

## God's Big Story | Kingdom | Keith Sobus

During this summer we've been talking about God's Big Story – and looking at the significant moments of scripture so that we can better understand the context of what it is that we're reading, whenever we open up the Bible. And so far we've covered Adam and Eve all the way to the Israelites and God's covenant with them.

Well, eventually Moses and his successor, Joshua die and Israel is charged with keeping the law and they're to do so under the governance of military tribal chiefs which the Bible calls "judges." It's a total failure. And over and over again the book of judges will say, "In those days, there was no king, everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

The books of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel detail Israel's transition from having judges to having an earthly king. In fact, Samuel is considered by some biblical scholars to be the last judge.

1 Samuel 8 details the critical moment of this transition from Judges to Kings:

<sup>4</sup> So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. <sup>5</sup> They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

And there's a sad sentence there, right? God wants Israel to be set apart – different from the nations and Israel says, "we want to be like the other nations." And Samuel prays to God concerning this and God responds:

<sup>7</sup> And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. <sup>8</sup> As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.

Samuel will go on to tell Israel that the kind of king they need is one who is humble and faithful to God. Their first king, Saul, will be a warning to them of how not to live and their second king, David, will be an example to them although in his later life, we see that Israel is still in need of a righteous king. God will use Israel's flawed kingdom to foreshadow a perfect kingdom to come, where God is their King.

There's a specific story from David's early life that illustrates his faithfulness and his humility and demonstrates the facts that He is the kind of king God wants for His people and He's also the kind of person that God wants Israel to be like.

It's the story of David and Goliath. But it's a story that we often get wrong. In a variety of ways. This is not the story of an underdog. So today we have two questions: What is the story of David and Goliath and what does it mean to me?

We read about it in 1 Samuel 17 and verse 3 explains the need for a showdown.

<sup>3</sup> The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.

Neither army is going to disadvantage themselves by trying to fight uphill. So neither wants to be the first to move. They're at a standstill. And a champion from the Philistines steps out and challenges the

Israelites to Single Combat – where one of the best fighters from each army faces off – a military event that many ancient historians have recorded. This fight will serve to demonstrate the fate of the battle. The Champion's name is Goliath and he taunts the Israelites relentlessly.

There's some debate as to how tall Goliath is. Some of the earlier manuscripts that we've found place him at around 6' 9 inches. Others place him at around 9' 6 inches and one Old Testament expert – Robert Alter argues for around 8'.

No matter what – Goliath was huge and formidable. The tallest man recorded by Guinness Book of World Records was 8' 11' and at his peak, about 500lbs and he was still growing when he died due to a infection. Just 9 inches shy of what most translations of the Bible place Goliath at. Goliath's coat of armor weighed about 125lbs – about the same as a full suit of armor for a medieval knight. Bulky and cumbersome but not unreasonable for a man of Goliath's size.

Goliath is basically, ancient tank warfare. He's specialized heavy infantry. He's fully armored, He carries a sword, a spear, and a javelin. He's one of the biggest men their nation has to offer and his purpose is to breach the enemy line. In ancient warfare, when you're part of the front line, you do not want this man coming at you. He's a prized soldier in any army. Often referred to in scripture as champions or mighty men or heroes depending on the translation.

No one in Saul's army (including Saul, who scripture says is head and shoulders above all other Israelites) is willing to fight. In steps David. He's not an old man but he's also not a small shepherd boy. In fact, even before his fight with Goliath, he's known for being a brave warrior.

1 Samuel 16:18 says

<sup>18</sup> One of the servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the lyre. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the Lord is with him."

But David's not a tank. He's a slinger. A ranged infantry unit. Ancient writers and modern historians say they had further range than most archers in their time. There's a tribe in Israel called the Benjamites and Judges 20:16 describes them as having 700 soldiers who could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. National Geographic reports that recent experiments show that slingers had as much stopping power as a .44 magnum. These handguns have been known to take down Elephants. So when David says he's been killing lions and bears as a shepherd, he's not exaggerating. Asiatic lions weigh as much as 420lbs and Syrian bears weigh around 500lbs – close to what we can imagine Goliath would've weighed.

David is not an underdog and he's not outmatched, he only looks like it. But looks can be deceiving, particularly so when you're in a state of fear and doubt or when you're overconfident.

So what is the story of David and Goliath? It's a historical single combat battle that takes place in a valley between two opposing armies. A ranged infantry unit vs specialized heavy infantry.

What does this story mean to me?

Well, two things.

First off, David here, is a type of Jesus. And this happens often in the Old Testament – people and their circumstances will foreshadow Jesus. Or sometimes we might say, they prefigure Jesus. Jesus himself at one point invokes Jonah as a type.

In Matthew 12:39-40 Jesus says

<sup>39</sup> He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

You know, interestingly enough, Jonah hints at this. He alludes to Jesus without knowing it. In a prayer to God he describes in metaphorical terms that he is buried in the earth even though he’s in water. He even describes seaweed wrapped around his head which seems unnecessary unless it’s understood as a reference to the crown of thorns. (Jonah 2:5-6)

<sup>5</sup> The engulfing waters threatened me,<sup>[b]</sup>  
the deep surrounded me;  
seaweed was wrapped around my head.

<sup>6</sup> To the roots of the mountains I sank down;  
the earth beneath barred me in forever.

But you, LORD my God,  
brought my life up from the pit.

So many Christian theologians are quick to point out that David doesn’t represent us. He represents Jesus. Goliath is sin and death and we are the cowering Israelites. So similarly to David’s fight with Goliath, when you read the New Testament, Jesus’ victory is totally unexpected. When Jesus is dying on the cross – he looks like he’s outmatched. But looks can be deceiving and ultimately Jesus overcomes sin and death through the cross. He’s taken down Goliath. And so he secures victory for us. Just as David stands between the enemy and Israel and secures victory and saves his people. Jesus stands in the gap for us and secures our victory even when his weapons seem inferior. And by the way, both were sent by their father.

And Goliath hints at this like Jonah did. When he sees David with a Shepherd’s staff and sling he says, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?”

David only has one stick – his shepherd’s staff, but perhaps Goliath’s slipup alludes to Jesus without knowing it. Jesus who will come at sin and death with two pieces of wood.

Now, most people who come to this conclusion will caution you. You are not David. You’re the Israelites. Your job is to cower and let God fight your battles for you. Now, as good as that sounds, I can’t get down with that completely. We’re not passive spectators in the kingdom of God. We’re called to Follow.

James tells us that Elijah was a man just like us. Paul tells us that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is in us. Jesus tells us that anyone who has faith in him will do what he’s been doing and more. The New Testament does not expect Spirit filled believers to be cowering Israelites.

2 timothy 1:7 says

For God has not given us a **spirit of fear and timidity**, but **of power, love, and self-discipline**.

So what do we do with this story of David and Goliath? We use it as our example for how God wants us to be part of his kingdom. And there's three things that David does that I want us to see this morning.

## 1) **DAVID SURRENDERS:**

**DAVID IS FIGHTING WHEN NO ONE ELSE WILL – HE'S WILLING TO LAY IT ALL DOWN FOR GOD.**

David Surrenders, not to Goliath, but to God. His whole life is offered in service to God.

He has the heart of Esther who approached the King when it was against the law to do so and says, 'if I die, I die.'

He has the heart of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who say: <sup>17</sup>

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us<sup>[c]</sup> from Your Majesty's hand. <sup>18</sup> But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

He has the heart of Jesus who when facing crucifixion says " "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

*Here's the Takeaway: If you die to self, you'll be free live for God.*

You see, David takes a chance, he takes a risk. He sees Goliath. He feels the fear of his brothers, his king, and his fellow countrymen. But he's willing. He's surrendered. He's prepared to give his life for God.

Most of us will probably go our whole life without having to put our lives on the line for our faith.

But all of us will at various times have to put our reputation, our pride, our dreams, our finances, our comforts, our self-interests on the line for Jesus. Only when we're dead to self can we be freed to live for God.

How many times have you missed the opportunity to join the fight because you've been too scared of the risks? I know I'm guilty of it.

## 2) **DAVID TRUSTS GOD:**

**GOLIATH TRUSTS IN HIS OWN POWER, DAVID TRUSTS IN GOD.**

Someone once said that David has to overcome three Goliaths. First, he overcomes his oldest brother's doubts who sees David and says:

"Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle."

Then, David overcomes Saul's doubts who says:

"You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

And this happens, doesn't it? When we are at a point of critical faith and trust in God and all of the sudden there are doubts – sometimes from the people who are closest to us. They doubt our intentions,

they get us wrong, and we're wounded from the ones we needed support from. It's almost like there's a spiritual battle taking place behind the scenes, right?

And others doubt our fitness. "Are you sure you're right person for the job? I'm not sure this is the right fit for you. Let someone else, with more experience go first. Aren't you a little young?"

But notice David's confidence doesn't come from self-esteem. He's not Goliath. Goliath is confident in himself. He's confident in his position, in his size, in his armor, and in his weapons. And that's his downfall. He's so confident that he underestimates David and his defenses are down.

David's confidence comes from remembering who God is and what God has done and his ability to see how he fits into this story. Look what he says to Saul (TWO SLIDES)

<sup>34</sup> But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, <sup>35</sup> I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. <sup>36</sup> Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. <sup>37</sup> The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."

You see David looks back on what God has done in his life. He looks back on the battles he's fought before. He looks back on the character of God. He's the LORD. He's Yahweh. He's the living God. He's the rescuer. And He's worked through me before. He can do it again.

The next thing Saul does, is he tries to dress him in Saul's armor.

<sup>38</sup> Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. <sup>39</sup> David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

Notice the parallels – the coat of armor, the bronze helmet, Saul's dressing David like Goliath. And David takes it off. He gets his staff, his sling, and five stones. What's he doing? He's looking at his Gifts, his abilities, his experiences, and he's saying, "No, I think this is how God wants to use me."

I love that. He's not looking at Goliath and forcing himself to fit this mold the way that Saul is. Saul looks at Goliath and he thinks, "Well, David's going to need armor and weapons if he's going to defeat Goliath." But David trusts that God has given him exactly what he needs already – he doesn't need to fit someone else's perception of what a warrior should look like.

And so people will doubt us because we don't look the way they imagined, because we're not the right gender, because we're not the right age, because we're not the right size, because we don't have the right tools, because we don't have the right education or experience.

The same thing happens when Goliath sees David:

<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. <sup>42</sup> He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him.

Is Goliath mad that David is hotter than he is? No, he's insulted because David doesn't look like a warrior. He's not scary. He's not this weathered, hardened, experienced champion that strikes fear into the hearts of men. He's not what Goliath expects. So he taunts David and curses him and this is how David responds: (TWO SLIDES)

<sup>45</sup> David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. <sup>46</sup> This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. <sup>47</sup> All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

David knows that it's not by sword or spear or even sling that the LORD saves. The Battle is the Lord's. And here's what makes this exceptional: David is a deadly warrior. He's killed a bear, and a lion, he's experienced with a sling, he's known already for being a warrior. But that's not what he's relying on. That's not what he's trusting in. It would've been so tempting for David to be driven by self-esteem but he's not. His courage comes from God.

Appreciate for a moment how David's humility looks different when we consider this. David humbly places his trust in God. Goliath foolishly and pridefully places his trust in his own might. Underdogs don't need to be told to be humble, they know their victory is a longshot. But David's humility doesn't come from his lack of ability, it comes from his fear of God. It comes from a place of wisdom.

*Here's the Takeaway: You don't need the power of the sword as much as you need the power of God.*

In theory, that's something that we can all get behind isn't it? But how does it look in practice? Do we pray more than we prepare? Do we search for God's will more than we analyze any given situation when we're deciding our best course of action? I mean – when you're thinking about marriage or buying a house or choosing a career or applying to college or sharing your faith or quitting your job or confronting your neighbor or filing for divorce – are you looking for God's will and trusting that His way is right and that if you're obedient then he'll provide. Or are you thinking, "Which decision seems most appealing or most practical to me?" How often do we miss out on God's miraculous power and provision because we trust in our own power instead of the power of God.

### **3) DAVID SERVES:**

**DAVID IS FIGHTING "SO THAT THE NATIONS WILL KNOW GOD."**

We see that in his response to Goliath

"the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel." (v.46)

David is serving God. He's living for something greater than himself. David's not saying, "God help me do this courageous and prominent thing so that I can be known, so that I can be recognized, so that I can be influential. So the whole world will know there's a champion in Israel."

David is fighting because He wants God to be known, he wants God to be glorified.

That's the key, isn't it? This isn't a story about how trusting in God is the way to riches and recognition. This isn't a message about how to unlock the universe's hidden path to success.

*Here's the Takeaway: Favor comes when we're passionate for God's purposes.*

If you want to be surrendered to God and trusting in his power because you think that's how you get ahead in this life – you'll be sorely disappointed. As long as your life still revolves around you – you'll never experience what God wants for you. You'll never please God. You'll never know His favor. God chose David because he was, "A man after my heart." David was passionate for God's purposes. He was passionate for the things God was passionate about.

Man, some of my best friends have been people who have said, "If it's important to you, it's important to me." And God is just the same – some of his best friends are people who can say, "If it's important to you, it's important to me." "If it matters to you, it matters to me." "If it breaks your heart, It breaks my heart."

You know, the fact of the matter is, there are Goliaths in our world still. There's fear, there's addiction, there's illness, there's poverty, there's doubt, there's selfish ambition, pride, violence, tragedy, oppression.

And while Jesus has overcome sin and death and made salvation possible, the world still experiences the effects of sin and a daily struggle with evil.

Ephesians tells us there is a fight – not against flesh and blood but against evil spiritual forces. Theologically, each of us has three enemies: Satan, Sin, and Self. If we want to overcome those Goliaths, we need to have the right weapons. Not the sword, but the power of God. And if we want to experience God's kingdom, the way it's meant to be experienced, we need to do three things:

We surrender our lives to God.

We trust in God, not ourselves.

And we serve God's purposes.