

1 Samuel 17:1-30 - David and Goliath - Part 1

We come this morning to one of the most well-known stories in all of the Bible. I may have known about David and Goliath before I even knew about Jesus. I am pretty sure it was one of the first sermons I heard at the Bible camp where the Lord saved me when I was 14. And it's a classic passage for kids that age because that's probably about the age David is. And the idea that a teenager can - with the power of God - defeat someone who is 2 feet taller than Shaquille O'Neil is pretty inspirational.

And that's usually how this story is taught: David was a young guy who trusted God and look how much he accomplished. And if we just trust God like David did, look how much we can accomplish.

Let me just say that's okay. That's not the worst thing in the world. Jesus says if we have faith like a grain of mustard we can do what? Move mountains (**Matt. 21:20-22**). I've probably taught this passage that way many times and maybe you have too. But what I want to show you is that although all of that is true, I think that misses the bigger picture.

The passage has also been used in a spiritual or allegorical way. I was at a pro-life fund raiser many years ago and they were talking about how to defeat the Goliath of abortion and Planned Parenthood. And let's be honest, abortion feels like a proverbial Goliath in our society. And their strategy - like David - was to have 5 smooth stones, 5 practical ways of attack, against this Goliath of abortion. And that's fine, there's nothing wrong with having 5 strategies to defeat abortion - I think that's great. There's nothing evil with using the 5 stones as an allegory.

But I just don't think that just having faith like David or using this as an allegory for the 5 things we should do to defeat our giants quite gets to the heart of the passage.

Here's the gist of the passage: Israel needs a new king because king Saul is a coward. And here we see the future king David rise up and deliver Israel. This is a great story, but it's a story about God using a new king to deliver his people from an impossible enemy.

Here's the other thing that I think is pretty neat about this passage: As David defeated Goliath, we see for the first time that David is a type of Christ. We know that David is a type of Christ in many ways, but I think this whole story is a type of Christ.

My brother in law is really into photography. He has a really fancy camera and he has some really fancy lenses. One of the lenses is this monster thing where you zoom in on someone and everything else becomes completely blurry. You could take a picture of a person in a crowd and person's face is crystal clear and the crowd all around them is a blur. It's a really cool effect.

Another lens that he has is actually able to capture the subject and the background with amazing clarity. We had a family get-together at Canon Beach a few years ago and he used that lens to take a picture of our family on the beach in front of Haystack Rock. So the picture shows our family clearly but anyone who has ever been to Canon Beach knows where we are the minute they see the picture.

What I want to suggest to you is that as we look at the story of David and Goliath, we should look at it like a photographer with 2 lenses. One lens is the close up lens where we just focus on the amazing story that it is: a Spirit-filled young man who defeats an amazing giant through faith in the power of God.

But there's a bigger lens we should also look through. And that's that the David and Goliath is a living, breathing, historical picture of Jesus defeating Satan and saving God's people. David killing Goliath is a type of Jesus crushing Satan.

So think about this through the big picture lens: All of God's people are basically trapped by an enemy that they can't defeat. Then out Bethlehem comes a Spirit-filled man who has been anointed to be the King of Israel. And in one defining moment he utterly destroys the enemy of the people of God, he brings them salvation, he earns a bride for himself from the king, and all the people of God praise him for his salvation.

You could take that big picture description of David and Goliath and apply it to who? Jesus and Satan. Jesus, the Spirit-filled, anointed King of Israel from Bethlehem who comes and through the cross destroys the one who has the power of death (**Heb. 2:14-15**) - Satan - and wins for himself a bride - the Church - who praises him forever and ever.

You remember at the beginning of 1 Samuel I mentioned that God has one main story he tells? And he tells it over and over again throughout the Bible? Well he doesn't tell the story with fictional characters, he tells the story with real-life characters who really lived and in the providence of God their lives were pictures of the gospel.

And if you remember this is called typology. It's not allegory where we take the real people and things and make them to be something they're not. And it's not just a cool story for the sake of a cool story. It's a real story about God's deliverance that points to the bigger story about God's deliverance.

Yes we should be brave like David. Yes we can accomplish a lot of things in God's strength. But we shouldn't miss the bigger picture that we are very much like the people of Israel who need to be delivered from an enemy we can't defeat.

Okay, that's a lot of introduction. Here's what I want to do. Because most of us are very familiar with this story, I want to just sort of walk through this chapter section by section. And as we do I want to zoom in and out with proverbial lenses. I want to look at the the actual historical situation and then zoom out a bit and see how it fits in the larger picture of the Bible story.

So we'll break this up into 6 sections each based on a specific person or group. We'll look at 3 this week and then 3 next week:

1) Goliath the Dragon **Read 1-11**

Now if you remember from the end of chapter 14, Saul did eventually take up the mantle as the warrior king. It was his job to eradicate foreigners from the land and the Philistines were in the land. This battle takes place about 15 miles west of Bethlehem. It was a 4-5 hour hike to get where they were.

And this is an unusual battle situation. Most battles throughout history - biblical history included - are just armies attacking each other in all-out warfare. If you've seen Lord of the Rings or something like that where armies are divided up into sections spread out in battle - a battle array - that's usually how it goes.

But the Philistines had adopted sort of a representative battle plan. The idea was simple: we'll send out our biggest and best warrior, you send out yours and whoever wins the battle wins the war. That way thousands of people don't die. You live in slavery forever, but at least you're alive.

There's just one catch, the warrior for the Philistines is massive. He's something like 9 1/2 feet tall. A cubit is a foot and a half - so six cubits is 9 feet, and a span is about 6 inches. So he's 9 1/2 feet tall.

Some people think that's an exaggeration. Some copies of the OT say he's 4 cubits and a span - he's 6 1/2 tall. Which would be the exact height as Saul. Remember Saul was a head taller than everyone in Israel? That's probably 6'6" or 6'8" - so this would be Saul's mirror image on the Philistine side. They'd say the issue here isn't that Goliath is massively tall, but that Goliath is willing to fight and Saul won't come out and meet his equal.

But the problem with that is that all the other descriptions of Goliath and his armor don't make sense if he's only 6'6".

His coat of mail, his armor is 125lbs. - that would be about half the weight of the average 6'6" person, there's no way that would work. His spear is massive, likened to a weaver's beam. That's probably talking more about how thick the shaft of the spear was, not it's length. Some people have guessed that the length was 26', but that's probably not true. Think about the shaft of a shovel or a rake that most of us use, it's only about 1" in diameter. A weaver's beam could be long or short, but it was usually 2-3" in diameter. We couldn't rake or

shovel with that, but Goliath could because his hands were so massive. So I think it's safe to say Goliath is a giant.

And giants are mentioned throughout the Bible. **Gen. 6** mentions nephilim as well as other giants. There's also the rephaim who are a line of giants. Og, the king of Bashan, had 6 fingers on each hand, and 6 toes on each foot and although it doesn't tell us exactly how tall he was, the Bible says his bed was 13'6" long (**Deut 3:20**). At the end of **2 Sam. 21:15-22** (cf. **1 Chron 20:4-8**) there is a list of various giants - all in the area of the Philistines - that David's warriors killed. Some were related to Goliath. So there are biblical giants.

And there are giants even today. There are tall people. The tallest person who we have official measurements for in modern times was a guy named Robert Wadlow, born in 1918. He only lived 22 years; he was officially measured at 8'11" and he weighed 439lbs. But Robert wasn't shaped like a warrior. Most really tall people are just tall, not necessarily powerful.

Usually when we think of a giant we think of someone who has the build of Andre the Giant - he was 7'4" and weighed 520 pounds. It wasn't just that he was tall, he was also built out and super strong. That's probably what we're talking about with Goliath. He wasn't just tall, he was also built out and super strong. Only someone who was incredibly strong could carry 125lbs of mail, a bronze helmet which probably weighed another 50-60 lbs., a massive bronze javelin for throwing on his back, a spear for close combat, and probably his own shield in addition to his armor-bearer's shield. He was unbelievably massive.

His armor made him impervious to archers' arrows, the shield made him impervious to thrown objects. His spear was so large no one could get close to hit him with a sword. His head was almost completely protected by bronze which was state of the art at the time. It would take a Marine sniper to land a shot that was precise enough to kill him.

And what I want you to notice is that it's Goliath that shows just how unworthy Saul is to be king and much Israel needs a true king. **Read 11**

When Israel is in its most desperate hour, it's king is cowering to stay out of harm's way. He's no true king. He's a disgrace. And his cowardice paves the way for David who is needed to rescue in this situation.

Let's put on our other lens for a minute - our big picture lens. I mentioned that David is a type of Christ, but it's also true that Goliath is a type of Satan. How do we know that? There are a couple of things that tip us off.

First of all, what animal is Satan associated with throughout the Bible? A snake or a serpent. Throughout Revelation he's called a what? A dragon: "that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. In **Vs. 5** here, what is Goliath covered with? He's covered with a coat of mail. Literally in Hebrew this is a coat of scales, like fish or a dragon. This is not a normal body armor - look down at **Vs. 38**.

Read

Same thing? No, it's actually different. Saul's armor that he gives to David is a breastplate. Goliath has scales like a massive dragon.

Also, what's coming out of Goliath's mouth? He utters blasphemies and haughty words against the people of God and God himself. Again, this is Satanic activity that we see in Revelation. More recent commentators don't make this connection so much, but ancient commentators saw a direct link between Goliath the blaspheming giant and Satan who is called a dragon. Goliath is not Satan himself, but he seems to be a type of Satan. An enemy that the people of God cannot defeat on their own.

2) The Unassuming Savior Read 12-23

So we move from Goliath to David. Now, there's nothing here in this description that would make us believe that David is somehow qualified to slay a man who is many times his size. Except for the brief description in the last chapter that David was a man of war and a man of valor here what we see is really just an ordinary shepherd boy. One way we know David is in his teen years is that the OC Law said that you had to be 20 years old to be eligible for the military. So although David could handle himself in battle, he wasn't technically eligible

to be a soldier. So when Israel is out fighting, his services for Saul aren't needed and he returns home as a shepherd.

As I mentioned before, the battle ground was about a 4-5 hour hike from Bethlehem. It was 15 miles, like from here to Costco. In America we are so used to fighting foreign wars that are just "somewhere over there" we really don't have a concept of what it's like to have a true threat in our back yard. Just imagine you get home this afternoon and rather than the Super Bowl being on, there's a news alert about how Chinese boats with hundreds of thousands of troops have landed on the Washington coast and they are preparing to invade. That's only about a 5 hour drive away. That's what we're talking about. That's how close battle was at any given time in Israel. Except instead of driving, they were marching.

And what you need to understand is that because this was ancient warfare and things were so close, usually families helped to provide food and provisions for their young men on the battle field. David's job was to carry stuff back and forth from home to Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah. David's taking an ephah of grain - that's a 5 gallon bucket, 10 loaves of bread, and cheese for the commander. This is a pretty bottom-of-the-totem-pole kind of job, but at the same time it's crucial for the survival of the army.

Aside from what we already know of David, the only thing that stands out about him is that he is responsible enough to make sure the sheep he usually guards are in the hands of a shepherd. Meanwhile, as David goes back and forth he continually hears the taunting of Goliath. **Read 23**

That phrase "and David heard him" is really a cool phrase. It's actually used of God throughout the Bible when God is about to deliver his people from those who are oppressing them.

In **Exo. 2:24** God hears the groaning of the Israelites in Egypt, just before he raises up Moses to deliver them.

When the Assyrian king Shennacharib comes to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord hears - and destroys 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in a single night. (**2 Kings 19:20**)

It's not just that David heard the voice, it's that David heard the voice and deliverance is about to come. And it's going to come from this unassuming shepherd boy.

Let's zoom out for a second before we look at the next section. The only real connection between David and Jesus in this section is that David is an unassuming savior. If we had never heard this story before and were reading this for the first time, if we just paused here there's not a lot of about David that would lend us to think he's the guy to take out Goliath. He's got good traits, he's pictured as a completely stand-up guy. But kill Goliath? That's a tall order. David is an unassuming hero. If we were betting, we probably wouldn't have put our money on David.

In the same way, Jesus was an unassuming Savior. None of his family believed in him until after his resurrection. None of the people in his hometown believed in him or honored him, even though they saw his character.

Isa. 53:2 gets at this a little when it speaks of Jesus: he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

Even John the Baptist - after he had baptized Jesus! and said he was the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! - sent a message to Jesus asking: are you the one? Are you really going to deliver us?

David and Jesus are unassuming saviors. The Lord Jesus was meek and mild and gentle and lowly. He was not a flamboyant prima donna. When he graduated from high school he wouldn't have been voted most likely to be Messiah and save the world.

There are a lot of well-meaning Christians who think that the only way to make an impact for the gospel today is to be loud and brash and over-the-top. They do crazy stuff in the name of Jesus to draw a crowd. The

secular world around us is shouting and they say that in order for the church to be heard we have to shout along with it. We have to do new and creative and crazy things to get peoples' attention.

No we don't. Like Jesus, like David, God shows his glory not through the raging of the nations but through the peace and meekness that comes through the Holy Spirit.

Before we look at the 3rd group, one thing to keep in mind about types is that not every detail matches precisely. David is the youngest child, Jesus was the oldest. David battles Goliath when he is a teenager, Jesus defeats Satan when he's 33. So types are not a 1-to-1 ratio. Types in the Bible are more like family resemblance. My kids look enough like me that people see an family resemblance. But they're not carbon copies. That's what types are. There's a pretty clear connection - we're not just making stuff up, or making a bigger deal than it is. But it seems as though if God has connected dots, we should too.

3) The fearful Israelites **Read 24-30**

So the Israelites are trapped. They are very afraid. There's no way anyone can defeat Goliath. He's just too much of a threat. The more he taunts Israel, the more they realize there is no way they can win.

Back in 11 the description is "greatly afraid." That phrase is used only a few times in the Bible and that's when the threat is overwhelming. Remember when Jacob comes back to Israel with Leah and Rachael and all the kids and the flocks and he finds out his brother Esau is coming with 400 men? Jacob hasn't seen Esau since he stole his birthright and now Esau was coming with an army. Jacob was greatly afraid (**Gen. 32:7**).

The Israelites were greatly afraid when Assyria had surrounded Jerusalem. This is used when there is an existential threat to the people of God. When they are in real danger of being wiped out completely.

And there's no reward big enough for anyone to even go try to fight Goliath. It's suicide. David's there in the camp and there's chatter about how Saul has promised that the one who kills Goliath will get riches and can marry Saul's daughter - they'll be royalty. They'll be son-in-law to the king. All their families debts will be paid - it's like the year of jubilee.

There's are no takers. It doesn't matter how great the reward is, there's no going into battle with Goliath the dragon.

David says, "What's the reward? Who's this nobody? I'll go." And the whole army cheers! "Hey, we've got a guy who's going to try!" Is that what they say? Of course not. Their fear and lack of faith is so great, they think he's foolish. He's mocking them. **Read 28-30**

His own brother is seething with hatred. He insults David: where's your few sheep? You can't even take care of sheep, how are you going to fight in battle? He says he knows the presumption of his heart. Wow - Eliab knows David's heart? He knows what's going on on the inside? He knows that David just came to watch some of the action?

David has no idea what he's done. He's not evil or wicked. He's just wondering why none of the soldiers who claim to follow the one true and living God are doing anything about this uncircumcised blasphemer. He's about to do something.

What do we take away from this? Two things:

1) I think there is something to be said that the people of God should take courage.

Psa. 115:3: Our God is in the heavens, he does all that he pleases.

We serve a sovereign God and we should act like we serve a sovereign God. And we shouldn't be worried about what the world throws at us. There's a lot people fear in this life. Worried about school or friends or a job or family or maybe your life. All those are in God's hands. And what if we lose them all? Then we have Jesus and that is enough.

Rom 8:31-37: What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are **more than conquerors** through him who loved us.

No matter what comes: take courage that God is on the throne and walk in faithfulness.

2) If this story is a type of Jesus - and I believe that it is - then we can identify also with the Israelites who are unable to deliver themselves. Just like them, we need a savior who can defeat the enemy because we can't. Christianity isn't about pulling up your bootstraps and pushing through. It's about looking to God to provide a savior to deliver us from our weakness again and again. God provided David, but in his mercy he provided Jesus.

Pray