

# Report of Saul's Death

2 Samuel 1

## Lesson Outline

### I. David Learned of the Disaster: 2 Samuel 1:1-16

- A. Messenger Entertained: 2 Samuel 1:1-10
- B. Messenger Executed: 2 Samuel 1:11-16

### II. David Lamented for the Defeated: 2 Samuel 1:17-27

- A. David's Statement: 2 Samuel 1:17-18
- B. David's Song: 2 Samuel 1:19-27

## David Learned of the Disaster

2 Samuel 1:1-16

### **Messenger Entertained:** 2 Samuel 1:1-10

#### David Returned from Battle

As the Israelites and Philistines prepared for battle, David left the Philistine camp and returned to Ziklag to find the city in ruins and his family missing (1 Samuel 30:1-4). He assembled his men and rapidly pursued the invaders (1 Samuel 30:16-20). After defeating the Amalekites and rescuing the captives, David and his mighty men returned to Ziklag (1 Samuel 30:26; 1 Chronicles 12:1, 8, 20-22). With his family safe, David's thoughts probably turned to his nation and the outcome of the Battle of Gilboa. Unbeknownst to him, the battle lasted only one day, with the Israelites being routed and King Saul defeated (1 Samuel 28:19).

On the third day after his return, while he rested and wondered, a messenger arrived from the battle. This man brought an intriguing report that appears to be filled with false information. The Bible provides details of King Saul's death in two passages (1 Samuel 31 and 1 Chronicles 10). Both accounts agree on key points.

1. *Saul's situation* – Saul was wounded (1 Samuel 31:3; 1 Chronicles 10:3).
2. *Saul's request* – Saul asked his armour bearer to kill him, but the man refused because Saul was God's anointed (1 Samuel 31:4; 1 Chronicles 10:4).
3. *Saul's end* – Saul took his own life (1 Samuel 31:4; 1 Chronicles 10:4).

As will be seen, this man's information differed from the other accounts in several ways. It is likely the messenger fabricated his report. Why remains a mystery, perhaps he believed he would be rewarded for slaying King Saul, David's known enemy (2 Samuel 4:10).

### David Received the Messenger

The man arrived in David's camp with torn clothes and dirt on his head, giving the appearance of mourning. Bowing before David he told of his escape from the Israelite camp, implying he was an eyewitness to the events he was about to give. He informed them that King Saul, along with his three sons, was slain and the army was defeated. It is possible David already knew of their deaths but remained without details and evidence. It is important to note that David received the news of Saul's death and was not eagerly looking for it in anticipation of taking the throne.

The messenger provided his details of the account, saying he came upon King Saul by chance as the Philistines were bearing down upon him. The defeated king, apparently wounded, sought the man's identity and assistance in ending his misery. According to the Amalekite, he generously complied and afterwards took King Saul's crown and bracelet as evidence of his death. The man was certain King Saul would not live, which was probably said to justify his actions to David. Though this appears to be fabricated, we are reminded that at this point in Saul's life nothing of the world mattered (1 John 2:17).

1. *His position* – it was empty and would be filled by another.
2. *His power* – it was gone and he was helpless.
3. *His possessions* – they were worthless and no longer a benefit.

Perhaps knowing Jonathan was David's close friend, there were no details given concerning his demise. The Amalekite man claimed to be an eyewitness and to have taken part in King Saul's death. Whether David believed the message to be accurate or not is unknown. Later David states the man was looking for a reward, so David may have believed his account, until he received accurate information which led him to conclude the man was a fraud (2 Samuel 4:10).

### **Messenger Executed:** 2 Samuel 1:11-16

#### David Discouraged

Upon hearing the news and observing King Saul's possessions, David was overcome with emotion and anguish.

1. *He rent his clothes* – a display of his grief.
2. *He wept* – an outward expression of his mourning on the inside.
3. *He fasted* – an act of humility and grief, which David did for the remainder of the day (Psalm 35:13, 69:10).

These outward demonstrations symbolized great grief and were common. The other men with David did likewise, hurrying alongside their beloved leader. David mourned for all involved, for Saul, his enemy but a man he obviously forgave (Proverbs 24:17-18). He grieved for Jonathan his best friend, for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel. David understood the value of life.

### **David Dealt With the Messenger**

After grieving the loss of the king and his sons, David verified the man's identity as an Amalekite and questioned why he dared to take Saul's life. At this point, David made it clear Saul was God's anointed man. That is why David himself refused to slay Saul and prevented others from ending his life (1 Samuel 24:6-10, 26:9-11).

David directed one of his men to execute the Amalekite messenger, and it was done. This was not a hasty decision but made after a period of mourning. Some believe this harsh, but David proclaimed the man was killed for his action against King Saul. The man confessed to being a murderer and was punished accordingly (Genesis 9:6). He claimed to have killed God's anointed, King Saul (1 Chronicles 16:22; Psalm 105:15). The man legally deserved death for taking a life (Exodus 21:12; Numbers 35:16-21; Romans 13:4). With Saul dead, David was king and he acted with authority.

## **David Lamented for the Defeated**

*2 Samuel 1:17-27*

### **David Statement: 2 Samuel 1:17-18**

#### **David Composed a Song**

David took this opportunity to write a song or poem. A lamentation is a dirge or song – often a mournful one. David was a writer and frequently expressed himself in this manner (Psalm 18:1, 40:1-3). He was greatly affected by the turn of events and displayed his despair in song.

Grief is real and often leads to discouragement. The Lord Jesus Christ understands our afflictions and can relate to our troubles (Hebrews 4:15). He has not abandoned us but is willing to carry our burdens if we take them to Him (Matthew 11:28-30; Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:6-7).

#### **David Challenged the People**

The people of Judah were to teach their children the bow. Perhaps it was in reference to the fact the Philistine archers wounded Saul (1 Samuel 31:3). Their weapons of war proved to be highly effective against the Israelites. This may have been a practical order, so they would be prepared for future engagements. Some believe the bow referred to a musical instrument and implied the children be taught this song or poem. Either way, there is a hint here of David's future authority over the nation, beginning with direction for Judah.

David's lamentation was recorded in the Book of Jasher, which may have been a book of national importance, where detailed accounts of events were kept (Joshua 10:13). If so, the book was not scripture but an historical document for the Israelites. Saul's record as king would be remembered and so would David's song of memorial. All did not go as planned for the nation while Saul was king but he was the first king of Israel and the Lord's anointed (1 Samuel 10:1).

### **David's Song: 2 Samuel 1:19-27**

#### **Supportive Song**

David opened the song commemorating the events that had transpired, the beauty of Israel was slain and the mighty had fallen. The beauty may refer to Saul personally or be a general statement referring to all of the valiant men that died in battle. Saul and Jonathan were both mighty warriors and many powerful fighters fell alongside them. King Saul's faults and failures were not mentioned. To David's credit, he refused to slander the fallen king (Proverbs 10:18).

David challenged the people to keep silent concerning the bad tidings. They were not to be spoken of in Gath or published in the streets of Askelon. These were two of the five principal cities of the Philistines, with Gath being the capital. Obviously David understood the Philistines knew the outcome but it grieved him that the enemy would rejoice in their defeat and downfall. He knew the nation would be slandered and he wanted none of the Israelites to help in the matter. There is no need to make our faults and failures public, seek God's forgiveness and move forward (Philippians 3:13-14). This does not encourage the covering up of sin or error when it is found, but to refrain from gossiping about the matter (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12).

#### **Somber Song**

David proclaimed that the mountains of Gilboa were to mourn. The mountains were to remain dry and no longer yield harvests. Some do not believe this to be literal, only poetic words to display the greatness of their mourning, but it must be mentioned that the mountains of Gilboa remained dry and sterile until recently, when the Jewish National Fund planted thousands of trees to brighten up the scenery. The mountains became a memorial to King Saul, Jonathan, and others that were tragically slain there in battle. It was where their shields were cast down and no longer required, for they had entered into eternity (Hebrews 9:27).

David remembered their lives with fondness, both being lovely and pleasant. In the end, they were not divided but died together fighting the enemy. David, a warrior himself, recognized their prowess in battle.

1. *They were swifter than eagles* – in pursuit of the enemy.
2. *They were stronger than lions* – in warfare (Proverbs 30:30).

Together, Saul and Jonathan were powerful and mighty. David remembered them as valiant and formidable. He directed the daughters of Israel to weep and remember Saul's goodness to them.

### **Sorrowful Song**

David was distressed due to the death of Jonathan. He remembered him as a mighty soldier who fought gallantly for Israel (1 Samuel 14:1-16). He died in the high places, on Mt. Gilboa, and would be greatly missed. For David, it was difficult. Jonathan was his brother-in-law and a true friend, always pleasant or kind to David (1 Samuel 18:1-4). He helped and protected David in his time of trouble (1 Samuel 19:1-7). Nothing is better than a true and close friend; likewise, it is difficult to lose a good friend. The love they had for each other was great, for David it was greater than for anyone else. Many in our perverse generation will twist this to promote their filthy teachings. There is nothing immoral implied, David simply cared greatly for Jonathan because he was loyal, and at times, David's only friend.

In closing, David summed up Israel's situation and it was not good. Their king and his son were gone along with many other valiant men. A time of transition was upon them, with the hope of a new king and leaders. The weapons of war had perished, with the army fleeing in defeat. The Philistines won the battle and controlled much of the land in the south. The nation had to rebuild, which would take time and require God's strength. The LORD already blessed the nation and provided a king, David.