

1 Samuel 17 • When Giants Collide

Introduction

David versus Goliath is one of the most used stories by non-biblical sources in the world. One of the affects of its universal adaptation by even non-Believers is that it becomes something else set apart from the Bible that eventually ceases to communicate the message and lessons originally intended. This is a story that all Christians need to examine word-for-word to recapture God's intended message for them.

¹Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; and they were gathered at Socoh which belongs to Judah, and they camped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. ²Saul and the men of Israel were gathered and camped in the valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array to encounter the Philistines. ³The Philistines stood on the mountain on one side while Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with the valley between them.

[Read v.1-3]

Background: "Socoh" means "a fence or hedge", "Azekah" means "dug over", and "Ephes-dammim" means "boundary of blood". Taken together they describe the forward edge of evil or unrighteousness, if you will, a physical line drawn and held by the forces of the enemy and depicts the forces on each side of the valley facing each other.

Q: Has anything significant ever occurred in this area before?

A: When Joshua led the original conquest of Canaan, Azekah was the place where God intervened during the battle with the five kings of the Amorites, destroying the enemy with large hailstones (Joshua 10:10-11) as a prelude to the day the sun stood still. So this was a site of great, supernatural victory in Israel's past, a place of God's direct intervention for victory. It should have been a great reminder of the power of faith in God.

Application: *Although God has been faithful in the past, do we sometimes lack trust when facing the future? Do we allow ourselves to begin thinking that maybe the current situation is "different" and that God won't intervene? How is this in itself probably a test from God?*

[Read v.4-11]

⁴Then a champion came out from the armies of the Philistines named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. ⁵He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was clothed with scale-armor which weighed five thousand shekels of bronze. ⁶He also had bronze greaves on his legs and a bronze javelin slung between his shoulders. ⁷The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and the head of his spear weighed six hundred shekels of iron; his shield-carrier also walked before him. ⁸He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel and said to them, "Why do you come out to draw up in battle array? Am I not the Philistine and you servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. ⁹If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us." ¹⁰Again the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together."

¹¹When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Q: Using Goliath as an example, how does the enemy present itself before us?

A: In the most menacing, intimidating earthly form possible. Goliath is really a representation that no man on his own strength and ability can overcome Satan and is completely overmatched whether trying to resist his attack or even in undertaking the offensive against him. His weapons, armor, and supporting physical stature are impossible to overcome one-on-one.

Q: What is the nature of Goliath's first challenge? Why does he initially make no mention of any gods, whether his own or Israel's?

A: He limits the challenge to the human level. He doesn't want anyone to think about anything else other than the earthly, physical factors which are overwhelmingly in his favor. This is how he nullifies their faith and causes their dismay as they examine the earthly factors alone.

Application: *What problems have you faced/do you face in which the factors are just too big and overwhelming? Do they get you to forget about the power of trusting in God? Do you only consider the earthly possibilities of effecting a resolution, or do you allow for God to work something greater?*

¹²Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons. And Jesse was old in the days of Saul, advanced in years among men. ¹³The three older sons of Jesse had gone after Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and the second to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. ¹⁴David was the youngest. Now the three oldest followed Saul, ¹⁵but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's flock at Bethlehem. ¹⁶The Philistine came forward morning and evening for forty days and took his stand. ¹⁷Then Jesse said to David his son, "Take now for your brothers an ephah of this roasted grain and these ten loaves and run to the camp to your brothers. ¹⁸Bring also these ten cuts of cheese to the commander of their thousand, and look into the welfare of your brothers, and bring back news of them. ¹⁹For Saul and they and all the men of Israel are in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines."

²⁰So David arose early in the morning and left the flock with a keeper and took the supplies and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the circle of the camp while the army was going out in battle array shouting the war cry. ²¹Israel and the Philistines drew up in battle array, army against army. ²²Then David left his baggage in the care of the baggage keeper, and ran to the battle line and entered in order to greet his brothers. ²³As he was talking with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine from Gath named Goliath, was coming up from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke these same words; and David heard them. ²⁴When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid. ²⁵The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and

[Read v.12-19]

Q: Where have we met these 3 brothers of David before? How might it relate to this event?

A: They are the 3 sons of Jesse mentioned by name that were rejected by Samuel as being the next king of Israel before he ultimately anointed David. (1 Samuel 16:6-13) It's interesting to note that we have the current (and known to be rejected) King Saul accompanied by 3 men who have also been rejected for the office, all in the presence of **GOD'S** anointed king-to-be.

Q: What is the contradiction in attitude between David and everyone else? How is it shown in his actions?

A: In v.11, "...Saul and all Israel...were dismayed and greatly afraid". They were frozen in fear opposite the enemy. David "went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's flock at Bethlehem". (v.15) He was living out his life normally as if nothing had changed.

Point: The knowledge of God's calling combined with faith that He will do all things according to His will and timing makes for a **spiritual** giant.

Q: What is David's first duty to his brothers?

A: To feed them, to provide the necessities for sustaining life.

Q: How does this have spiritual parallels?

A: Feeding—particularly with grain/bread—is a recurring biblical symbol of teaching God's Word. One of the spiritual meanings would be that Christ—the very Word of God Himself—first prepares us for the spiritual battles ahead by feeding us God's Word.

Application: Have you ever been "too" anxious to join in the battle, so to speak? Is it possible that God is first preparing/strengthening you through His Word in order to deal with things to come? If an athlete trains to be ready for the competition, how does a spiritual warrior "train" for battle?

[Read v.20-30]

Q: What is the similarity and difference between David and Saul, particularly according to v.22?

A: When Saul was publicly anointed king at Mizpah, his initial reaction was to hide himself in the baggage. (1 Samuel 10:20-22) David is quick to leave the provisions with the baggage and join the people. In other words, one's tendency is to hide from God, the other's to embrace Him.

Q: What is the contrast between the way Israel acted before and after Goliath's challenge?

A: Prior they went "out in battle array shouting the war cry", (v.20) that is they appeared enthusiastic and/or prepared for war. Afterwards, however, "they fled from him and were greatly afraid". (v.24)

Q: How did this result in their perception of the right solution for the problem?

A: They knew that Israel needed a deliverer, but they were looking for an earthly one rather than God. They provided an earthly enticement ("...the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel".) for an earthly deliverer.

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will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel."

²⁶Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?"

²⁷The people answered him in accord with this word, saying, "Thus it will be done for the man who kills him."

²⁸Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle."

²⁹But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just a question?" ³⁰Then he turned away from him to another and said the same thing; and the people answered the same thing as before.

³¹When the words which David spoke were heard, they told them to Saul, and he sent for him. ³²David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

³³Then Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth."

³⁴But David said to Saul, "Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. ³⁶Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God." ³⁷And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

And Saul said to David, "Go, and may the LORD be with you."

Q: How do we know that David was actually focused on the core spiritual issues involved rather than the peripheral earthly ones?

A: It's first betrayed in David's identifying the enemy as "this uncircumcised Philistine". To be uncircumcised represents having no knowledge of God's ways nor having a personal, covenant relationship with Him. This is someone completely opposed to God, not simply opposed to God's people.

It's further revealed by David's labeling of Israel as "the armies of the living God". David draws a clear connection to the fact that this is more of a spiritual battle than a simple earthly one by defining Goliath's "reproach" of Israel coming from God's enemies, ignorant of His Word and ways, against God's very own.

Q: In the example of Eliab's rebuke of David, what can we be assured of when we attempt to rally God's people to overcome evil?

A: There's always somebody that will tell us, "It can't be done."

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

Point: David never allowed the distractions of earthly things or even their appearance to diminish being grounded in the things of God. This is a practical example of faith beyond the circumstances. He did this not only for himself personally, but for all those around him as well.

[Read v.31-37]

Background: Consider the following commandment in God's Law with which Saul and all Israel would have been familiar and how it might relate:

When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.

Deuteronomy 20:1

Q: How might Saul's concerns be characterized—were they more earthly or spiritual in nature?

A: Saul, seeking a human solution, had human concerns and excuses.

Q: How might David's response be likewise characterized?

A: David responds with real-world examples of being able to overcome as a human, but he attributes those successes to actually being spiritual successes by summarizing, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

Q: How did God prepare David for the "big" things?

A: God tested David privately with a lion and a bear before testing him publicly with a giant. Faithful in the private battles, God saw him through public trials.

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*If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out,
Then how can you compete with horses?
If you fall down in a land of peace,
How will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?
Jeremiah 12:5*

Point: *In his own way, David is a spiritual reminder of what Saul and company should have known through Deuteronomy 20:1 to begin with, that God is greater than the circumstances. But their lack of faith was in direct proportion to their lack of faithfulness.*

[Read v.38-40]

³⁸Then Saul clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with armor. ³⁹David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. So David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." And David took them off. ⁴⁰He took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine.

Q: What was the people's request when they originally asked Samuel to appoint a king over them, which turned out to be Saul?

Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, "No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

1 Samuel 8:19-20

Q: Who was actually the king of Israel at this time?

A: Although Saul formerly sat on the throne, David had been anointed king by God. Therefore the true king of Israel, in taking on this fight, will "go out before us and fight our battles".

Q: Is there a possible ploy that Saul is attempting in providing David with his garments and armor?

A: Dressed in this manner, David would appear to everyone as Saul, even to the point that many might think it was Saul himself that was going out to fight Goliath.

Q: What is significant about David's decision not to use the weapons offered by Saul but to trust in his own, simpler weapons and resources?

A: David's trust is not in man but God, that trust further grounded in the belief that God's preparation and provision is enough to get the job done. David is actually a contrast of the true king of God that trusts in God's ways versus Saul the earthly king whose trust is in material things.

Q: Is it by chance that David selected FIVE stones? What is the point?

A: Goliath had 4 brothers, all of whom by the laws of the times might claim the right to exact revenge on their brother's killer. If necessary, David was prepared to finish the job completely, even if it should continue beyond just the immediate fight with Goliath.

Point: *God provided all the preparation necessary; David did not need to be supplemented by things that men perceived as necessary.*

Application: *Have you ever received advice—or offered it—that you need "this or that" to spiritually succeed? Have you noticed that most of the time such suggestions are almost always a list of earthly resources? When carrying out God's work, what happens when we fail to rely on God's provision and rely on man's?*

[Read v.41-47]

⁴¹Then the Philistine came on and approached David, with the shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴²When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him;

Q: How is Goliath's response now different from that previously offered over each of the past 40 days?

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for he was but a youth, and ruddy, with a handsome appearance. ⁴³The Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴The Philistine also said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field.”

⁴⁵Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. ⁴⁶This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD’S and He will give you into our hands.”

⁴⁸Then it happened when the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, that David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground.

⁵⁰Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David’s hand. ⁵¹Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. ⁵²The men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the slain Philistines lay along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron. ⁵³The sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps. ⁵⁴Then David took the Philistine’s head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent.

A: Whereas Goliath previously refrained from introducing anything “spiritual” and wanted everyone to remain focused on the daunting, physical factors of the situation, for the first time he betrays the spiritual basis for the conflict by cursing David “by his gods”. The outward battle has spilled out from the inward spiritual conflict.

Q: How does David turn the whole argument upside down? How does this contrast with the way that Saul and Israel had sought a deliverer?

A: David plainly refutes all earthly factors and declares his faith in the things of God. Whereas Saul and company had offered an earthly reward to entice an earthly deliverer, David invokes God as Deliverer. David’s goal is to bring glory not to himself but to the One True God in the eyes of **BOTH** sides.

Q: How does David identify God?

A: “The LORD of hosts”. This is a description of God not just merely commanding the people of Israel, but in command of the entire universe. It’s an allusion not only to God’s sovereignty over both sides but to His power and authority beyond the confines of either side.

Application: How often during conflicts with friends, family, co-workers, etc. do you stop to consider the greater spiritual issues at stake? Do you seek to win the earthly argument at the expense of the greater spiritual victory?

[Read v.48-54]

Q: How is David a “type” or picture of the Messiah?

- Both were born in Bethlehem.
- Both were rejected by their brethren. (When David became king his brethren received him just as the Jews will receive Christ when He returns the second time.)
- David was anointed king years before he was permitted to reign; Christ is King now but will not reign on earth until Satan is banished.
- King Saul typifies Satan in this age—although rejected and defeated, he was permitted to reign until David took the throne; Satan is permitted to persecute God’s people yet will one day be defeated.
- Just as David was sent by his father to the battlefield, so Christ was sent by His Father to this world.

“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder. He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters. Luke 11:21-23

- Satan is the strong man guarding his goods (the people under his control), and Christ is the Stronger Man who overcomes him.
- Christ invaded Satan’s kingdom, overcame his power, took his armor, and now is dividing the spoils by saving lost souls and making them children of God. This is what David did that day: He overcame the strong man and allowed Israel to divide the spoils.

Application: How does the following apply to your approach to the battles of your life: “Christians do not simply fight **FOR** victory, but fight **FROM** victory, the victory won at the cross”?