

A Nation Without a King and David Without a Home

Scriptures: 1 Samuel 27-31

Throughout the times when Saul was searching for David, God was David's hiding place. God protected David from Saul by revealing who would turn him over to Saul, by diverting Saul as he was closing in on David, and so on. David had a chance—two times—to kill Saul. But he would not raise his hand against Saul, even though Saul was trying to kill him. Today we will learn about the death of Saul and David's rise to the throne.

In today's story, we will be going to three different camps with their leaders and what is going on in each camp: Philistines with Achish as their king, Israelites with King Saul, and David and his men.

David to the Philistines: The last time David had a chance to kill Saul but did not, Saul promised not to harm him. But David had heard that promise before. So David felt like he would one day be killed by Saul, so he and his men went to live in the land of the Philistines (the enemy of the Israelites). At one point, David had married twice (after Michal), and he brought his two wives, and the men brought their households and moved to Gath. When Saul found out David lived among the Philistines, he quit looking for him.

One day, David asked King Achish if he could live in a country town. So Achish gave him Ziklag. And they lived in Ziklag for a year and 4 months. David and his men would raid people far away and bring back their livestock. When King Achish would ask where David had raided, David would tell him some place in Judah. The king trusted David and thought David was making himself a stench to his people. King Achish thought David would always be his servant.

The Philistines had come to fight Israel. Achish wanted David to be his bodyguard for life and wanted his men to go with them against Israel. David agreed.

Saul goes to a witch: The Philistines had assembled at Shunem, and Saul and his men were camped at Gilboa. Saul saw the Philistines and he was scared to death. Samuel had died, so he could not ask God about the battle for him. He had killed the priests. And God was not answering him at all through prophets, or dreams or anything. (7-1) So, Saul decided to go to a witch to see if she would bring up Samuel from the dead.

Saul disguised himself and went with two men to the witch. She asked if this was a trap? For she knew that Saul had cut off all of the magic arts from the land. Saul told her she would not be punished. So she used her magic and called up Samuel. When she saw Samuel, she cried out, "Why did you deceive me? You are Saul." Saul said, "Do not be afraid. What do you see?" "I see a god coming out of the earth." Saul asked, "What does he look like?" (7-2) She answered, "An old man, wrapped in a robe." Saul knew he was Samuel and bowed down.

Samuel asked, "Why have you disturbed me?" Saul said, "I am greatly disturbed. The Philistines are coming against me and God will not answer me. So I have summoned you to tell me what to do." Samuel said, "Why do you ask me, since God has become your enemy? God has torn the kingdom from you and given it to David BECAUSE you did not obey God. God will give Israel to the Philistines and tomorrow, you and your sons will be with me. God will give Israel to the Philistines."

Saul fell on the ground filled with fear. He had no strength for he had not eaten all day. The witch and his servants urged him to eat and he finally did. Then they went away that night.

Philistine army: The Philistine commanders were passing by the army and saw David and his men at the rear. They asked King Achish what those Hebrews were doing there? The king answered, “David has been with me for days and years and I find no fault with him.” But the commanders were angry and afraid David would turn against them in battle. And besides, they knew the song sung about David.

So reluctantly, King Achish dismissed David and his men and they went back home.

How David finds Ziklag: David and his men left early the next day to head back to their town of Ziklag. When they got there, they found that it had been burned with fire and all of their families were gone! David’s men wept and talked about stoning David. But David strengthened himself in the Lord.

David and his men went in pursuit of the ones who did this. When they found the Amalekites (the ones who had taken their families), they were spread out all over the place. They were eating, drinking and dancing because of all the spoil they had taken. David and his men struck them and brought back all of their families!

At the battle scene with Israel and the Philistines: The Philistines fought Israel. (7-4) They killed Saul’s three sons, and (7-5) archers had badly wounded Saul. Saul told his armor bearer to kill him so the enemy would not. But his armor bearer would not do that. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell on his sword too. When Israel saw that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and the Philistines came and lived in them.

The Philistines came to strip the dead and found Saul. So they cut off his head, stripped off his armor and put his armor in the temple of their god, (7-6) and fastened Saul’s body to the wall. They sent messengers out with the good news to tell the Philistines that Saul was dead.

Brave Israelite men came and took down Saul’s body from the wall, burned his body and buried his bones. Saul had reigned 40 years in Israel.

Now, Israel is without a king. David is without a home.

David continued to be with God. He sought God’s guidance, he would obey God’s commands, he waited on God’s timing, he would not kill the Lord’s anointed even though it would make his life easier at the time. Even when his own men became very bitter at David and threatened to stone him, David continued to grow closer to God through the trials of life.

Saul, on the other hand, had been given another heart by God, and God surrounded him with valiant men. But Saul would not carry out God’s commands, he offered the sacrifice himself instead of a priest, he killed a whole town of priests, and even inquired of a witch. Do you see how Saul grew further away and forsook God, so God forsook him?