

Sunday, May 10, 2026 pm

**JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (52)**  
**United Kingdom (6)**  
**Saul's Tragic End**  
**1 Samuel 27-31**

Tonight we continue our "Journey through the Bible". We are continuing our study of the United Kingdom, as we conclude our examination of Israel's first king – Saul. We have addressed his becoming king, his insecurities, desperation and rebellion as he pursued David thinking he could hinder YHWH's plans. He pursued David to the neglect of his people, but David always prevailed with humility and faith. Tonight we address the tragic ending of Saul's life.

**I. The context**

- a. In our last lesson, we left off with Saul and David again parting ways. Saul has murdered priests and destroyed the city of Nob in his hatred, and pursued David continually. David has spared his life twice which resulted in Saul ceasing his pursuits for a short while (his "repentance" was short lived).
- b. 27:1- 7- David flees again to the territory of the Philistines. He knows he is not safe remaining in Israel. This time he goes to Achish, king of Gath (a territory of the Philistines), with his band of 600, and is allowed to stay in the area. In fact Achish believes that David is now his ally. Note vs. 4 – when Saul is told this, he seeks David no more. He will dwell in that land for 16 months (vs.7) in a city called Ziklag.
- c. 27:8- 28:2 – David and his men go and attack various cities (Geshurites, Girzites and Amalekites) and destroys everyone so that they cannot bring news back to Achish. David lies at times and tells him he is fighting against Judah or other places (vs. 10) so the king thinks he is now loyal to him AND that Israel abhors him. He therefore makes David and his troops a part of his army.
- d. 28:3-25 – Saul continues his downward spiral and becomes so desperate that he consults a medium (even though he had expelled them from the land of Israel – one of the good things he did, likely early on). We are reminded that Samuel had died. Meanwhile, the Philistines again gather against Israel. Saul seeks direction from YHWH, but hear nothing by dreams, Urim or prophets. So he desires to find a medium (witch, soothsayer, etc.) because he wants to speak to Samuel. He is brought to a woman in En Dor by disguise. At first she refuses because Saul had ordered all such to be put to death. Saul assures her nothing will happen and asks that she call up Samuel. She does and is immediately surprised (which says something about her incantations prior to this). She sees Samuel and knows she is talking to Saul. Samuel is upset that Saul has called for him and says, "Why have you disturbed me?" (vs. 15). Saul explains he wants to know what will happen with the Philistines. Samuel tells him, the LORD had departed from him and torn the kingdom from him. Furthermore, he is told that the next day he and his sons would die at the hands of the Philistines and Israel would lose the battle.
- e. Saul is severely troubled and falls to the ground in dreadful fear. The witch encourages him to eat (though he does not want to). When they finally eat, Saul gets up and goes to his home.
- f. 29 – The Philistines are gathering their armies together to fight against Israel. As the Philistines pass by their king in review, at the rear you find David and his men. The Philistine princes are not happy with this and confront the king. The king defends David believing he has defected to him. But the princes refused to let David go along in battle lest he turn against them (they knew what he had accomplished – vs. 4-5). Achish concedes to his lords and tells David to return to his place. Vs. 8, David acts upset, "What Have I done?" Why can't I go?. The next morning David and his men leave while the Philistines go to Jezreel.

- g. 30 – As David and his men return to Ziklag, the Amalekites had raided and burned the city and taken its spoils and all the women and children with them, including David’s 2 wives. The men are disheartened, but David inquires of YHWH through Abiathar. The Ephod (likely the Urim and Thummim) is brought and God is asked if they should pursue the Amalekites. YHWH says yes and that they would recover everything. So they proceed to attack the Amalekites. On the way, ~200 of the men were unable to continue (tired, weak, etc.) and thus they stayed behind with the possessions of David’s men. The 400 continue their pursuit and find an Egyptian servant who for 3 days had been left by his master (of the Amalekites) because he had become sick. After being fed, he informs David and his men about the Amalekites and lead this small army to them. David then attacked them from twilight until evening the next day. They were victorious and utterly destroyed them (except 400 men who escaped on camels). All is recovered, including their families. As the 400 rejoin those who stayed behind, worthless rogues in their midst did not want to share the spoil. But David intervened and declared the importance of all involved, including those who stay behind. When David returns to Ziklag, he sends some of the spoil to various brethren of Israel – Bethel, Ramoth, Jattir, etc. These were places where David and his men were able to rove (while avoiding Saul).
- h. 31 – records the tragic end of Saul and his sons. We read that the Philistines pursued Israel as they fled and killed Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, Saul’s sons. The an archer drew struck Saul and severely wounded him. Saul knows he is dying and asks his armor bearer to kill him. He refuses so Saul falls on his own sword and dies. The armorbearer then kills himself. That area of Israel is defeated. The next day, the Philistines find the bodies of Saul and sons and cut off their heads and strip them of their armor to parade throughout their cities. They put the armor in the temple of their gods and fasten the bodies of Saul and his sons to a wall in Beth Shan. WHEN the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead hear about where their bodies are, they travel all night to take them down. They burn them (respectfully) and bury their bones at Jabesh and fast for 7 days. And thus ends the life and reign of Saul.
- i. 1 Chronicles 10 - NOTE: With this reading we are introduced to the book of 1 Chronicles. As we move forward into 2 Samuel (and 1 & 2 Kings) we will find the Chronicles will parallel beside them. Like the gospels, there are accounts in each book exclusive and others that repeat the story, sometimes verbatim and at other times given unique details that present a fuller story. 1 Chronicles 10 records the tragic death of Saul and mostly parallels 1 Kings 31, but there are few details worthy of mention here. 1) When the Philistines find the bodies of Saul and his sons, they fasten the head of Saul in the temple of Dagon with his armor (vs. 9). ALSO we read in 1 Chron. 10:13-14 a summary of Saul dying because of his unfaithfulness and because he consulted a medium.
- j. NOTE: 1 Chronicles 12:1-22 gives us some further insight into the men who joined David (the 600). These included Benjamites (Saul’s brethren) who were very skilled with slings and bows. Chronicles names many of these men. We also find in vs. 17-18 as David comes to meet them he asks whose side they are on and they declare loyal allegiance to David. We also read of men from Manasseh and Gad joining David and kept growing until they became “like the army of God” (vs. 21-22).

## II. Lessons to consider

- a. God protects those who belong to Him – this was a dark time in David’s life and YHWH is with him. Even as he flees to the land of the Philistines.
- b. Fear can lead to lies – there is debate whether David going to the land of the Philistines demonstrated trust in God or a lack of trust. Whatever the reason, David is in a situation where he lies to protect himself. Do NOT see this as lying being acceptable in given circumstances. There is NO indication that God TOLD David to ally (real or pretentious) himself with the Philistines. Lying is a sin!
- c. The folly of the occult – Saul’s desperation caused him to turn to a medium (one who supposedly communicated between the living and the dead). Clearly this was NOT God’s intention. One of the

- few good things Saul did was to outlaw mediums (according to the LOM – Deuteronomy 18:10-11, Leviticus 20:27).
- d. Where disobedience leads – why did Saul go to a medium? Because he had been rejected by God and had rejected God by his decisions. Rebellion and sin always leads you away from God and usually takes you farther than you intended.
  - e. The deafening silence of God – do not live your life so that you cannot turn to God – cf. Psalm 66:18 - *If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.* Isaiah 1:15, 59:2, etc.
  - f. God can accomplish His will – even as David is in the land of the Philistines, circumstances prevail so that David is protected. Remember, he IS God's anointed next king.
  - g. God provided a way out for David – circumstances prevailed (providentially?) so that David did not have to fight against Israel. Remember 1 Corinthians 10:13 when we are faced with temptations – God can make the way of escape. Will you take it?
  - h. Seek God in times of trouble – again, we find David putting his trust in God. When returning to a devastated Ziklag, David asks God what to do next. Let us, as we face decisions always consider God's will (his word, the advice of those with wisdom and integrity, etc.)
  - i. Don't give up when you face troubles – David was in despair but did not quit. He regrouped and moved forward.
  - j. Compassion for the weary – David ensured that those who were unable to proceed were taken care of. Also the Egyptian servant abandoned by his master.
  - k. The importance of those working behind the scenes – those who stayed behind still had a task – to protect their belongings. Consider 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 – every part is important.
  - l. Show your gratitude – after David returned, he shared some of the spoils with fellow Israelite cities, that likely had helped them in their times of distress. We need to be thankful always AND show our gratitude to others.
  - m. The ultimate downfall of pride – Saul is killed after a life filled with prideful failures. Proverbs 16:18 is clear, *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*
  - n. We are reminded of the reality of death – Hebrews 9:27 – we will die and then face God in judgment.
  - o. Showing due respect for the dead – the men of Jabesh-Gilead showed Saul respect. When have no say over the destiny of the dead, but showing respect for the deceased reminds us that it was NOT just flesh and bones, but a soul that will spend eternity somewhere.

And thus we continue our journey through the history of God's people and plans. We find in this lesson the end of a tragic chapter and the beginning of better hope as David is inaugurated as king. Life is filled with good and bad events. We may not be able to control many of them, but we must never forget that God is still in control and His will will be accomplished. Think about it!