

Dr. Phillips, OT History, Lit., and Theology, Lecture 20

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Our Father, we do pray that your name would be exalted, exalted in our midst, and exalted in our hearts. Father, we are thankful that you are our God, and because of what Jesus has done, stooping down to make us great, we do indeed enjoy the tremendous blessing and benefit of salvation through Christ. Lord, as we thank you for this, we thank you for so many other blessings that you have lavished upon us as well, we're thankful to be here, we're thankful to have friends, and fellowship, and Christian community. We pray that we would be good members of this community, helping and coming alongside those who are struggling for whatever reason. We pray for your mercy and grace to be showered upon them. We would ask that we would learn today the lessons that you would have us to learn, and as always we would pray that you would help us to be prepared to be your servants, through the planting of your word deeply in our hearts. We ask these things in Christ's name with thanksgiving. Amen.

Well, we've got to do a little bit of review, as we move on to David and the rise and the fall of Saul, but before we do that, just a little bit more artwork to work on. Obviously, we have a picture that depicts *whom?* --David. Now, which one is David? Right, it's the hands, right here with the harp. Notice how small that depiction is in contrast to Saul, notice the prominent thing that he's holding: it's the spear, isn't it? And of course, we're supposed to be mindful of the stuff that you've read for today. David's playing the harp to soothe Saul's spirit when the evil spirit comes upon Saul, and yet Saul, being so vexed by the evil spirit on more than one occasion, he hurls it, and hurls it in order to try to kill David. So, a very interesting juxtaposition here, between two persons: the Spirit of the Lord on David, and the Spirit of the Lord removed from Saul. We're going to talk about that in a moment.

Just a couple of things to remind us of what we were doing last time, another nice little artwork to stimulate us a little bit this morning. We said as we were talking about the life of Saul, that the two reasons that the Scripture gives for his having the kingship

removed from him are first of all, his presumptuous sacrifice at Gilgal. He was supposed to wait until Samuel came, seven days, and he didn't wait quite long enough. He waited seven days and then offered the sacrifice, of course, he's not a priest, or even in the line of Levi, and he was not supposed to be doing this, but he did it. Then, secondly, God commanded that he deal fully with the Amalekites by exterminating them, and of course, he left all those "best" sacrifices, that's what He said they were going to be, but it was basically the animals and so forth, and also left the King alive.

For those reasons, Saul has the kingship taken away from him. We're going to pose some questions about that. The first one: You've read the story of David, and even if you haven't read it for today, you probably know a lot of what David did. Why are Saul's sins so much worse? *How* are Saul's sins so much worse than the ones that David engaged in? We won't see those much today, Friday is when we're going to get into them, but David's story is pretty well known. This is not a rhetorical question, I'm curious as to what you think.

How are Saul's sins so much worse? He doesn't wait long enough to offer a sacrifice, and doesn't kill everything and everybody. What did David do? Anybody know from Sunday school? [*answer from audience*] Right, in some ways, something that has to do with those sacred offerings, good. (*another answer*) Okay, so David's guilty of adultery and murder. He's guilty of adultery with Bathsheba and wiping out Uriah, her husband. What is the heart issue? Okay, you're saying there is a difference in terms of their humility, and their stance before God, and their willingness to confess and so forth.

I think we're going in that direction, but let me just push that a little bit. David, and again we're going to see this on Friday, doesn't confess until Nathan comes and nails him with what he's done wrong. Otherwise, he's in the business of covering it up. So, it does take the prophet saying, "here's a parable, this is *you* in this parable," again we'll see this on Friday. But, I think you're right, in indicating that it has to be a heart issue, after all God Himself says he's going for a man after God's own heart, and David is indeed, a man after God's own heart, I think we're going to see that it has everything to

do with his humility, and his ability to recognize that he is just utterly, utterly wrong once he comes around to that point.

Whereas, Saul does cover up a little bit, and Saul as we said last time, is pretty busy trying to make monuments in his own honor, and makes sure that his honor is supported in the popular approach, and so forth, so I think there's some of those things. Great, in other words, to put it in a nutshell, maybe there is some question that needs to be raised here, because Saul seems to get judged very quickly, and yet David does have time that God gives him to repent, and God sends him the prophet Nathan and so forth, to bring him to that point where he'll repent. So you're still seeing some things that are a little uneasy with this. Okay, you're raising the issue of the presence of the Spirit of God, on the one hand it seems to be an abiding presence with David, perhaps, and, on the other, it comes upon Saul. God also very directly takes it away. We're going to address that "Spirit of the Lord" issue in a little bit, so that's forthcoming, but your point is well-taken.

Anything else? So, even as you're reading the narratives, you're seeing that there is an ongoing, very personal relationship between God and David, or David and God, whereas you might not see that so clearly, at least in the things that we're allowed to see, as we see Saul's heart. The idea that Saul's heart was changed, and that the people are so shocked when they see Saul prophesying, with Saul among the prophets, et cetera, it seems to be that these manifestations of the Spirit, for Saul are, dare I say, temporary, and not evidence of an indwelling abiding Spirit. Now, I'm not here in the business to be God and judging Saul, we're not doing that. Just from reading the texts, we can suggest that is the case. Well, I have more to say about that later on.

A couple other questions, once the kingdom is removed from Saul, why is God allowing Saul to be king for so long, and to suffer such torment, because he does. There is a real paranoia going on here, and it's something that is gnawing at Saul, and you can tell it. I suspect that if psychologists got a hold of him, they would really have some interesting diagnoses to suggest, and by the way, there have been some psychologists who have done some interesting work on Saul. But why? Why years of pursuing David,

chasing him all over everywhere, trying to kill him, and still clinging onto the kingdom, even though he knows, because he's going to tell Jonathan, "as long as you are friends with David, you've got to realize that you're never going to be king, and my dynasty isn't going to go on." Why do you suppose God leaves him there for so long? Okay, so this has less to do with Saul and more to do with the preparation of David, who as we know is a very young person when he first is coming on the scene here. Ah, so it's a lesson for the broader populace who need to learn that kings aren't necessarily the answer to every problem that they have, possibly. Is it actually mercy to Saul, in giving him more time? Could it be that as well? These are all fine. We could throw that in too, and suggest that maybe Saul is just like the Amorites. Remember the Amorites, who are in the land for four hundred years, and God doesn't use Israel to destroy them for that whole length of time, they've got extra time. Of course, the tragedy is, they, and in this case, Saul, don't avail themselves of that. Saul continues to, I would suggest, harden his heart right on up to the end where he tragically takes his own life on Mount Gilboa.

Well, at any rate, we don't have all the answers to these things. How are we to understand the Spirit of the Lord and the evil spirit? I'm going to come back to that in a moment, we raised some of those already. Let me simply suggest that as we have all of these discussions, one of the things I think we finally have to come back to is that we're not in the place of defining every aspect of what God decides to do. As Walter Brueggemann says, "God is untamable." And sometimes, in these circumstances, we realize that.

So why did God choose Saul as king and allow such personal and natural disaster? Again, just something to think about, I'm not going to spend a lot of time unwinding that right now. But, as you think of it from a personal standpoint, these are some really difficult things with which to wrestle. And, of course, the same kind of questions could be moved into our spheres: Why does God do some of these things, why does he allow them? We only have partial answers through a veil right now. Of course, this is where our confidence, faith and trust in God and in his ultimate sovereignty and goodness need to come into play, in our own hearts and minds.

Well, let's carry on, we've got a lot of things to do today. Just some things that you're going to want to know, David is, as we know, from the tribe of Judah. Genesis 49:10 has Judah the one that has been in God's sights to have the king coming from it. So, that will be important. It's also important just to remind ourselves that Ruth is in this line as well, Ruth, the Moabite woman. This will be important, because there's coming a time in the texts that you've actually read for today where David is under such stress as he's running from Saul that he actually takes his father and mother and moves them into Moab for safe keeping for a while. And he's taking them to the home territory, it's one of the reasons why that's the case.

He's anointed by Samuel, and this is taking place in a very interesting context, if you've got your Bible I'm actually moving back to 1 Samuel 16, just have a quick look at the interesting stuff that's going on here. The Lord sends Samuel down to Bethlehem, is Samuel entirely forthcoming at the Lord's command, in terms of what he's to do? The answer is, no. Because, Samuel says, "oh my goodness, if Saul finds out, this is going to be really awful, he's going to kill me!" And so the Lord says, "you just go and say that you're going to be giving a sacrifice." Of course, that's not the whole truth, but it's the truth to preserve Samuel's life once he goes down there. You had the whole thing set up, Jesse brings his first three sons down into Samuel's presence, Samuel at the Lord's instruction, says "no that's not the right one, that's not the right one, that's not the right one." Finally David, who has been out as a shepherd, is brought in, and here we have another instance of the God's very clearly indicating his choice of his person, because David is the youngest in this context. Notice that in 16:13, as David is anointed, it says "Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers," from that day on, the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power. It's the same expression that's used with some of the judges. You know, when God had something really specific for that judge to do, "the Spirit of the Lord comes on him in power," clothes him, in effect, and then he is able to do that.

At the same time, in the very next verse, and that's why this is such a pivotal thing, in verse 14 it says, "the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit

from the Lord,” I know your NIV says “tormented him,” actually, “fell upon him”-- terrified him, startled him. Those are the right words. Something that we can, if you use your imagination, it is really an evil spirit that is doing terrible things to twist him all inside, I would suggest. And we certainly see that happen as we see the needs of Saul to have something to pacify his spirit. Just a couple of thoughts in this regard, and I certainly, as I said a moment ago, don’t have all the answers here, but a couple of suggestions in terms of this whole “evil spirit from the Lord.”

First of all, in terms of the Spirit, capital “S”, if you will, God’s Spirit, suggesting some purposes, indicate that Saul was chosen, I said that a moment ago. When he first is anointed, by Samuel, we’re going back now to the earlier chapters, it’s very clear that he’s prophesying, and that’s indicative that he’s chosen. He leads Israel to victory. Later on, this same Spirit will come back into the context in chapter 19 (you can read that on your own), actually to protect David from Saul. So even though the evil spirit is tormenting Saul, the Spirit is still making him prophecy at certain points to protect him. And then, my suggestion is, and I realize that this gets into some very interesting theological territory, but I think as you put all these details together, and I’ve got it up here and I’ve already said it, that what we’ve got is the Spirit, specifically, powerfully, and temporarily manifesting himself in Saul, or perhaps on Saul, to get some purposes done, and some of those things are there. So, I’m not going to suggest that this is an indwelling Spirit.

Next point, this is the tragedy, and I think this actually gets us into some of our answers of the earlier question, Saul has those two instances where we learn the kingship is removed from him. But there’s an ongoing disobedience, an ongoing rebellion, ongoing “self-servingness” about Saul as we’re reading it. And therefore the passage that I just read, “the Spirit is removed.” In Psalm 51, which we’re going to study in about two weeks, and what you’ve sung in Hebrew, I realize, “Take not your Holy Spirit from me,” David has seen what’s happened to Saul. And I would suggest that as that Psalm comes out, and of course, David is writing under the inspiration of the Spirit himself, but something about the experience of seeing what happened to Saul may also be what’s the

impetus behind his cry, his plea, after he's been caught in his own sins. Psalm 51 is written after the situations with Bathsheba and Uriah and so forth. David knows full well that he's forfeited the presence of the Spirit and God could do that, in terms of removing it, and therefore he prays that God would not remove the Spirit.

Well here's the other side of the picture. We talked about purposes of the Spirit of the Lord and the presence, we've got some mentions of this evil spirit, and again these are hard things to think through and talk about, but as you read each of these passages, and you see what happens to Saul as a result of his ongoing proclivities towards disobedience and rebellion, I would suggest it's part of God's judgment against Saul. And again, that's a hard thing to say, and I don't have ways to put it all together, but it seems that it might be part of what's going on. And having said that, I think we need to come back to the place in our thinking that God does use all of these things--all the things to work his good purposes. To work his good purposes on behalf of Israel, to bring David into the kingship, we're going to talk more about the extended period of time. David will show himself to be a leader during that time, and also to be one who is eminently concerned not to do anything to, as he puts it, "touch the Lord's anointed." David had lots of chances, in the texts you've read today, to wipe Saul out of existence, and he refuses to do it, because he will not touch the Lord's anointed. He also doesn't want to be accused of usurping the throne, I mean from a very pragmatic standpoint that's part of the picture too. It's because Saul was tormented by the spirit, that we actually have David being brought into Saul's presence. So again, in God's very good, providential oversight of all this, it's one of the things that gets David, very practically speaking, into the court, as opposed to being out in Bethlehem shepherding sheep. Because here he's brought into the court process early on.

Well, what we're going to do is look through David's life in terms of the good things that happened to him, first of all. Then we'll look at the not-so-good, remembering that both of those categories of things are used by God in his sovereignty and his providence to make all this work together. For the good, as we've just said, David is called upon to be a soothing presence, music therapy if you want to think of it that way.

Some of you are music majors who may be going into music therapy, it's a big thing, and lots of people can tell you the benefits of that sort of approach. So he does provide music to relieve some of Saul's stress.

In chapter 17, of course, has our David and Goliath incident. Although I don't need to tell you that story, I do need to make a couple of comments in regard to it. We'll look at a map in a moment and see where it takes place. But here's the thing, when David goes out to the battle, he's actually going to provision his brothers and just check on them. And, when we look at the map in a moment, I'll show you why that's so significant and why his dad would be so concerned to send him out there, but that's basically why he's going. However, and here's the lesson, among the many lessons that we might derive from this, it turns out that all the things he's been doing up to that point, slinging rocks at lions and bears and shepherding sheep have been precisely the preparation he needed. Precisely, even though he probably didn't think so, and his brothers sort of looked down on him and said "what are you doing here, you're supposed to be back with the sheep!" But God had prepared him. So transfer that to your life, all the things that are a part of your life, God will use those, even if some of them don't seem terribly important to you right now.

Years ago when I taught at a different institution, the president of the institution gave a chapel talk one day, and he was about 50-ish at the time, and he told all the jobs that he had had. They were fairly menial jobs for a long time, and he said as he was going through them he was thinking "What on earth is God doing at this point, I don't see why my life is like this, I don't see where it's going." Yet in retrospect as he looked back, he could point to important issues and lessons and things that God used from each one of those as they were woven together into the fabric of where his life was at this point. So, David's slinging rocks at sheep, he's going to kill off the worst enemy of the Israelites, the person of Goliath.

The second thing I want you to note about this story is what David says, because it does say something about his character. He is fully convinced that the God of Israel will do what needs to be done to rescue Israel from the Philistines. He's fully convinced of it.

He's totally vexed that Goliath has basically derided and disdained that God. And so that too, in terms of his confidence, and as Christian said earlier, his heart attitude. I think that's one of the things we've learned from that. Now there's a lot more to be said about the David and Goliath incident, but we've got to move on.

He's a popular warrior, in fact he's such a popular warrior that it really makes Saul pretty angry, this refrain comes through a number of times. The women are singing and dancing and so forth and so on, and they say, "Saul has slain his thousands, David his tens of thousands," which of course doesn't make Saul very happy. David is popular. As a result of this, he will become Saul's son-in-law, because Michal, Saul's daughter, falls in love with him. In fact, this is one place in Scripture where we have a woman actually falling in love with the man. And, David pays a very interesting price to get her. As you know, Saul is out to still eliminate David, and so he says, "Well, I would just like you to show up with a hundred Philistine foreskins in your hand," David comes with two hundred, and for that, he gets his bride. By the way, this is a gory time. Did you notice as you were reading the text that after David kills Goliath, what does he do? He marches into Saul's presence holding the head, it's the way things were. He will also march into Saul's presence with two hundred Philistine foreskins, that's not exactly the kind of thing we see as being, well, savory. It's pretty gruesome stuff.

He's also a recipient of Jonathan's friendship. Jonathan is older than he is. If you put together the chronology of this, we've got at least a half generation to a full generation between them. And yet, Jonathan, who is utterly self-sacrificing, making his covenant with David, affirming David and protecting David is basically ruining his own chances to be king. It's at the expense of Jonathan's following Saul in the kingship that Jonathan will establish his covenant friendship with David. We've seen *hesed* operative in Ruth and Naomi, *hesed* on a horizontal level with Boaz and Ruth, and Ruth and Naomi, here we see it with David and Jonathan. And it's a wonderful friendship which will carry over for generations, because David's going to protect Jonathan's son later on.

Well, we need to keep moving on, just to give ourselves a little feeling of the geography of this David and Goliath incident. Here we've got to back up a little bit and

remind ourselves of the Philistine cities, you know the ones I said you'd want to remember later on for an exam coming up, right? They're out here on the seacoast, the two inner ones are Gath and Ekron. So, the Philistines belong out here. What does our text in 1 Samuel 17 tell us? It tells us they were camped between Socoh and Azekah. Here's Azekah, right in this area right here, and don't think for a moment that they're not intent on making their way up here into the hill country. Here's Bethlehem, and you can see why David's father is a little bit concerned to send David out to see what's going on. Because, if things are going to go bad for the Israelites, they're going to march up this valley and take the hill country, and life is going to be pretty grim. So, that's why this is such a critical time.

Now, let's look at it on the ground, here we are standing on Azekah, and looking at the Elah Valley which runs just like this. That's the Judean hill country, right over there would be Bethlehem, and Sokoh is the "Philistine Camp." Between Socoh and Azekah would go all the way around here, just imagine Philistine armies, Just think, because it says the Israelite armies are on the other side of the valley over here, and this is one of those stories where you can pretty much locate where it happened. Some of the others are guessing a little bit, this one is pretty clear. So, we can imagine our David and Goliath confrontation right about in there, very interesting kinds of things. But, think of the protection that this whole area is, our buffer zone of the Shephelah right out here, it had to be between the Philistines' cosmopolitan forces out here on the plain, and our little settlements that are up in here in the hill country.

Ok, carrying right along, the bad times. Picking up the map again, what happens at Nob? I'm tired of hearing myself talk. (*a student answer*) Right, and actually even before Saul gets angry at the priests, you've got David on the run, and Abimelech is the priest. David says, "Help! We're on a mission from the king!" He's telling a lie. And therefore he gets the bread of the presence. As suggested earlier, he's got this dedicated, consecrated bread and takes it. He's also got Goliath's sword, and they run. And who's there that sees it happen? A very interesting, nasty character. (*Student answer*) Not at that point, Abner is going to show up later. This is not even an Israelite. Anyone

remember “someone-or-other the Edomite”? It’s your garden variety name, it’s a name you see all the time, Doeg. Aren’t all your friends named Doeg? Doeg the Edomite is an informant. He sees David, he sees this happen and he tells Saul, who is thoroughly vexed, and basically decrees the execution of all the priests at Nob.

One of them gets away, carrying something very important. What is it, does anybody know? This is going to be extremely important for David in the future, and it’s something Saul doesn’t have. It’s the Ephod, and what does the Ephod have in it? The breastpiece, which has the Urim and the Thummim. So later on as you start reading the text, you see, “and David inquired of the Lord, should I do so-and-so?” and there’s an answer from the Lord. And again, he inquired, “should I go up to Keilah?” Yes. It’s because most likely, Abiathar, who is the one that escaped, brought along with him the Ephod which has indeed the means of inquiring from the Lord. So that’s going to be a really important thing.

Now the other thing that happens in this is when Abiathar comes in, David says “Oh, no, I know that I am responsible for the death of those people, because I saw him there and I should have realized what was going to happen.” So already David is feeling the weight of that, and feeling the guilt of it as well. David does go over to the Philistines for a little while, it’s kind of a temporary thing at this point, The king is Achish and Achish is king of Gath. Again keep in mind the city of Gath, one of the inner Philistine cities. At this point in time, Achish is going to say, “Oh, this guy is really crazy, we don’t want him around.” And so, David has to run farther. He doesn’t stay with the Philistines, he’s going to come back later on.

He picks up a bunch of malcontents. I’ve got “army” in quotation marks. It’s people who are disaffected. You can kind of read between the lines. They’re seeing Saul’s support fall apart. They know David was a popular warrior, and a good one. And so, these folks are sort of changing allegiances, and they’re going to continue to add themselves to David’s forces. I’ve got a little circle around the wilderness area, where we have him spending a whole lot of time out here. If you look, it’s kind of hard to see, even me up here so the back must be hopeless. Here’s Maon here’s Carmel, here’s Ziph. Three

cities that show up in this section, in these chapters we've been reading about. And, especially Maon and Carmel show up in the whole narrative with Abigail. Because we have, in that story, A guy named Nabal, which means what? "Fool" of the absolute worst kind. When we get to the book of Proverbs, we're going to talk about fools and the different Hebrew words for fools. This is the worst one, it's the most godless, immoral, hard-hearted type, and that's his name, an interesting contrast with his wife. Who, in order to placate David, will come out. I want to read the things she says to David when she comes out with all the provisions that her husband had refused to give to David. By the way, David had done a favor for them, David and his "army" had been protecting Nabal's shepherds, so David wasn't going in there saying "please give me some stuff, or else!" He's saying "please give me what you owe me for protection."

When Abigail comes out, she has some interesting things to say. I'm starting at 1 Samuel 25 verse 28. "The Lord will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master," speaking to David, because he fights the Lord's battles. "Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live," in other words, she's telling him, "don't let blood be on your hands," or innocent blood in this context. Because God's going to make a dynasty for you, she's speaking prophetically. Verse 29, "Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of your master [David] will be securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God". Verse 31, "my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed, or having avenged himself." Right away from the get-go, Abigail is described as both a beautiful and very intelligent woman, and she shows that here, in terms of the way she deals with David.

So, some interesting times, taking place here as David is on the run from Saul. A couple of things to look at, if you look at the picture on the left, you see what might help us figure out one of the stories that takes place. This is one of a number of wadis, steep v-shaped valleys that have been cut through this wilderness area. It doesn't rain out there a lot, but when it rains up in the hill country over the millions of years, you've had water cutting down these valleys. You can be walking along the path on this side, and chat with somebody on that side, and yet can't get to them. Now, let me read something from

chapter 26. This is another case where David is sparing Saul's life, he's gone into the camp, Saul has been sleeping, and Abner has been sleeping. They take Saul's water bottle and spear, and away they go. It says in verse 13, "David crossed over to the other side. There was a wide space between them. He called out to the "army" and to Abner son of Ner, "aren't you going to answer me?" They had this exchange back and forth. Abner and Saul can't get to David, because there's obviously too much space in between them, it would take hours to climb down and then back up again. David can in some ways taunt Saul and Abner especially. So that gives us a little feeling for maybe how that narrative might unfold in this topographical context.

Here we simply have a picture of the wilderness, I think I've showed it to you before, but this is the kind of area that David would be running through. It's barren. There are a few places where there are water sources and springs, but by and large it's barren. David will go from stronghold to stronghold, and you probably saw that when you were working through the text. But most of the time, it's pretty bleak landscape out there.

Moving right along, we do have, as you look at chapter 27, Achish doing something very interesting. David finally goes back to him, I said he went there earlier, doesn't stay long, a little uneasy with it. But now having run from Saul long enough, verse 1 of chapter 27, "David thought to himself, one of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is go to the Philistines." So he does, but here is the interesting thing. The Philistines are here, let me do the cities again. Do you get the impression that these Philistine cities might be important to know? Here's Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod, Gath and Ekron. There they are, that's sort of the centerpiece, the five Philistine cities. Granted, they're pushing their way east, they're pushing their way north, but those are the cities. What Achish does is position David in a place called Ziklag, which is right here. And you're thinking, "that's kind of a boring place to be." But probably not, because what we don't know until we start studying more broadly in this area, it's through the Negev, and you see the western Negev being half-obliterated by

my white ellipse there, but it's through the western Negev that you have, for centuries, a very good spice trade going on.

Spices are coming from Saudi Arabia, from points farther east, and one of the ways to get them through the Mediterranean Sea is to "camel" them right through the Negev, the camel being the "ship of the desert." And so, there's a very important trade route going through there, and probably what Achish is doing is appointing David to oversee that, the stuff that's coming through here. So, he's appointing David as a sheriff, if you will.

Now, what does David do? It's a scheme, or a ruse or an outright lie, if you want to be bold about this. But what does he do in this position? It's really politically astute, it's not particularly truthful. Let's watch it happens in chapter 27. Verse 6, Achish gives him Ziklag. Verse 8, "David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites." You're thinking, "yeah, so?" But what he's doing, basically is making raids on semi-nomadic and nomadic people that are down here. The Amalekites haven't been wiped out, they're still down here in the northern Sinai/western Negev area. So David is doing something to kind of push back people that would be making life miserable for southern Judah. Let's keep reading, verse 9: "whenever David attacked an area, he didn't leave a man or woman alive, took sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels, and then he returned to Achish." What does he say? Here's the thing, Achish says, "Where did you go raiding today?" David would say "Oh, well, I went raiding against," what does the next verse say?--"the Negev of Judah." The Negev of Jerahmeel, the Negev of the Kennites. He's telling Achish that he's been beating up on Judah, on Israelites. That's what he tells Achish, "I've been sort of attacking my own folks," the Negev of Judah. That's plunder that belongs to Israelites, the southern part of the tribe of Judah. So what he tells Achish is, "Hey, I'm on your side, don't worry, I'm taking care of those Israelites down there." Yet in reality, what he's really doing is protecting those Israelites against those semi-nomadic sorts.

Now, why is that important? Well, he's getting in good with Achish, so that Achish will trust him, and not be suspicious anymore. He's also storing up political

capital for himself for the future. Because, what's going to be the first tribe that appoints David king? Judah. He's king of Judah first. That's because they have a political debt to pay. He's been good to them. At any rate, we have to deal with another story in between this Amalekite business, but let me at least mention it for the time being.

When David initially sets out to go to war with the Philistines and against the Israelites, which we're going to look at in a second, he leaves his family behind in Ziklag, and the Amalekites come and raid, obviously because they've been attacked by David and now they see their chance. And in chapter 30, David will get back at them, and that's the important part of the whole thing. He will take on the Amalekites, recover all the plunder that the Amalekites have absconded with, and bring it back. Our purposes here are going to be to spend the next ten minutes in a very interesting narrative. But, in order to understand our very interesting narrative, we've got to understand what's going on.

Let's look at the map on the right first. There might be a map on this next exam. Here you've got Philistine cities, that's their territory. When we started introducing this whole thing, one of the things I've said is that the Philistines have a way with going beyond their territory and making deep inroads into Israel. When the battle moves up north, here's how it works. They go up along here, through Mount Carmel, they're going to make life very miserable by cutting the four northern tribes, I think I said that last time, off from the southern tribes. So, a Philistine presence all the way through here. Now, on the map, this is Mount Moreh, you've seen it on the map on the left, This is Mount Gilboa, you've seen it there as well, in between all that valley area. As you read the story of the events working up to Saul's death, one of the things we know is that on the east side of Mount Moray right about here is a little place called Endor. Does that name ring a bell from the stories you've read for today?

What happened at Endor? There's a witch there, and what about her? [*a student answer*] Right, and we're going to talk about the implications of what her "conjuring" means in a moment. But, notice what's going on here. You're absolutely right, Saul has gone in disguise, and why has he gone in disguise? Because he has not gotten a message from the Lord. There's no word from God, and he's desperate, because here are the

Israelites encamped on Mount Gilboa, the text tells us. There's an encampment there, and there's Philistines all across here, and on Mount Moreh.

Saul is so desperate for a word from the Lord that he goes behind enemy lines to get it. That's taking a real risk, with that whole crowd of Philistines like a horde of locusts out there. And he sneaks behind enemy lines to get to this witch at Endor. Of course, as she says, "what's going on here?" as he has supposedly expelled the witches, he has to placate her and say "don't worry, please do what I've asked you to do."

But the map is important to have in mind, because it gives us a little sense in terms of the added risk that Saul is taking at this point. And then gives us a sense in terms of how very desperate this man is as he's reaching the end of his life.

Well, let's see how it works out. Chapter 28 is the one that we really want to look at. When he gets there, I'm going to start reading because it's such a fascinating thing here, verse 8: "Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, he goes to the woman and says 'consult a spirit for me, bring up the one I name.'" She says, 'I can't do that,' Saul swears to her, 'surely as the Lord lives you will not be punished,' and the woman says 'whom shall I bring up?' and he says 'Samuel.'" And then what happens? You get the impression by virtue to her reaction to this, that all along her witchcraft has been a bit of a sham. Maybe she's been fleecing everybody up to this point. Because when Samuel really appears, she's absolutely horrified! Notice verse 12, "when the woman saw Samuel, she cried out of the top of her voice." By the way, when people cry out at the top of their voices, it's really a piercing shriek, right? "Why have you deceived me, you're Saul!" And the king says, "what do you see?" I'm not sure what your NIV says next, but the woman says, "I see *Elohim*." "I see *Elohim* coming up out of the ground," what is that? I know that the text in the NIV says "I see a spirit," but the Hebrew word is *Elohim*, do you know what that means? "gods" or "God". She's probably not meaning to say "I saw God," as in *Elohim* who created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1, but that word can also be used in a plural sense, as some very strange manifestation here that she's probably identifying as a supernatural deity in some way, in her mind at any rate. So, I'm not so keen with this "spirit" translation, it's watering it down. "I see *Elohim* coming up."

She describes it, and Saul knows it's Samuel. Here's the interesting thing. Samuel has a message, and it's a very appalling message. Verse 16: "Why do you consult me now that the Lord has turned away from you and become your enemy?" What a horrible thing to hear, that the Lord has become your enemy, Samuel says to Saul. "He's done what he predicted through me, he's torn the kingdom out of your hands, and given it to David. Because you did not obey the Lord, or carry out his wrath against the Amalekites, the Lord has done this to you today".

So, we get again a reaffirmation of something we said last time. Obedience, obedience, obedience is what God wants. Even though that obedience may be very difficult at times, obedience is what God wants. "The Lord will hand over both Israel and you to the Philistines, tomorrow you and your sons will be with me." Of course, Samuel is on the other side.

Well, the battle does indeed take place, Saul is mortally wounded, he asks his armor-bearer to take his life, he won't do it, so Saul himself will fall on his sword. Verse 7, "When the Israelites crossed the valley, and all those across the Jordan saw that the Israelite army had fled, Saul and his sons had died, and they abandoned their towns and fled and the Philistines came and occupied them." Do you see what's happened here? The Philistines have pretty much made a complete devastation of what was Israel at this point. Israelites have fled, and Philistines have occupied their own towns. This is utter destruction, and Saul has died along with it. David, when he inherits the kingdom, is going to have a real mess to put together, we're going to see that on Friday.

But let's keep reading, verse 8: "The next day when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa." Notice what they do to the bodies, it's an ugly thing. "They cut off his head, strip off his arms, send messengers in the land of the Philistines to proclaim the good news." Rejoicing over the deaths of the kings. "Put his armor in the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to wall of Beth Shan." So, some pretty gruesome details.

Now here's what's interesting. Verse 11 of the last chapter of 1 Samuel: "When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard of what the Philistines had done to Saul, they

journeyed all night long to Beth Shan, they took down the body of Saul and his sons, and they went to Jabesh where they burned them. Why are the people of Jabesh Gilead so intent on rescuing, if you will? Honoring post-mortem the bodies of Saul and Jonathan and the brothers? Why Jabesh Gilead? (*a student answer*) Well let me ask it this way, how is it related to the tribe of Benjamin? Because if they're going across the Jordan, Benjamin is not going to be there, it's going to be the tribe of Reuben or Gad, I'm not sure which actually. But it's related to the tribe of Benjamin in a very interesting way, think back to the end of Judges. (*a student answers*) There's a relationship there, isn't there? You've got a real concern, they're recognizing that Saul has done something good for them, and therefore they're going to do something good as well. And, Saul had done something good for them because going back to the book of Judges, that's where some of the women were taken from to replenish the tribe of Benjamin. We've got kind of a long, threaded connection going on.

Well, the Amalekite, interestingly enough, in 2 Samuel 1, a guy shows up, says he's been at the battle, David says "who are you?" He says, "I am an Amalekite", and he claims to have killed Saul. Of course, he's doing that because he thinks David is going to reward him. And yet David, again, as he's been doing consistently through this whole process, David is going to say, reading between the lines, "I'm not going to have anything to do with anybody who has done away with Saul, or hurt Saul, or harmed Saul and his sons in any way." David doesn't want to be accused of usurping the throne. So therefore he's not particularly pleased with the Amalekites as he was not afraid to destroy the Lord's anointed, so David strikes him down.

Then finally, the second part of the chapter, kind of affirms in poetic form what I've just been saying. David isn't rejoicing over the fall of his enemies. He doesn't do that, his enemies in this case being Saul. Instead, he comes up with one of the most poignant songs there is. "Your glory lies slain on your heights, O Israel." Verse 23, "Saul and Jonathan, in life they were loved and gracious, in death they were not parted swifter than eagles, stronger than lions." Verse 25: "How the mighty have fallen in battle, Jonathan lies slain on your heights, I grieve for you by brother Jonathan, you were very

dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than the love of women. How the mighty have fallen, how the weapons of war have perished.” So, David reaffirms the profound depths of that covenant love that he and Jonathan had shared, and Jonathan is now dead, and David feels the pain of that deeply.

That brings us to the end of the consideration of Saul. As I said, the kingdom is in shambles at this point, Saul’s kingdom that started out well had basically disintegrated. David is going to have to put it together, and we’re going to see how that works on Friday. Have a great day.

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