

# The Life of David

## *Long Live the King*

Study 2 | 1 Samuel 17:1-54

*“The King Defeats Our Enemies”*

### News and Needs

April 22nd- Ministry Leaders’ Meeting, 7:30 at the office: “The Great Giveaway” Chapter 6

April 25th- Brooklyn-wide *potluck* at John Jay after the morning service and joint *congregational meeting* between Flatbush, Williamsburg, and Park Slope. Bring lots of food!

### **1. What is notable about the description of Goliath and his speech in verses 1-11? About the description of David and his speech in verses 12-30? About the response of Saul and the men of Israel to Goliath?**

The Philistines are an enemy of Israel who are invading Israel driving them back deep into their own territory. The invasion halts at the Valley of Elah and out comes Goliath from the ranks of the Philistines.

The description of Goliath with his weaponry and armor shows him as a “hulking man of material impedimenta – everything is given gargantuan size or weight” (Robert Alter). Goliath would have been over eight feet tall and his armor weighed over 125 pounds. Goliath shouts at Israel and offers to settle the conflict through a battle between two champions. Goliath also defies Israel, which means “to insult, disgrace, and shame” (Robert Alter). “By his taunting words, Goliath has laid an insult on Israel that only a victorious champion can take away” (Robert Alter). The description (especially the bronze helmet and his coat of mail which would have looked like scales) and speech of Goliath conjure up the image of the serpent from Genesis 2-3 who “defied” God. So, the story is unfolding the promise of Genesis 3:15, namely that, the offspring of the woman would crush the offspring of the serpent.

The description of David is in direct contrast to that of Goliath. “It invites us to suppose that David divided his time between playing the lyre for Saul and tending his father’s flocks. The implicit assumption, however, of the story that unfolds is that David is unknown in the court of Saul, and that the to-and-fro movement between Bethlehem and the front would be to bring provisions to his older brothers.” So, David is unknown in Israel and a servant to his own family members. He is a seemingly unimportant young shepherd boy. Goliath was shouting out his insult every day, so David would have heard him when he delivered provisions to his brothers. David responds to Goliath’s insult with great incense and he recognizes this is an affront to God. Also, David is described as the son of Jesse who is the offspring of the woman in the ancestral line of Jesus.

Saul and the men of Israel were “dismayed and greatly afraid” and they even “fled from Goliath”. Saul and the men of Israel are paralyzed and frozen. “Saul, as the man head and shoulders taller than all the people, might be thought to be the one Israelite fighter who stands a chance against Goliath.

Instead, he leads his own troops in fearfulness: the stage is set for his displacement by David” (Robert Alter).

**2. What is significant about the exchange between David and Saul in verses 31-40? What strikes you about the exchange between David and Goliath in verses 41-47? What are the implications of David’s victory over Goliath in verses 48-54?**

David becomes known in the ranks of Israel because of his fearless words about Goliath. When Saul finds out about David he meets with him. Immediately, David offers to fight Goliath. No longer is David unassuming and seemingly unimportant, especially when he shares his stories about how he has fought off lions and bears as a shepherd boy. David proclaims that the Lord has delivered him from the lion and the bear, and he persuades Saul by saying that the Lord will deliver him from Goliath in the same way. Then, David cannot even wear the armor given to him and his only weaponry is a sling and five smooth stones. David approaches Goliath in great weakness.

The story approaches its climax in the exchange between David and Goliath. The way in which they speak to one another indicates that this is not just a battle between David and Goliath, nor simply between Israel and the Philistines, but there is a greater battle at play. Goliath curses David by his gods and David proclaims that he comes in the name of the Lord. David takes Goliath’s insult and turns it back on him saying that he will give his body to the “birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth.” The greater purpose of the battle is revealed when David says that through his victory “all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.” David continues by saying, “the battle is the Lord’s.” The Lord is the central character in the story and he will deliver his people from their great enemy!

David approaches Goliath in his weakness, with no armor and the weaponry of a shepherd boy. Yet, Goliath does not see what is coming and weak David strikes the giant down with his slingshot. Then, David cuts off Goliath’s head! Again, the story picks up on the promise of Genesis 3:15 which says that the offspring of the woman will crush the head of the offspring of the serpent. David crushes Goliath’s head! The micro-story of David and Goliath captures the macro-story of Scripture. The story of Scripture unfolds to show how Jesus crushes Satan through his own weakness, namely, death on a cross.

**3. Who should we identify with in this story? How does this story help us understand the role of a king for God's people? How does this story shed light on the person and work of Jesus?**

The story of David and Goliath is often used to encourage people to identify with David, showing the same courage and bravery against our enemies. Do you think we should identify with David? What if we identified with Israel? Israel faced Goliath who is represented as the enemy of God in the story. As God's enemy, Goliath defies Israel. How does this help us think about who our enemies are? What causes us great fear and dismay? First and foremost, we should identify with the ones in the story who need to be delivered from the enemy.

Israel also got to participate in pushing back the Philistines after the defeat of Goliath. Paul picks up on this in Romans 16:20 when he says, "The God of peace will crush Satan under *your* feet." As those who were rescued we get to chase out and push back against our enemies. How can we push back against the enemies we mentioned above?

Unlike Saul, David portrays the role of a king for God's people in this story. He has zeal for God's honor. He protects and defends God's people. He restrains and conquers the enemies of God's people. He delivers and rescues God's people. The kingship of David points forward to the kingship of Jesus who (as mentioned earlier) defeats the enemy of God and his people and provides deliverance.