

## Sunday Night Message

March 1, 2020

### *1 Samuel 31 – The Death of Saul*

Topics – Saul; Jonathan

Series – *1 Samuel*

Text – 1 Samuel 31

#### Introduction

In chapter 31, we will see the end of the life and reign of King Saul. God's hand of blessing had long been off of Saul, and Saul knew that David was actually now God's choice to lead His people; but Saul stubbornly held on to his throne. He should have and could have turned the kingdom over voluntarily to David, but instead the kingdom had to be ripped out from under Saul through the invasion of a Philistine army.

God's will will be accomplished. Jesus told another Saul in the New Testament: "*It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*" (Acts 9:5). What Jesus meant was that it is hard to resist the will of God. King Saul tried and eventually lost the battle.

Here in chapter 31, we will see the end of the reign of Saul. When we last left David, he was fighting for his family against the Amalekites down in Ziklag. David does not know it, but while he is fighting in the south, God is taking care of David's other problem in the north.

David is not mentioned at all in this chapter, but this chapter has everything to do with David.

(See map for location of the battle.)

#### I. The Battle that Ended the Reign of Saul (vs. 1 – 6)

Saul had an impressive military career, but he was never able to conquer the Philistines (See 1 Samuel 14:47 – 52). Saul had great success when God was with him, but without God Saul was no match for the far superior army of the Philistines.

It is important to note from this chapter that God did not allow the Philistines to win this battle because He was with them. Rather, it was because He was against Saul. Note – Bad spiritual leadership will allow the devil's crowd to gain a short-term victory. Saul had rebelled against God's authority by allowing the Amalekites to live. He had also killed all of the priests in the City of Nob. In his final act of desperate defiance, he actually goes to a woman with a familiar spirit (a witch), and gets her to try to speak to the dead prophet Samuel.

The point is that the deaths of many thousands of Israelites here in this battle were caused by the rebellion of their leader. Notice in verse six: "all his men" – this does not mean that every Israelite soldier was dead, because verses seven tells us that many fled; but surely many of the army of Israel were killed in this battle.

**Note – the actions of a leader will affect many people.** Many people in Israel died because of the stubborn rebellion of Saul; many wives were made widows; many children were made orphans; many a family lost their homes; all because of the rebellion of one man.

My actions as a pastor will either positively or adversely affect many in the congregation.

Dad – your actions will affect your family.

According to this chapter, Saul was wounded by the archers, meaning he was probably well behind his army. Saul had taken his own life after he was wounded, fearing that the Philistines would have abused him. 2 Samuel 1 will record an alternate account of Saul's death, which was likely a fabrication offered by an Amalekite who had taken Saul's crown and bracelet after finding him dead.

Three of Saul's sons are also dead, including Jonathan. It is especially sad that Jonathan died. David loved Jonathan, and they had made a covenant together. David and Jonathan were supposed to rule the kingdom together:

*"And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house." (1 Samuel 23:16-18)*

A fourth son, Eshbaal (1 Chronicles 8:33; 9:39), either escapes, or was not at the battle in the first place. Eshbaal is also called Ishbosheth, meaning "man of shame," will be anointed king by Abner, and will replace Saul, at least temporarily. He will reign for two years over all of the tribes but the tribe of Judah, which will anoint David as their king.

## **II. The Boasting of the Philistines (vs. 7 – 10)**

The Philistines do with Saul what Israel did with Goliath: they chopped off his head, and paraded it around. Their boasting will be short-lived. Their ending of Saul's reign will bring about the beginning of the reign of David; and David will be far more powerful than Saul ever was. David will drive out the Philistines (See 2 Samuel 5:17 – 25).

*"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:"*  
(Proverbs 24:17)

Illustrate – At Appomattox Courthouse when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Grant, Grant would allow none of his men to cheer.

Saul was David's enemy as well, but David did not cheer over Saul's death; he actually wept.

## **III. The Burial by the People of Jabeshgilead (vs. 11 – 13)**

The people of Jabeshgilead rescued the bodies of Saul and his sons. Very early in Saul's reign, when he was humble and dependent upon God, Saul had helped the people of Jabesh when the Ammonites had threatened them (see 1 Samuel 11:1 – 12).

The people of Jabesh were now returning the favor by showing respect for Saul and his sons. They went as far as to fast for a week over the death of Saul.

David's first act as king will be to honor the people of Jabesh because they honored Saul and his sons (see 2 Samuel 2:4 – 6). David would later disinter the bodies of Saul and Jonathan and rebury them in their families tomb in Benjamin (2 Samuel 21:13 – 14).

Notice that even though David was tormented by Saul, he shows nothing but respect for Saul and for those who honored him.

Note – some try to make a case for cremation based upon what the people of Jabesh did with Saul's body. However, even though they burned his body, they still buried his bones. It could be that they burned their bodies because they were so badly mutilated.

Cremation was not very typical for the Hebrews, except in the case of criminals (Joshua 7:25 records that Achan and his family were burned:

*"And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones."*

(Joshua 7:25)

### WARS OF KING SAUL

- ★ Capital city
- City
- ▲ Mountain peak
- ← Advance of the Ammonites against Jabesh-gilead (*I Sam. 11:1ff*)
- Saul's interior exploits against the Ammonites (*I Sam. 11:8ff*)
- ↖ Saul's external exploits (*I Sam. 14:47-48*)
- ← Advance of the Philistines against Shunem (*I Sam. 28:4ff*)
- Saul's interior exploits against the Philistines (*I Sam. 31:1-7*)
- ★ Battle scene

