

2 Samuel 1:1-27

Introduction

1. 1st and 2nd Samuel were originally one book, but were divided in two with the creation of the LXX and originally called 1st and 2nd Kings with what is now 1st and 2nd Kings being called 3rd and 4th Kings
2. 1st and 2nd Samuel cover the transition from the time of Judges (where Israel was a conglomeration of smaller, individual tribes governed by judges) into a single nation and one people of God governed by a king
3. 1st Samuel covers the rise and fall of Saul, Israel's first king, and foreshadows David's upcoming reign
4. 2nd Samuel covers David's life and is broken down into three parts:
 - a. The first 9 chapters cover the rise of David as king and focus on many of his righteous attributes and actions
 - b. Chapters 10-20 reveal a different side to David where we see his sin and struggles as a result of that sin
 - c. Chapters 21-24 are a reflection of David's life and covers six different events or episodes from various times throughout his life (they do not follow chapter 20 chronologically)

A. David learns of Saul's and Jonathan's deaths (READ 1:1-11)

1. David had just returned back home to Ziklag:
 - a. His city was in ruins having been destroyed and burned with fire by an army of the Amalekites (READ 1 Samuel 30:1-20)
 - b. David and his men had just returned after slaughtering the Amalekites and recovering their belongings and their kidnapped families
2. He hadn't been home three days yet before an Amalekite man arrives and delivers news that the army of Israel had been defeated by the Philistines, and that Saul and Jonathan are dead
 - a. According to 1 Samuel 31, Israel was battling the Philistines on Mount Gilboa and suffered a massive defeat
 - b. The Philistines had overtaken them, killed Jonathan and mortally wounded Saul (hit by an arrow)
 - c. Fearing that he would be tortured by the Philistines, Saul begs his arm-bearer to finish him off but the arm-bearer refuses so Saul tried to kill himself by falling on his own sword
 - d. At this point, an Amalekite that had been taken prisoner by Israel stumbles upon Saul who is still alive, and Saul begs him to finish him off
 - e. So, the Amalekite deals Saul the final death blow, takes his crown, bracelet and sword, escapes from the camp and heads to Ziklag where he delivers the news to David
3. Before we look at David's reaction, we need to remember that Saul and his army were David's number one enemy:
 - a. They constantly pursued David, and Saul made at least 14 attempts to assassinate him
 - b. In fact, the reason David was living in Ziklag (a Philistine city) was because he couldn't find a safe place to live in all of Israel and believed Saul wouldn't pursue him into enemy territory (READ 1 Samuel 27:1-4)

4. How might you respond if you were David?
 - c. Would you be thankful?
 - d. Would you rejoice and celebrate?

Death of Madalyn Murry O’Hair: one of the most well known atheist activists of the 60’s 70’s and 80’s; her lawsuit against the Baltimore Public School System led to the 1963 Supreme Court ruling that effectively banned school sponsored or teacher led prayer and Bible reading in schools; she sued to have “In God We Trust” taken off currency and “under God” removed from the Pledge of Allegiance; she protested the reading of Bible verses by our astronauts and fought to get the nativity scene removed from her state capital; she founded the group American Atheists and even published one of the first atheist magazines; Life Magazine called her “the most hated woman in America”; one source even referred to her as “Big, loud and often obscene.” Then, in 1995 she suddenly disappeared with her adult son and adult grand-daughter. At first the authorities thought they had run away with a bunch of money that had been withdrawn from her foundation’s bank account, but it was learned later that they had been murdered by someone employed by the foundation. Their bodies weren’t found until five years later (2001).

I remember when her murder was revealed in the news and I remember thinking, “Good! She got what she deserved!”—I can also tell you there were a lot of Christians thinking, feeling, and even saying the same thing publicly

5. We might expect such a reaction from David but instead we see a much different, almost shocking response

B. David’s three unexpected reactions (1:11-27)

1. The first unexpected reaction is that David mourns what happened (READ 11-12)
 - a. We would expect David to mourn when it came to Jonathan’s death because the Bible makes it clear that they were exceptionally close, practically brothers
 - b. However, the text explicitly states that David wasn’t simply mourning the death of his friend Jonathan but also Saul—in fact, it mentions three things:
 - 1) He mourned “**for Saul and his son Jonathan**”
 - 2) “**for the people of the LORD**”—possibly a reference to the Israel’s army as the NIV renders it
 - 3) “[for] **the house of Israel**”—a reference to all of Israel
 - c. There are a couple of remarkable things about this reaction:
 - 1) First, David’s mourning was public, not private: tearing of the clothes, weeping and fasting were all forms of public mourning
 - 2) Second, David wasn’t alone in his mourning; all 600 of his mighty men mourned, wept and fasted right alongside him
 - a) This may speak to their loyalty to him
 - b) However, it likely also indicates something much more significant
 - c) These men had just as much reason to hate Saul and his army as David did

- d) In fact, one of these men just a short time before this, offered to kill Saul himself when they snuck into Saul's camp, but David warned him about taking such action (READ 1 Samuel 26:8-12)
 - e) Maybe the reason David's men mourned Saul's death rather than celebrating it was because the message we just read from David stuck with them
2. The second unexpected reaction is that David kills the Amalekite messenger (READ 13-16):
- a. We should almost expect David to thank the Amalekite here for two reasons:
 - 1) First, David would no longer have to fear Saul
 - 2) Second, it appears the Amalekite did Saul a favor by not killing him before he could be tortured and made sport of by the Philistines
 - b. However, instead of thanks and praise, David has one of his men kill the Amalekite:
 - 1) The text specifically states the reason: the man wasn't "**afraid to stretch out [his] hand to destroy the LORD's anointed**"
 - 2) However, less obvious in the text is that David was acting in obedience to the Law:
 - a) When Israel left Egypt there were attacked in the wilderness by the Amalekites
 - b) As such, God pronounce judgment against them and declared that He would blot out the memory of the Amalekites from under heaven (Exodus 17:15-16)
 - c) In Deuteronomy 25:17-19 God reminded the Israelites that once they entered the land, they were to remember God's command and blot out the Amalekites (Deuteronomy 25:17-19)
 - d) In fact, God called on Saul to do this in 1 Samuel 15 and his failure to obey the LORD in this command was one of the biggest mistakes of his life and led to the LORD rejecting him as king
 - e) Here, David wasn't going to make that same mistake, and killed the Amalekite just as God had commanded Saul
3. The third and final unexpected reaction is that David immortalizes Saul and Jonathan in song (READ 17-27):
- a. Since David was a composer and musician it shouldn't surprise us that in his grief he might write a song, especially to honor his friend Jonathan
 - 1) However, David goes beyond that by composing a song for the purpose of immortalizing both Saul and Jonathan and to ensure that they are not forgotten in Israel—notice that we are told that David not only sang the song himself but instructed that it was to be taught to the sons of Judah (RE-READ 17-18)
 - 2) According to one commentator, this song is one of the "most sensitive and moving expressions of mourning ever penned or uttered" (Bergen, p. 292).
 - 3) According to another Hebrew scholar, this passage is "one of the finest specimens of Hebrew poetry in the Old testament" (Gordon, p. 201)
 - b. Themes found in the David's song:
 - 1) It begins in v. 1 with an amazing word picture not seen in most English translations—the literal translation is "**The gazelle of Israel is slain on your high places**"—the word for gazelle also refers to beauty, splendor or glory
 - 2) He curses Mount Gilboa where they died (21)
 - 3) The Three times David refers to Saul and Jonathan as "**mighty**" (19, 21, 25, 27)

- 4) He speaks of the respect they received because of their courage and strength in battle (22-23)
- 5) He calls on the women of Israel to weep over Saul because of the prosperity he brought to Israel (24)
- 6) He ends on a personal and passionate tribute to his friend Jonathan (26)

Conclusion

1. To be honest, I've struggled with how to apply this passage practically, and I'm still not quite sure how
2. It seems David's response to Saul's death was a result of him being able to see past the misery that Saul caused him and instead see the big picture: God's purpose and plan
3. David understood that God raised up Saul to be king to lead and protect Israel, but David also knew that Saul failed miserably at this and ultimately faced the consequences of his actions—David mourned this
4. He understood that the LORD desires obedience, one of the areas in which Saul struggled, so even though Saul's death brought relief to David and the Amalakite's actions personally benefited David, he refused to ignore the Law and reward the Amalekite—he chose to obey the Law instead
5. He understood that in spite of Saul's rebellion and sin, God still used him to protect and bring prosperity to Israel—and for that he was able to honor Saul
6. When I think about my initial reaction, and that of many other Christians, to the death of Madalyn Murry O'Hair, I wonder why we didn't mourn instead of rejoice—after all, the big picture is that the pain and suffering she brought to Christians pales in comparison to the pain and suffering she now faces for all eternity without Christ
7. When I think about those outspoken voices today who blaspheme God and persecute His people, should I rejoice in the knowledge that someday God will pay them back, or should I mourn the fact that they too will face judgment and condemnation for all eternity?