be treated. What a great picture concerning our own shield of faith.
- Were Saul and Jonathan really undivided?
- David says Saul gave Israel a better life, clothing them in scarlet.
- The last sad note was David’s personal lament over Jonathan, his “brother.”

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