

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 SAMUEL 27-31

At the end of His “*Sermon on the Mount*” Jesus tells a parable about two men.

A wise man builds his house on *the rock*. A foolish man builds on *the sand*. And on the surface there isn’t much difference between the two houses...

Perhaps they both had wooden studs - a brick façade - medal siding adorned the other three sides... These two homes might’ve been constructed by the same builder - using the same materials – employing the same methods.

It wasn’t until the hurricane hit that the differences in construction became apparent. The house that stood on the sand collapsed from the rain, and wind, and floods. Jesus said, “**And great was its fall.**” Where as, the house with the rock foundation never budged. It had a solid – not a shaky – foundation.

And Jesus explained the parable... “**whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock...**” Then He identifies the foolish man, “**everyone who hears... but does not do them...**”

In Jesus’ parable the *foundation* of each house determined its *future*.

Jesus told this parable to His disciples, but He could’ve been describing the first two kings of Israel. David feared the Lord – so much so, that he refused to harm Saul even when it he had the power to do so... Saul was God’s anointed.

Whereas, Saul had no fear of God... He acted on impulse - not conviction. Saul did what was best for Saul. Obeying God was not a high priority for King Saul.

As a result, when the pressure gets applied Saul folds up like a cardboard box in a thunderstorm. Tonight we'll look at *the tragic fall of a once tall Saul...*

And the words of Jesus are sure to come to mind, "Great was (his) fall."

Chapter 27, "And David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul." That's not what David had just said with his mouth...

In the last chapter, verse 24, after sparing Saul a second time, David had cried out, "As your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation."

But now what he *declared to the world* he *doubts in his heart*. David makes the right confession – says the right words – then struggles to back up his prayer with faith. *Sound familiar?* Remember, faith is measured by *attitude* not *articulation*.

Twice now David had Saul in the sites of his rifle, but refused to pull the trigger. Of the 600 men in David's posse, 599 thought he was nuts. Everyone assumed God had delivered the enemy, Saul, into David's hands, so he could kill him.

Only David figured God had turned Saul over to see if he would bless him.

This was huge test... would David fear the Lord and honor

God's anointed? David passes, but nothing changes. Hey, when you do the right thing aren't you supposed to be rewarded? Don't all stories of obedience have a happy ending?

Put God first and you come from behind to win the game?

In his book, "A Tale of Three Kings", Gene Edwards writes about this particular time in David's life. He says, "These were David's darkest hours. You know them as his pre-king days, but he didn't. He assumed this was his lot forever."

The combination of his crew's disappointment – God's apparent indifference - and his own disillusionment caused a deep, dark depression to settle over him.

David is just about out of options. "There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand."

David figured he would be safer by taking his chances with the Philistines.

"Then David arose and went over with the 600 men who were with him to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. So David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow."

Remember chapter 21 - this is David's second try at hiding out in the city of Gath. And it's still a mystery to me, why he chose Gath of all places? This was Goliath's hometown. He faced personal, family vendettas in the city of Gath...

“And it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath; so he sought him no more.”

“Then David said to Achish...” This time David tries a different approach. On his first visit to Gath, he got cold feet before Achish, and pretended to be mad.

The king had all the crazy people he could handle and sent David away.

This time though, David promises to be a good citizen... "If I have now found favor in your eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there. For why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?"

Verse 6 “So Achish gave him Ziklag (a suburb of Gath) that day. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. Now the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was one full year and four months.”

And David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites. For those nations were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as you go to Shur, even as far as the land of Egypt. Whenever David attacked the land, he left neither man nor woman alive, but took away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the apparel, and returned and came to Achish.”

In other words, David eliminated the eyewitnesses. He didn't want it to get back to the Achish that he was attacking people who were friendly to the Philistines.

Then Achish would say, "Where have you made a raid today?"

And David would say, "Against the southern area of Judah, or against the southern area of the Jerahmeelites (who were one of the families of Judah), or against the southern area of the Kenites (who were allies to Judah)."

David had the king of Gath convinced he'd turned into a desert pirate, and turned against his own people. It's my hunch David was splitting the spoils with Achish, so he wouldn't ask too many questions... Achish thought David was *Captain Jack Sparrow* - and his men were the *Pirates of the Judean*. [Aaarg!](#)

"David would save neither man nor woman alive, to bring news to Gath, saying, "Lest they should inform on us, saying, 'Thus David did.'"

And thus was his behavior all the time he dwelt in the country of the Philistines. So Achish believed David, saying, "He has made his people Israel utterly abhor him; therefore he will be my servant forever." David conjured up a clever ruse.

Notice though, *David is no longer in Israel, but Israel is still in David*.

While in Ziklag, David works as an undercover agent. He makes friends with the Philistines – while he continues to fight for the God and people of Israel.

In a sense this is the job of every Christian. We live behind enemy lines. We're surrounded by the enemy. We need to live peaceably for our own survival – then use our position shrewdly – to win battles for God and to promote His kingdom.

Chapter 28, “Now it happened in those days that the Philistines gathered their armies together for war, to fight with Israel. And Achish said to David, "You assuredly know that you will go out with me to battle, you and your men."

And David said to Achish, "Surely you know what your servant can do." David was playing along. “And Achish said to David, "Therefore I will make you one of my chief guardians forever." Achish was convinced David had swapped sides.

Meanwhile back in Saul’s court, the king reaches new heights of madness.

Verse 3 “Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had lamented for him and buried him in Ramah, in his own city.” Samuel had been God’s prophet to Israel. For decades whenever God wanted to deliver a message to His people he sent Samuel. Saul is about to need guidance and Samuel is no longer around...

Verse 3 “And Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists out of the land.”

This was a noble act from Saul’s earlier days. Remember, Saul started out sincere. He wanted to serve God - he just wanted to serve himself more.

And in a stand for righteousness Saul excommunicated the witches and new age channelers, and palm readers, and fortune tellers, and astrologers - everyone who dabbled in the occult... Be careful of any method that promises supernatural power or guidance, yet side-steps God. We’re forbidden to ever exclude Him.

But once again – a trait indicative of Saul – the king fails to obey God fully. In Leviticus 20:27 God commands Israel, “A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them.” If Saul had obeyed, and eliminated the occultists as God had commanded this sad chapter would’ve never happened.

Saul falls into the trap of his own partial obedience... *and he isn't the last.*

Verse 4 “Then the Philistines gathered together, and came and encamped at Shunem. So Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped at Gilboa.

When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.”

Saul’s downfall occurred nearly 30 years earlier when he failed to obey the Lord at Gilgal. Afterwards we’re told, “the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul.”

Now Saul is in desperate need of divine guidance. He tries to pray - but the heavens are brass – and Samuel is no longer around to bail him out.

Hey, God isn’t trying to be mean by not answering Saul. But why do we expect God to continue to speak when we don’t obey what He’s already said? Saul already proved he was only willing to obey if it served him.

Saul can *pray* all he wants... but God refuses to *play!*

“Then Saul said to his servants, “Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.” And his servants said to him, “In fact, there is a woman who is a medium at En Dor.” En Dor was within Philistine territory.

There’s a tradition that suggests this witch was the mother of Abner, Saul’s General. This is why Saul’s men didn’t have to search far for a medium.

The other reason Saul met the witch in En Dor – he knew he was committing an abomination, and was too ashamed to do it *outside*... so he met her *indoors*!

“So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night.” Saul knew he was committing an abomination. The king was so ashamed of his wicked actions he came to the witch incognito. Saul shows up in costume. Call it, “the first Halloween costume.”

Remember, after Saul rebelled against God at Gilgal, Samuel warned Saul, “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.” I’m sure at the time Saul was appalled at Samuel’s statement. He would never think of turning from God to a witch.

How can rebellion be on a par with witchcraft? Yet here, because of Saul’s persistent rebellion, he eventually turns to Satan and to witchcraft. Be careful of undercover evils. *Sins of the heart* ultimately lead to *abominable acts*.

There is a little known Jewish tradition that says when Saul walked up to the witch of En Dor she looked at him with a silly grin. He threatened her, “Woman wipe that smile off your

face.” When she refused Saul slapped the woman.

Later he was arrested, and charged with “Striking a Happy Medium”...

That’s just a joke! In reality, Saul asked the woman, “And he said, “Please conduct a seance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you.”

Saul wants to talk to the dead – a practice specifically forbidden by God.

Then the woman said to him, “Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?” The witch had no idea to whom she was speaking, and how far the king had fallen. “And Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying, “As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.”

Then the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” And he said, “Bring up Samuel for me.”

What happens next is a surprise. The witch doesn’t even have time to quote her incantations or muster up a spell. All of a sudden she’s shocked by what she sees... “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!” She thinks this is a *sting operation*. She’s about to get busted. It’s a set-up.

Notice, when the witch saw Samuel she “cried out with a loud voice.” As soon as she saw a real person she became frightened. She was scared spit-less.

Phillip Keller writes of this incident, “In terror she screamed... This was not the usual weird apparition that came to her otherwise beclouded mind and deluded spirit. This was an act of the living Lord.” ...the one time it truly happened.

I believe she was shocked by the reality of the phenomena. Normally a séance was a farce, *or a demon appeared*. Evidently, this occasion was an exception that had never occurred before. God allowed Saul a brief communication with Samuel.

The only other time it happens is on the Mount of Transfiguration when Elijah and Moses appear and talk to Jesus... Moses returned from the dead.

But normally, this is forbidden. The spirit world obeys God’s boundaries.

Luke 16 reveals the travel rules for the dead. When the rich man in hell wants to return, and warn his lost brothers of the horrors that await them – God forbids him. Once you’re assigned to heaven or hell there are no passes or furloughs.

What happens in 1 Samuel 28 is an exception to the normal rules of eternity.

Verse 13 “And the king said to her, "Do not be afraid. What did you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth."

So he said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is covered with a mantle." And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed down.” Now Samuel said to Saul,

"Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Hey, I was having a great time. You're pulling me away from the party. He's a little *perturbed* he's been *disturbed*.

"And Saul answered, "I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do." Then Samuel said: "Why then do you ask me, seeing the LORD has departed from you and has become your enemy?"

And the LORD has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David.

Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD nor execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines.

And tomorrow you and your sons will be with me." Not necessarily in Paradise, but in the afterlife. In other words, "Tomorrow, you're going to die." "The LORD will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines."

Then immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, and was dreadfully afraid because of the words of Samuel." Saul had already been sentenced by God.

And there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day or all night.

And the woman came to Saul and saw that he was severely troubled, and said to him, "Look, your maidservant has

obeyed your voice, and I have put my life in my hands and heeded the words which you spoke to me. Now therefore, please, heed also the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you; and eat, that you may have strength when you go on your way."

But he refused and said, "I will not eat."

So his servants, together with the woman, urged him; and he heeded their voice. Then he arose from the ground and sat on the bed."

Now the woman had a fatted calf in the house, and she hastened to kill it.

And she took flour and kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread from it. So she brought it before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they rose and went away that night."

Sadly, Saul's last meal was at the table of a witch.

And it's obvious what Saul ate... She took flour and kneaded it, and made bread. Put it all together... Saul, Sam, Witch... It was a *Saul sandwich*.

Chapter 29 "Then the Philistines gathered together all their armies at Aphek, and the Israelites encamped by a fountain which is in Jezreel.

And the lords of the Philistines passed in review by hundreds and by thousands, but David and his men passed in review at the rear with Achish."

The Philistine army is preparing for battle, and the five rulers of the five Philistine city-states want to see a show of force. They organize a military parade. The Philistine Army marches in front of a packed grandstand.

Imagine, flags are flapping in the breeze. Horses are snorting. Sandals are polished. Uniforms are pressed. At the end of the line is Achish... but wait... Achish is not the end of the line... Another battalion is pulling up the rear...

“Then the princes of the Philistines said, “What are these Hebrews doing here?” Here’s an interesting question. Even the heathen Philistines knew that David was out of place. It was odd to see David on the Philistine side of the ball.

I wonder how many Christians are asked the same question. Has anyone ever approached you and said, “Hey, you’re a Christian – what are you doing here?”

In bar... in the wrong part of the video store... in a liquor shop... meeting with someone you shouldn’t be seeing...

“Hey, what’s a Christian doing here?”

“And Achish said to the princes of the Philistines, “Is this not David, the servant of Saul king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or these years?”

And to this day I have found no fault in him since he defected to me.”

But the princes of the Philistines were angry with him; so the princes of the Philistines said to him, “Make this fellow return, that he may go back to the place which you have appointed for him, and do not let him go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become our adversary. For with what could he reconcile himself to his master, if not with the heads of these men?”

Is this not David, of whom they sang to one another in dances, saying: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his

ten thousands'?" The other Philistine kings were a lot less trusting – and probably a lot smarter - than Achish.

Maybe this is why David went to Achish, and Gath, in the first place.

Verse 6 “Then Achish called David and said to him, "Surely, as the LORD lives, you have been upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army is good in my sight. For to this day I have not found evil in you since the day of your coming to me. Nevertheless the lords do not favor you. Therefore return now, and go in peace, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines."

So David said to Achish, "But what have I done? And to this day what have you found in your servant as long as I have been with you, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" I'm sure David was planning to somehow sabotage the Philistine effort. He could've made a difference.

“Then Achish answered and said to David, "I know that you are as good in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless the princes of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle.' "Now therefore, rise early in the morning with your master's servants who have come with you. And as soon as you are up early in the morning and have light, depart."

So David and his men rose early to depart in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.” The Valley of Jezreel – otherwise known as Armageddon – the most famous battlefield in the world.

Many of history's battles were fought in this valley - but the

final battle between the Christ and the Antichrist will be fought in this same location... in Jezreel.

The Philistines march northeast to battle. David returns south - to Ziklag.

Chapter 30, “Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire, and had taken captive the women and those who were there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried them away and went their way.” While David was away, the Amalekites took revenge. They retaliated against David’s raids on their territory with an attack of their own.

They burn down the city and homes, and take their wives and kids captive.

“So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive.

Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep.” Obviously, they grieved bitterly.

“And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive. Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters.” David is mourning the loss of his own family – and that would’ve been heartbreak enough. But in addition, a mutiny breaks out. Some angry men begin to plot David’s assassination.

Can you imagine a more depressing – downtrodden - heart-rending situation? David reaches a new low. As the old saying goes, “He’s lower than a snail’s belly.”

In High School I played quarterback in the football, and there’s an old saying about quarterbacks... “When the team wins he gets too much of the credit. And when you lose he takes too much of the blame.” That’s also true of pastors.

It reminds me of the old pastor who turned his church over to a young man.

Along with the keys to the church he handed the young pastor three envelopes. Each one was numbered 1, 2, and 3. The old guy told the new pastor, “Son, when the honeymoon is over and the criticism becomes vocal open envelope #1.”

Well, it didn’t take long for the young man to feel the need, so he opened the first envelope. It said, “Blame everything on the former pastor.”

He followed the advice and it worked... for a while.

But soon the opposition found something else to attack, so the pastor opened up envelope #2. It read, “Blame everything on the denomination.”

Again he followed the advice, and staved off the vultures for a time.

Finally, the criticism and attacks grew more frequent, and more bitter, so this time he opened the third envelope which read, “Start preparing three envelopes.”

Hey, David must’ve felt like it was time *to start preparing three envelopes.*

But I love how he overcomes. **“David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.”** In times past - when David was down - God sent people to encourage him. Gad, Jonathan, and Abigail... *but no one comes to encourage David at Ziklag...*

There are times when God cuts us off from the support of friends and family. He forces us to depend on Him wholly and solely. Through the discipline of loneliness God teaches us that *He* alone is faithful to meet our needs.

Read the Bible for yourself – develop a prayer life – practice God’s presence on a daily basis – personalize God’s promises... so when the day comes when you’re abandoned and all alone, you too can *“strengthen yourself in the Lord.”*

Verse 7 **“Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, "Please bring the ephod here to me." And Abiathar brought the ephod to David.”** The ephod was the sacred smock worn by the High Priest. The breastplate was attached to the ephod. It was adorned with 12 jewels that spoke of the 12 tribes of Israel...

Inside the breastplate’s pouch were the Urim and Thummin – which we believe were two stones that were somehow used by the priest to seek God’s guidance.

Imagine when you need to know God’s will just reach your hand in the magical pouch and presto... No seeking God or walking in the Spirit... instant answers.

Put verses 6 and 7 together and you can understand the dilemma faced by Old Testament believers. They loved God - wanted to serve Him - but they lacked the persistent,

indwelling presence of God's Spirit that's part of the New Covenant. David knew enough of God to strengthen himself – but at the same time felt a strong enough separation from God that he tried to make it up through mechanical means. The Old Covenant produced an inferior, incomplete relationship with God.

As we're learning in Hebrews, Jesus is the author of a *better covenant!*

So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?" And He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all." So David went, he and the 600 men who were with him, and came to the Brook Besor, where those stayed who were left behind."

David's troops are moving southwest in hot pursuit of the Amalekites. The Amalekites lived in the deserts of the Sinai Peninsula. They're about to cross the brook, when David realizes some of his guys are slowing him down...

Desert warfare calls for a lean, mean, fighting machine. So he splits his men in two groups. "David pursued, he and 400 men; for 200 stayed behind, who were so weary that they could not cross the Brook Besor."

Verse 11 "Then they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David; and they gave him bread and he ate, and they let him drink water. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. So when he had eaten, his strength came back to him; for he had eaten no bread nor drunk water for 3 days and 3 nights." They nurture

a possible informant back to health.

“Then David said to him, "To whom do you belong, and where are you from?"

And he said, "I am a young man from Egypt, servant of an Amalekite; and my master left me behind, because 3 days ago I fell sick. We made an invasion of the southern area of the Cherethites, in the territory which belongs to Judah, and of the southern area of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire."

And David said to him, "Can you take me down to this troop?"

And he said, "Swear to me by God that you will neither kill me nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this troop."

“And when he had brought him down, there they were, spread out over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil which they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.”

And here’s David’s battle strategy... attack’em while their hungover...

“Then David attacked them from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not a man of them escaped, except 400 young men who rode on camels and fled.

So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away, and David rescued his two wives. And nothing of theirs was lacking, either small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything which they had taken from them; David recovered all.” Silencing his critics... “Then David took all the flocks and herds they had driven before those other livestock, and said,

"This is David's spoil."

“Now David came to the 200 men who had been so weary that they could not follow David, whom they also had made to stay at the Brook Besor. So they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. And when David came near the people, he greeted them. Then all the wicked and worthless men of those who went with David answered and said, "Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except for every man's wife and children, that they may lead them away and depart."

They didn't think the 200 *slow pokes* deserved an equal cut of the spoils.

“But David said, "My brethren, you shall not do so with what the LORD has given us, who has preserved us and delivered into our hand the troop that came against us. For who will heed you in this matter? But as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike."

So it was, from that day forward; he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.” David established a principle in Israel... Those who *step out and obtain* and those who *stay back and maintain* deserve an equal portion.

And this is a principle that applies to the Church. Some of us are called to fight on the front lines. We teach, encourage, pray, and interact with people publicly.

But other members of the Body have supportive roles. They duplicate CDs, and run the sound board, and move tables and chairs. In essence, *they guard the stuff*.

Both types of work are vital - and deserve a similar cut of the spiritual spoils!

Verse 26 “Now when David came to Ziklag, he sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah, to his friends, saying, "Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD" - to those who were in Bethel, those who were in Ramoth of the South... in Jattir... in Aroer... in Siphmoth... in Eshtemoa... in Rachal... in the cities of the Jerahmeelites... in the cities of the Kenites... in Hormah... in Chorashan... in Athach... in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to rove.”

This was a diplomatic move on David's part. These cities in southern Judah had heard rumors that David had defected to the Philistines. David shares the spoils of battle with his southern neighbors to assure them of his loyalty.

Chapter 31 recounts the Battle of Gilboa - the end of a once great man - *the fall of King Saul*. In Hosea 13:11 listen to God summarize the reign of Saul... He says to Israel, “I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath.”

In chapter 31 we'll see God's wrath at work and His judgment on Saul.

“Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.” Saul had allowed his army to turn to shambles. They were poorly prepared for battle.

“Then the Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons. The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers.”

In ancient battles often an army would detach a hit squad of sharpshooters to take out the opposition's king. This had an overwhelmingly demoralizing effect.

Saul has been hit! He knows he'll be captured and tortured, so he orders his armor bearer to finish him off... “Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me.”

But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid.”

Tradition says the armor bearer was Doeg - the ruthless tattletale who had no problem drawing his sword on the priestly family. But now he refuses to kill Saul...

“Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it.” When someone tries to commit suicide they're more afraid of *people's judgment* than *the judgment of God*.

“And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword, and died with him. So Saul, his three sons, his armorbearer, and all his men died together that same day.” It was a catastrophic loss for the nation of Israel.

Verse 7 “And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, and those who were on the other side of the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and

his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.” The Philistines took over the west bank. Even some of the cities east of the Jordan were evacuated. This was the deepest encroachment into Israeli territory ever launched by the Philistines.

“So it happened the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. And they cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and sent word throughout the land of the Philistines, to proclaim it in the temple of their idols and among the people.”

The army called for a national holiday in the land of the Philistines.

The king of Israel - their mortal enemies - had been slain. “Then they put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths...” This too was a common ancient custom.

Trophies of war were often placed in the temples of the conquering nations as a tribute to their gods. Remember, when the Ark was taken in battle, the Philistines placed it in the Temple of Dagon. Even David followed this practice. He placed Goliath’s sword next to the priestly ephod in the Tabernacle at Nob.

Later God will refuse to allow David to build the Temple because he is “a man of war”. Perhaps God didn’t want David to fill the Temple with trophies from his many military campaigns. Thus, He refused to allow David to build the Temple.

The Philistines also “fastened (Saul’s) body to the wall of Beth Shan.”

They chop off Saul’s head, and hang his swollen, rotting, bloated body to the wall. It was a way to rub salt in the wound of your enemy. It brought further shame and disgrace to an already beaten people... Actually, Saul’s headless body served as a metaphor of the nation. Israel is without a king. She’s a *body without a head*.

Verse 11 “Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, all the valiant men arose and traveled all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth Shan; and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.”

The men of Jabesh couldn’t bear the disgrace and humiliation. They come at night and take the body of *Saul* off the *wall*. But if you ask me, Saul has been “*off the wall*” for some time. It was really an appropriate end for Saul. The man who tried to maintain his image at all costs ended up a public spectacle of shame.

The residents of Jabesh want to give the body of Saul a decent burial.

They cremate his remains and bury his bones - which brings up the question, “What does the Bible say about cremation?” The answer, “The Bible seems to be silent on the subject.” It’s my opinion, all cremation does is speed up the process.

Apparently, cremation does in 20 minutes what nature does

in 20 years...