

1st Samuel

Lesson 54

1 Chronicles 12:1–6 tells us of more men who joined David at Ziklag.

1 The following men joined David at Ziklag while he was hiding from Saul son of Kish. They were among the warriors who fought beside David in battle. 2 All of them were expert archers, and they could shoot arrows or sling stones with their left hand as well as their right. They were all relatives of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin. 3 Their leader was Abiezer son of Shemaah from Gibeah; his brother Joash was second-in-command. These were the other warriors: Jeziel and Pelet, sons of Azmaveth; Beracah; Jehu from Anathoth; 4 Ishmaiah from Gibeon, a famous warrior and leader among the Thirty; Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, and Jozabad from Gederah; 5 Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah, and Shephatiah from Haruph; 6 Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Jashobeam, who were Korahites; (1 Chronicles 12:1–6)

David was still writing music about this time in his life. Listen to his worship music.

For the choir director: A psalm of David. 1 O LORD, rescue me from evil people. Protect me from those who are violent, 2 those who plot evil in their hearts and stir up trouble all day long. 3 Their tongues sting like a snake; the venom of a viper drips from their lips. Interlude 4 O LORD, keep me out of the hands of the wicked. Protect me from those who are violent, for they are plotting against me. 5 The proud have set a trap to catch me; they have stretched out a net; they have placed traps all along the way. Interlude 6 I said to the LORD, “You are my God!” Listen, O LORD, to my cries for mercy! 7 O Sovereign LORD, the strong one who rescued me, you protected me on the day of battle. 8 LORD, do not let evil people have their way. Do not let their evil schemes succeed, or they will become proud. Interlude 9 Let my enemies be destroyed by the very evil they have planned for me. 10 Let burning coals fall down on their heads. Let them be thrown into the fire or into watery pits from which they can’t escape. 11 Don’t let liars prosper here in our land. Cause great disasters to fall on the violent. 12 But I know the LORD will help those they persecute; he will give justice to the poor. 13 Surely righteous people are praising your name; the godly will live in your presence. (Psalm 140)

A psalm of David. 1 O LORD, I am calling to you. Please hurry! Listen when I cry to you for help! 2 Accept my prayer as incense offered to you, and my upraised hands as an evening offering. 3 Take control of what I say, O LORD, and guard my lips. 4 Don’t let me drift toward evil or take part in acts of wickedness. Don’t let me share in the delicacies of those who do wrong. 5 Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they correct me, it is soothing medicine. Don’t let me refuse it. But I pray constantly against the wicked and their deeds. 6 When their leaders are thrown down from a cliff, the wicked will listen to my words and find them true. 7 Like rocks brought up by a plow, the bones of the wicked will lie scattered without burial. 8 I look to you for help, O Sovereign LORD. You are my refuge; don’t let them kill me. 9 Keep me from the traps they have set for me, from the snares of those who do wrong. 10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, but let me escape. (Psalm 141)

Chapter 28

e) David as the Body Guard of the King of Gath (28:1-2)

Thinking that David has destroyed his future in Israel we find David as the body guard of the king of Gath. Chapter 28, Verse 1.

“Now it came about in those days that the Philistines gathered their armed camps for war, to fight against Israel. And Achish said to David, ‘Know assuredly that you will go out with me in the camp, you and your men.’”² David said to Achish, ‘Very well, you shall know what your servant can do.’ So Achish said to David, ‘Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life.’” (28:1-2)

By this time in the story line, Saul is approaching his fortieth year as king of Israel. David is near the end of his one year and four months of living with the Philistines. Within days, Saul will be dead and David will be the king of Judah. The nation of Israel will be divided with Ishbosheth, Saul’s son becoming the king of the remaining eleven tribes of Israel. With David’s tenure with Achish, Achish trusts David and makes him his permanent body guard. At the same time, the five lords of the Philistines, meaning the five kings of the five major cities that supported all the villages in the Gaza Strip as we know it today, decided to attack Israel, and specifically, King Saul. David and his men agreed to go with Achish to fight against Israel. What a decision? David agreed to be the servant of Achish.

2. David’s Transition as King of Israel

a) Saul Seeks a Witch (28:3-7)

If there was a need for a chapter break, verse three would have been the best place for the break because it seems that the following passage picks up with a different writer, perhaps the record that Nathan had written because Gad was most likely with David as we saw back when David took his parents to Moab. David would not have made that trip without his men. It was Gad who told David, while they were in Moab, to return to Judah. It seems that Gad was with David and Nathan was with Saul.

The writer begins to tell us the end of Saul’s reign and David’s transition as the king of Israel. It will take two years from this point for David to be king over all of Israel. He will be the king of Judah in the divided kingdom for two years, and then transition to be the king of all Israel in his third year.

In this coming passage, Saul is in a pickle and he needs a word from the LORD. Saul seeks a witch for that word. Chapter 28, verse 3.

“Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had removed from the land those who were mediums and spiritists.”⁴ So the Philistines gathered together and came and camped in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together and they camped in Gilboa.⁵ When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly.⁶ When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.⁷ Then Saul said to his servants, ‘Seek for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.’ And his servants said to him, ‘Behold, there is a woman who is a medium at En-dor.’” (28:3-7)

The point that Samuel was dead and had been buried at Ramah is just an introduction to this passage. However, it shows that a change in writers has been made from the one telling the story of David in Gath. We must remember, all Scripture is first hand testimony of the person who saw and experienced the events, unless the testimony is given to the writer directly from the LORD, such as was the case with Moses recording the story in the book of Genesis, or Luke, who knew the LORD Jesus, and was traveling with Paul, who knew the LORD Jesus, and told us he investigated and interviewed eye witnesses to record the Gospel by his name in the New Testament. Therefore, the writing had to come from the chronicle of Nathan that we have already mentioned and proved to be present in that time (1st Chronicles 29:29).

The Philistines had arrived at Shunem. Shunem was in the tribal area of Issachar. In order to arrive at that campsite, the Philistines had to travel over eighty miles across the tribal area of Dan, possibly the eastern edge of Ephraim, and split the tribal area of West Manasseh in half.

Saul and the Israelite army were on Mount Gilboa. It was a hill on the side of the Valley of Jezreel. From there, Saul could see the Philistines at Shunem in the valley. Saul saw the camp of the Philistines and knew he needed a word from the LORD. But no matter what Saul did, the LORD did not answer. Saul did not know it, but Saul's time was up. The LORD had death plans for Saul and it would happen on the next day. The high priest could not speak for the LORD, the Urim did not answer from the LORD, and the prophets, which would have included Nathan, had no word from the LORD. So Saul sought a word from someone forbidden to practice in the Promised Land, not by Saul, but by the LORD (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). In the last few years, Saul had evidently tried to appease the LORD by obeying his command to rid the land of mediums and witchcraft. That night, Saul visited the witch at Endor.

(1) Saul's Desire to Speak with the Dead (28:8)

The writer tells us of Saul's desire to speak with the dead. How could he have known what Saul asked for unless he was with Saul. Nathan must have heard Saul's request and say what happened next. Verse 8.

"Then Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, 'Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you.'" (28:8)

Nathan, the prophet, must have been one of the two men with Saul. The other might have been a priest. We do not know. Saul wanted the woman to conjure up a man. We are not sure what Saul expected, neither are we sure what the witch expected. Because all witchcraft is fake, the witch probably had an accomplice behind a curtain to help with the deception, as all do. Surely Saul, was only expecting to hear the voice of the man he wanted conjured up. Surely the witch was ready to provide.

(2) Saul's Promise to Protect the Witch (28:9-10)

But the witch was careful with Saul because she knew the law. We are told of Saul's promise to protect the witch. Verse 9.

"But the woman said to him, 'Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?'"¹⁰ Saul vowed to her by the LORD, saying, 'As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.'" (28:9-10)

Now Saul was disguised as someone besides the king. Nathan, if he was in fact there, was dressed in his regular clothing. If the third was a priest, as I suspect, did not have on his priestly garb, but had on regular clothing, so the witch would not have known any better. But Saul promised to protect the woman from Saul's own command.

(3) Saul's Request to Speak with Samuel (28:11-14)

And so, the woman will ask whom he wants conjured up. Saul's request will be to speak to Samuel. Verse 11.

"Then the woman said, 'Whom shall I bring up for you?' And he said, 'Bring up Samuel for me.'"¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman spoke to Saul, saying, 'Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul.'"¹³ The king said to her, 'Do not be afraid; but what do you see?' And the woman said to Saul, 'I see a divine being coming up out of the earth.'"¹⁴ He said to her, 'What is his form?' And she said, 'An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe.'" And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage.'" (28:11-14)

In Saul's hopeless despair, he wanted to speak with Samuel one more time. Samuel was dead, in his place of peaceful rest, waiting to be resurrected at the resurrection of the Messiah still to come. Saul had not spoken to Samuel in more than thirty-seven or thirty-eight years, since he tore Samuel's garment and Samuel walked away after killing Agag the Amalekite king. But Samuel had been a friend to Saul since their youth. But the friendship was broken when Saul disobeyed the LORD's command.

When Saul mentioned the name of Samuel, the witch did not have to do any of her normal humbo-jumbo, Samuel immediately began to come in view. When she saw him, she immediately knew that Saul had deceived her with his disguise and she was fearful for her life. Neither she nor her accomplice had time to do any of their regular routine. What was happening was real. To her fear, she was able to describe Samuel and Saul knew that it was him.

(4) Saul's Message from Samuel (28:15-19)

Samuel was not quite about his coming up. Saul's message from Samuel was quick on the heels of his arrival. Verse 15.

*"Then Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?' And Saul answered, 'I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has departed from me and no longer answers me, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do.'"*¹⁶ *Samuel said, 'Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has departed from you and has become your adversary?'*¹⁷ *The LORD has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David.*¹⁸ *As you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the LORD has done this thing to you this day.*¹⁹ *Moreover the LORD will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the LORD will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!"* (28:15-19)

The LORD may be slow to avenge those who sin against him, but He will avenge those who need vengeance. It took the LORD thirty-eight years to bring the punishment on Saul. Any time during those thirty-eight years, Saul could have gone to the remaining Amalekites and finished the task assigned by the LORD, but he did not. He chased David, a righteous man from here to there, but he never found time to complete the command. It is never too late to do what the LORD had told you to do and He will wait until time is up. Time is up for Saul. Samuel delivered the same message from the LORD that he did thirty-eight years before. This time, he tells more of the story. Saul's sons who were in the army would be dead with Saul when the battle occurs. The Israelites will lose the battle to the Philistines. David will be king.

(5) Saul's Reaction to Samuel's Message (28:20-25)

With Samuel's message heard, we come to Saul's reaction to Samuel's message. Verse 20.

*"Then Saul immediately fell full length upon the ground and was very afraid because of the words of Samuel; also there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day and all night."*²¹ *The woman came to Saul and saw that he was terrified, and said to him, 'Behold, your maidservant has obeyed you, and I have taken my life in my hand and have listened to your words which you spoke to me.'*²² *So now also, please listen to the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you that you may eat and have strength when you go on your way.'*²³ *But he refused and said, 'I will not eat.'* However, his servants together with the woman urged him, and he listened to them. So he arose from the ground and sat on the bed.²⁴ *The woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she quickly slaughtered it; and she took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread from it.*²⁵ *She brought it before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they arose and went away that night."* (28:20-25)

Saul was at the house of the witch for several hours. In order to feed him and the two men with him, she had to kill the calf, cook the meat, make the bread and cook it, unleavened because she did not take the time to let it rise and she fed Saul and his two men. Saul was in despair and did not want to eat, but he was finally convinced. It was Saul's last meal. No doubt he knew it to be so. After eating, Saul and the two men went back to the camp on Gilboa about seven miles away. No doubt, because of the distance, Saul and the two would arrive back at camp just about at daybreak.

Chapter 29

b) Philistines Mistrust David

(1) The Philistine Complaint about David (29:1-5)

Our compiler now backs up in time to tell us what is going on in the camp of the Philistines. Nathan probably told the story of Saul and the witch that we have just studied, Gad is probably telling this story because he was with David. He tells how the Philistines mistrust David and gives the Philistine complaint about David. Chapter 29, verse 1.

“Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek, while the Israelites were camping by the spring which is in Jezreel. ² And the lords of the Philistines were proceeding on by hundreds and by thousands, and David and his men were proceeding on in the rear with Achish. ³ Then the commanders of the Philistines said, “What are these Hebrews doing here?” And Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, “Is this not David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or rather these years, and I have found no fault in him from the day he deserted to me to this day?” ⁴ But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him, and the commanders of the Philistines said to him, “Make the man go back, that he may return to his place where you have assigned him, and do not let him go down to battle with us, or in the battle he may become an adversary to us. For with what could this man make himself acceptable to his lord? Would it not be with the heads of these men?” ⁵ Is this not David, of whom they sing in the dances, saying,

‘Saul has slain his thousands,

And David his ten thousands’?” (29:1-5)

The Philistines had moved the camp from Shunem closer to the Israelites. Their new camp was at Aphek, right next to Gilboa. There, the Philistines noticed David and his men with Achish and rejected them. They were afraid that when they attacked the Israelites, David and his men would begin to fight them on their side of the battle line. They were afraid of David, and they were wise to be afraid of him.