

The Jewish Kingdom - Lesson 17

David and Goliath

Today we look at what is arguably the most famous story in the Old Testament. This episode illustrates the rise of David and the decline of Saul as leader of Israel.

42. David and Goliath- I Samuel 17:1-58

- These ancient battles were typically not the most organized affairs. Generally, a battle such as this would have been basically two mobs running at each other and clashing in to chaos. One side would see the other lineup and begin to approach and they would go out to meet them in battle.
- vs. 4 - Goliath would have been one of the descendants of the giants of Canaan that Joshua drove out (Joshua 11:21-22).
- vs. 5-7 - Note that Goliath is not only a behemoth of a soldier, but that he is very heavily armored. This would probably make him, in ancient warfare at least, the equivalent of a tank.
- Goliath by the numbers:
 - Height - about 9 1/2 feet
 - Coat of mail - 126 pounds
 - Spear head - 15 pounds
- vs. 11 - Saul should have been the one to fight Goliath. He was the tallest man in Israel.
- vs. 12 - we are reintroduced to David and his family. Note that Jesse was counted an honored man.
- vs. 15 - this verse helps explain the continuity from Chapter 16. David's music had ministered to Saul. Saul's condition had improved and David had returned home. Remember that these armies were not standing armies but were common people mustered from their farms and livelihoods and pressed into service.
- vs. 17-18 - this would have been 10 days rations
- vs. 20-22 - note that both sides are prepared to begin the battle.
- vs. 25 - "free" - exempt from tax and tribute. Saul is trying to bribe other men into doing his job. I kind of picture this being announced to the soldiers in vain attempt to get one to fight Goliath.
- vs. 33 - David is probably about twenty and thus an inexperienced soldier.
- vs. 38-39 - Saul may have been one of the few Israelites to even have such armor. Maybe he should have used it to fight Goliath.
- vs. 43 - Staves is the plural of staff.
- vs. 46 - Goliath said that he would give David's dead body to the wild beasts, David says he will give the dead bodies of all the Philistines to the wild beasts.
- vs. 49 - "Why did he fall backwards? It is a notable fact, witnessed a thousand times on the battlefield, and in executing men by shooting, that when the firing squad fires and the bullets enter the man's heart, he always falls on his face, never backwards. It is one of the natural things that continually creep into Samuel's narrative that makes on know it is a true story. I have seen thousands of men fall

in battle, and I never saw a man shot through the brain or heart that did not fall backwards.” - B.H. Carroll, Baptist theologian and Civil War veteran.

- vs. 54 - David kept a couple of trophies from the victory
- vs. 55-58 - These verses cause a lot of confusion. Saul doesn't appear to know who David is, though he met him in the previous chapter. Some speculate that the chronology is bit off and these events take place before those of the previous chapter. In all likelihood, Saul is inquiring simply where David had come from. Maybe its because he is jealous and suspicious, or perhaps it is to make sure the reward of verse 25 is properly given.
- Once again, Saul should be the hero in battle but is upstaged when another takes the initiative. Jonathan had been the hero before, and now David is.