

The Death of King Saul and the Enthronement of King David

1 Chronicles 10-11

1 Chronicles 10 - *"Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. ² Then the Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons. ³ The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was wounded by the archers. ⁴ Then Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and abuse me." But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it. ⁵ And when his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died. ⁶ So Saul and his three sons died, and all his house died together. ⁷ And when all the men of Israel who were in the valley saw that they had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook their cities and fled; then the Philistines came and dwelt in them.*

⁸ So it happened the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. ⁹ And they stripped him and took his head and his armor, and sent word throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among the people. ¹⁰ Then they put his armor in the temple of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. ¹¹ And when all Jabesh Gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, ¹² all the valiant men arose and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons; and they brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

¹³ So Saul died for his unfaithfulness that he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and because he consulted a medium for guidance. ¹⁴ But he did not inquire of the Lord; therefore, He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse."

Background Notes

This chapter is very similar to the parallel account of the death of King Saul in 1 Samuel 31. However, we learn one detail here. When the Philistines cut off Saul's head from his dead body, they placed the head in the temple of their god, Dagon, in recognition of their belief that Dagon had given them the victory. Little did they know that their celebration would be short-lived. The reigns of King David and King Solomon were on the horizon, and the Philistines were about to fade into ancient history.

The valiant men from Jabesh Gilead crossed the Jordan River and marched all night through Philistine-controlled territory to recover the bodies of Saul and his sons from the walls of Beth Shan. They rescued the bodies of Saul and Jonathan from shameful desecration and from vultures, and gave them an honorable burning and burial back in Jabesh.

Why were the men of Jabesh Gilead willing to do this brave deed? Years before, at the beginning of his reign, King Saul had rescued them from the Ammonite threat (1 Samuel 11).

Doctrinal Points

1. King Saul did not prosper because the Lord was against him.

“Therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David, the son of Jesse” (v14). Did the Lord kill Saul arbitrarily, for no good reason? Of course not! Look at verse 13: *“So Saul died for his unfaithfulness he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord.”* When did Saul “not keep the word of the Lord”? Saul deliberately disobeyed the word of the Lord at least twice - once when God directed him through the prophet Samuel to wait at Gilgal (1 Samuel 13). Saul didn't wait for Samuel, but wrongly conducted a public sacrifice himself. And in 1 Samuel 15, Saul was told to eliminate the Amalekites, the enemies of God's people. But again Saul deliberately disobeyed. He practiced “partial obedience,” and he even tried to make excuses.

Saul not only sinned by deliberately disobeying the Lord, but he also sinned by consulting a witch. *“...he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the Lord; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse” (v13-14).* Read about this sin in 1 Samuel 28. This was a serious sin. It was deliberately disobedient to consult a medium or witch. These sins led to King Saul's death.

Deliberate disobedience and witchcraft are still serious sins today. If a believer gets involved in these sins, it could lead to his or her premature death - for his or her own good. 1 John 5:16 is written to believers, and it indicates that certain sins can lead to a believer's death. So there's certainly a lesson for us here in 1 Chronicles 10. King Saul did not prosper because the Lord was against him.

2. King David prospered because the Lord was with him.

1 Chronicles 11:1-9 - *“Then all Israel came together to David at Hebron, saying, “Indeed we are your bone and your flesh. ² Also, in time past, even when Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the Lord your God said to you, ‘You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over My people Israel.’” ³ Therefore all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord. And they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord by Samuel.*

⁴ And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus, where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. ⁵ But the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, “You shall not come in here!” Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David). ⁶ Now David said, “Whoever attacks the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain.” And Joab the son

of Zeruiah went up first, and he became chief. ⁷ Then David dwelt in the stronghold; therefore they called it the City of David. ⁸ And he built the city around it; from the Millo to the surrounding area, Joab repaired the rest of the city. ⁹ So David went on and became great, and the Lord of hosts was with him.”

Some time after Saul's death, all of Israel recognized David as the new king (v1-3). David reigned from Hebron over the tribe of Judah for 7 ½ years before all the tribes recognized him as the rightful king (2 Samuel 5). Then David decided to move the nation's capital to Jerusalem, a more central location, but the city was still in the hands of the Jebusites. They mocked David and his men, and said that no one would be able to dislodge them from Jerusalem. But they were wrong! Read the details of David's capture of Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 5. It seems that Joab was able to get inside the city by climbing up the city's water shaft, and then making a way for David and the army of Israel to enter and take the city. If you visit Jerusalem today, you can climb down that water shaft in the area of Jerusalem. It's still known as the City of David.

David strengthened and expanded the city of Jerusalem. The *Millo* (v8) was probably an area that was filled in to provide flat terrain for David's expansion projects. In all of these efforts, David was successful.

David became greater and greater, because the Lord was with him. *“So David went on and became great, and the Lord of hosts was with him”* (v9). What a contrast to King Saul! The sad record of King Saul in chapter 10 is included to highlight God's blessing on David in chapter 11. King Saul did not prosper, because the Lord was against him because of his sin. But King David prospered because the Lord was with him.

Practical Application

Be known by our Lord for your spiritual warfare and your spiritual worship.

1 Chronicles 11:10-35 - *“Now these were the heads of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel. ¹¹ And this is the number of the mighty men whom David had: Jashobeam the son of a Hachmonite, chief of the captains; he had lifted up his spear against three hundred, killed by him at one time. ¹² After him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who was one of the three mighty men. ¹³ He was with David at Pasdammim. Now there the Philistines were gathered for battle, and there was a piece of ground full of barley. So the people fled from the Philistines. ¹⁴ But they stationed themselves in the middle of that field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. So the Lord brought about a great victory.*

¹⁵ Now three of the thirty chief men went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam; and the army of the Philistines encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. ¹⁶ David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was in Bethlehem. ¹⁷ And David said with longing, “Oh, that someone would give me a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!” ¹⁸ So the three broke through the Philistine camp, drew water from the well of

Bethlehem that was by the gate, and brought it to David. But David would not drink it; he poured it out before the Lord. ¹⁹ And he said, “Far be it from me, O my God, that I should do this! Shall I drink the blood of these men who have

put their lives in jeopardy? For at the risk of their lives they brought it." So he would not drink it. These things were done by the three mighty men.

²⁰ Abishai, the brother of Joab, was chief of another three. He had lifted up his spear against three hundred men, killed them, and won a name among these three. ²¹ Of the three he was more honored than the other two men. Therefore he became their captain. However he did not attain to the first three. ²² Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day. ²³ And he killed an Egyptian, a man of great height, five cubits tall. In the Egyptian's hand there was a spear like a weaver's beam; and he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. ²⁴ These things Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and won a name among three mighty men. ²⁵ Indeed he was more honored than the thirty, but he did not attain to the first three. And David appointed him over his guard."

More of David's mighty men are listed in verses 26-47. Notice that Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband, was one of David's mighty warriors (v41). Also notice - Zelak the Ammonite (v39), and Ithmah the Moabite (v46) are included in the list. By birth, these men were foreigners - enemies of God's people - but they were part of David's army! What a great spiritual picture of a believer's position! By nature we were born as enemies of God, but through our new birth, we are included in the Lord's army!

The feats of David's mighty men (v10-25) contribute to an overall spiritual picture of our spiritual warfare and spiritual worship for our King, the Greater David, Jesus Christ Himself. Eleazar defended the food of God's people (v13), and we should defend God's Word of God, the food of God's people. Three of David's mighty men refreshed David's heart by bringing him water from the well at Bethlehem, at great risk and sacrifice (v17-19). What a beautiful picture of worship! Do we sacrifice ourselves to please the heart of our King? David elevated this act of courage and valor by pouring out the water as an offering before the Lord. Was this a waste? David didn't think so! Some people today would consider the time we spend in worship as a waste of time - but the Lord doesn't think so! He sees and remembers, and honors us!

Benaiah won victories over an impressive Egyptian, two Moabites, and a lion. This is a picture of victory in spiritual warfare over the world, as portrayed by Egypt and Moab - nations that represent the world in Scripture. It also pictures victory over the devil, as portrayed by the lion. The lion is a symbol of Satan in many Scriptures.

Are we mighty warriors and worshipers of our Lord and King, the Lord Jesus? Be known by our Lord for your spiritual warfare and your spiritual worship!