

FIRST SAMUEL

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 30

- Vv. 1-6 *David's camp looted.* David and his men marched for three days from Aphek and came to Ziklag. They arrived only to find that their camp had been attacked, the city had been burned with fire, and the men's wives and sons and daughters had been taken captives.
- Vv. 7-20 *David's pursuit of his enemies.* David made inquiry of Abiathar, the priest, to find out the Lord's will. The Lord informed him that he should pursue those who had destroyed his camp. David found a straggler from the enemy's forces, and the straggler helped David to take the enemy's camp by surprise.
- Vv. 21-31 *David's good will towards Judah.* David took considerable spoil from the Amalekites, who had attacked the camp. He did not keep all of it himself. He ordered that all his men should share equally in the spoils, and he then sent some of the spoils to the cities of Judah. He especially made sure that spoils were sent to Hebron and to all the places where he and his men had been protected when they fled from Saul.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *There is strength in the Lord.* David's men were so distressed when they saw that their wives and children had been taken captive that they threatened to stone David. David himself was really distressed, but we read this significant statement of David: "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (v. 6 b). When there is none other to give help, God is always close at hand.

STUDIES IN SAMUEL

2. *Victory belongs to the soldiers of the Lord.* A weaker man than David might have given up in despair when he returned to find that his own city had been pillaged and burned. He continued his march against the enemy and by the strength of the Lord was victorious. We need to remember that often victory is just around the corner. Sometimes we give up just on the brink of ultimate victory, but thus we know only defeat.
3. *Blessings are to be shared.* David was very unselfish in not keeping all the spoils for himself. He would not allow the selfish men in his army to keep those who had watched the baggage from sharing the spoils. He made it an ordinance in Israel that those who went to battle and those who watched the baggage were to share and share alike in the spoils of war. He also shared the spoils with those who had befriended him in earlier days. This is the magnanimous spirit needed by all of God's people.

David's Return to Ziklag, 30:1-31.

David's Camp Looted. 30:1-6

And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

2 And had taken the women captives, that *were* therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried *them* away, and went on their way.

3 So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, *it was* burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.

4 Then David and the people that *were* with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

5 And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.

6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

1. *Why had the Amalekites sacked Ziklag? 30:1*

David and his men had made expeditions against these people when David wanted to impress Achish (I Samuel 27:9-12). These Bedouin peoples had probably watched the departure of David and his men and had taken advantage of the opportunity to capture their women, children, and possessions. It is ironical that the people who led this expedition against David were the people whom Saul had been sent to destroy. Evidently Saul had not only spared the king, but had allowed some of the men to escape. These people then rose up to cause trouble for David.

2. *Why had they not slain any? 30:2*

They had not followed David's method of warfare. David had the extreme need for ridding himself of any witnesses and had entered into campaigns of total extermination. The captives taken by the Amalekites were probably destined to the Egyptian slave market. This was the way in which the Midianites were introduced in the days of Joseph. They bought him for twenty pieces of silver and took him to Egypt, where he was sold (Genesis 37:36).

3. *What caused David's excessive grief? 30:4*

David and his men had marched with the rearward of the Philistine armies as far as Aphek. There they were halted by the lords of the Philistines who were making the final assignments for the battle in the north. After they were discharged, they made a forced march for three days

and had arrived in their home only to find it pillaged and burned. They wept until they had no more tears and no more mental, physical, or nervous energy to expend in their grief.

4. *Why did the men blame David? 30:6*

The men felt that their association with David would ultimately bring them only misfortune. The men are described as being "bitter of soul." This description fits angry men as is evidenced by Judges 18:25 and II Samuel 17:8. The Shunamite woman whose son had died is described in this same way as she fell at Elisha's feet (II Samuel 4:27). The same idea is expressed in an attempt to describe Jacob's fear and distress as he was about to return to meet Esau (Genesis 32:7, 8) and also the people of Israel as the Canaanite peoples whom they had left in the land distressed them (Judges 2:15). These men were at their wits' end. Since David was their captain and ultimately responsible for the major decisions, they blamed him for all that had befallen them. They even considered seriously the actual stoning of David.

5. *How was David sustained in the day of peril? 30:6b*

Hardly any stranger circumstances can be imagined than those which confronted David upon his return to Ziklag. He and his men had hurriedly returned from Aphek to Ziklag by a forced march of three days' duration. Their welcome consisted of charred remains of what had been their homes and the knowledge that their women, children, and cattle had been driven away as spoil by the plundering Amalekites. Their grief was such that they wept until the fountains of weeping were run dry, and then the men turned and vented their grief by anger at David. There were conversations directed towards stirring up the men to stone David. In all this, we read, "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." By such faith David was sustained even in days of greatest peril.

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David's Pursuit of His Enemies. 30:7-20

7 And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David.

8 And David enquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake *them*, and without fail recover *all*.

9 So David went, he and the six hundred men that *were* with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed.

10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.

11 And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water;

12 And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk *any* water, three days and three nights.

13 And David said unto him, To whom *belongest* thou? and whence *art* thou? And he said, I *am* a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick.

14 We made an invasion *upon* the south of the Cherethites, and upon *the coast* which *belongeth* to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire.

15 And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company.

16 And when he had brought him down, behold, *they were* spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had

taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah.

17 And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.

18 And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives.

19 And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any *thing* that they had taken to them. David recovered all.

20 And David took all the flocks and the herds, *which* they drove before those *other* cattle, and said, This *is* David's spoil.

6. *How were the captives of Ziklag recovered? 30:7 ff.*

David inquired of the Lord concerning the advisability of going out against the Amalekites. God answered him by telling him that he should go out in pursuit of the enemy and added the promise that he would be blessed in the endeavor. An Egyptian, a slave of one of the plundering Amalekites, had grown faint while the plunderers were returning from Ziklag; and when he was unable to proceed with the army his master left him by the highway to die. This man was found by David, and his spirits were revived by their kind ministrations. He said that he would guide them to the camp of the pillagers if only David would promise not to take his life nor deliver him again into the hands of his master. Led by the slave, the men came upon the Amalekites as they were spread upon the ground eating and drinking, all of which was probably some sort of religious festival celebrating their successful plundering of Ziklag. The attack was sudden and soon decided, and the success was complete. David rescued all that had been carried away. Nothing was missing; and in

addition to recovering his own, David captured a large amount of other property.

7. *What was the nature of David's inquiry?* 30:8

David asked the Lord if he should pursue after the Amalekites. He puts it in the form of a question that could be answered by a full statement from the Lord. It would be better not to consider this as a question to be answered with a *yes* or a *no*. He was asking the Lord what would happen if he did pursue. The Lord answered his question. As he continued to be more specific, he asked if he could overtake the enemy. The Lord revealed to him that he would not only catch up with the Amalekites but he would recover everything he had lost.

8. *Where was the brook Besor?* 30:9

This brook is mentioned only at this point. It must have been south of Ziklag on the road to Egypt. Wady Gazze or Wady Sheria would fit a description of the events which transpired. Probably it was near Ziklag, because the men who stayed behind knew they would have to cross it in order to pursue the enemy.

9. *Why were the 200 so faint?* 30:10

David's men had been on a forced march from the rallying point at Aphek before they pursued their enemies from Ziklag. In addition, they had been under a great deal of mental strain as they had posed as friendly towards the Philistines. The final blow to their stamina came as they returned to find their wives, children, and supplies, carried away by marauders. Two hundred evidently stayed at Ziklag to protect the site. They knew that they would have to cross this valley and were not even able to begin the campaign.

10. *Who was the straggler?* 30:13

The young man whom David's men found in the field was an Egyptian. He was so faint that he was like a corpse according to the original text. After he had been given something to eat and drink, his spirit came again to

him. When he was asked about his background, he explained that he was an Egyptian but was a servant to an Amalekite. He had been left behind because he was sick and unable to keep up with the rest of the company.

11. *Who were the Cherethites?* 30:14

The Cherethites were tribes of the Philistines who lived in the southwest part of Canaan. Ezekiel mentioned them (Ezekiel 25:16) as did Zephaniah (Zephaniah 2:5). In these references they are synonymous with the Philistines. The Greek version called these people "Cretans." It is now understood that the Philistines originally came from Crete. David had Cherethites and Pelethites as body guards (II Samuel 8:18; 15:18; 20:7, 23; I Kings 1:38, 44; I Chronicles 18:17). Later on these men were called captains and the guard (II Kings 11:4, 19).

12. *Why did David overcome the Amalekites with ease?*
30:16-20

When David came on the campsite of the Amalekites, they were spread all around over the ground eating and drinking and dancing. They were celebrating the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines and out of the land of Judah. Just how long David smote them is not clear, but it must have been only one evening. It was the next day after they had left Ziklag that he began the attack at twilight. He continued the attack after dark and recovered everything.

David's Goodwill Toward Judah. 30:21-31

21 And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that *were* with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them.

22 Then answered all the wicked men and *men* of Be-lial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they

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went not with us, we will not give them *ought* of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead *them* away, and depart.

23 Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand.

24 For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part *is* that goeth down to the battle, so *shall* his part *be* that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.

25 And it was *so* from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.

26 And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, *even* to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord;

27 To *them* which *were* in Beth-el, and to *them* which *were* in south Ramoth, and to *them* which *were* in Jattir,

28 And to *them* which *were* in Aroer, and to *them* which *were* in Siphmoth, and to *them* which *were* in Eshtemoa,

29 And to *them* which *were* in Rachal, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Kenites,

30 And to *them* which *were* in Hormah, and to *them* which *were* in Chorashan, and to *them* which *were* in Athach,

31 And to *them* which *were* in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

13. *What military law was based on these events? 30:22-25*

Two hundred men had been too worn out by the events of the return from Aphek and all that transpired to cross over the Brook Besor as the men of David pursued the Amalekites. As a result, they had stayed behind with

some of the equipment. When the victorious men returned, they met these two hundred men; and the baser of their number were of a mind to refuse to divide the spoil with the two hundred. All that was to be given to these men were their wives and children. David immediately vetoed the proposition. His language is contained in this couplet:

“As the portion of the one who goes down into battle, So is the portion of the one who remains with the baggage.”

To this he added these words: “They shall all share alike.” David’s decision in the matter became a precedent for what was done in Israel from that time forward.

14. *To who did David send presents of the spoil? 30:26-31*

David used the booty at his disposal to win the hearts of the men of Judah. He sent portions to the elders of Judah, to his friends, and to his kinsmen with the note that the spoil was taken for a blessing for them from the possessions of the enemies of Jehovah. The listing of the cities indicates that they were all in the South of the land. In these cities and among these people David had wandered when he was a fugitive from the wrath of Saul. Many of them had no doubt rendered valuable assistance to David and his party. Sending these gifts could not fail to make the elders of these cities well disposed towards David; and so to facilitate his recognition as king after the death of Saul, David acted wisely. Moreover, some of these places may have been invaded and plundered by the Amalekites, since they had pillaged the Negeb of Judah.

CHAPTER 30 IN REVIEW

1. Who had attacked Ziklag? _____
2. How long had David taken to reach Ziklag? _____
3. Which wives of David were captured? _____

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4. What did David's men propose to do to him? _____
5. What did the priest bring to David? _____
6. What was the priest's name? _____
7. How many men went with David? _____
8. How many stayed behind? _____
9. Whom did David's men find in a field? _____
10. To whom did David send some of the spoil he took? _____

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 31

Vv. 1- 6 *Saul's death.* Samuel had told Saul that he would die in battle. This came to pass as the armies of Israel and Philistia met in battle on Mt. Gilboa. Saul fell on his sword and killed himself. His sons were killed with him in this fatal battle.

Vv. 7-13 *Saul's burial.* The Philistines cut off Saul's head and stripped off his armor. They put his armor in the house of their gods the Ash-taroth. They fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. The men of Jabesh-Gilead heard that Saul's body was hanging on Beth-shan. They came by night and took the body and gave it a decent burial.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *The word of God is sure.* Saul had done everything he could to try to thwart God's will. Even though he had disobeyed God on at least two outstanding occasions, he evidently thought he could escape the ultimate punish-