

CHAPTER 30

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST SAMUEL 30

This chapter relates the condition Ziklag was in when David and his men came to it, the city burnt, and their families carried captive by the Amalekites, which occasioned not only a general lamentation, but mutiny and murmuring in David's men, (^{<OR1>}1 Samuel 30:1-6); the inquiry David made of the Lord what he should do, who is bid to pursue the enemy; and being directed by a lad where they were, fell upon them, and routed them, and brought back the captives with a great spoil, (^{<OR2>}1 Samuel 30:7-20); the distribution of the spoil, both to those that went with him, and to those who through faintness were left behind, (^{<OR3>}1 Samuel 30:21-25); and the presents of it he sent to several places in the tribe of Judah, who had been kind to him when he dwelt among them, (^{<OR4>}1 Samuel 30:26-31).

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag, on the third day,* etc.] Either from their departure from thence, when they went out with Achish, or rather from the time of their leaving Achish, and the camp of the Philistines; so long they were upon their march homewards, (see ^{<OR5>}2 Samuel 1:1,2); and no wonder, if it was the distance of eighty eight miles, (see Gill on "^{<OR6>}1 Samuel 29:11");

that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag; the southern parts of the land of the Philistines, and of Judah, as appears from (^{<OR7>}1 Samuel 30:14); taking the opportunity of the Philistines being gone into the land of Israel, and particularly of David's absence from Ziklag, to whom they bore a grudge for his invasion, destruction, and spoil of them not long ago, (see ^{<OR8>}1 Samuel 27:8);

and smitten Ziklag, and burnt it with fire; not that they smote the inhabitants of it, there were no men in it, and the women and children they carried captive; but they demolished the buildings in it, pulled down the houses after they had rifled them, and burnt them with fire, that David and his men might dwell there no more.

Ver. 2. *And had taken the women captives, that [were] therein,* etc.] There being no other to take, the men were gone with David:

they slew not any, either great or small; that is, of the women, whether married or unmarried, old, or maidens, or children; which was very much, since David destroyed all that came within his reach, men and women, when he invaded them, (¹⁰⁷⁰1 Samuel 27:9); but perhaps this was not owing to their humanity, but to their covetousness, designing to make an advantage of them by selling them for slaves; no doubt they were restrained by the providence of God:

but carried [them] away, and went on their way; homewards with their captives.

Ver. 3. *So David and his men came to the city*, etc.] Or however to the place where it had stood, and where it now lay in ruins:

and, behold, [it was] burnt with fire; the whole city was laid in ashes:

and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives; as it appeared afterwards; for upon their first coming they knew not but they were all destroyed; and which they might reasonably suppose from their former treatment of them, unless there were any left upon the spot which could inform them how things were, which does not appear, and which must make their distress the greater.

Ver. 4. *Then David and the people that [were] with him lifted up their voice*, etc.] In doleful shrieks, and loud lamentations:

and wept, until they had no more power to weep; till nature was quite exhausted, and no moisture left; so the Vulgate Latin version, “till tears failed in them”; they could shed no more.

Ver. 5. *And David's two wives were taken captives*, etc.] Which is observed as one cause of his particular distress, and another follows in (¹⁰⁸⁰1 Samuel 30:6):

Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite: that is, who had been his wife; for he was now dead, (¹⁰⁵⁰1 Samuel 25:39), and was so before she was married to David; both these came with him to Gath, and were left at Ziklag when he went with Achish, and here they were taken; (see ¹⁰⁵⁰1 Samuel 25:42,43 27:3).

Ver. 6. *And David was greatly distressed*, etc.] Partly for the loss of his two wives, and partly because of the mutiny and murmuring of his men:

for the people spake of stoning him; as the Israelites did of Moses and Aaron, (^{<0440>}Numbers 14:10); the reason of this was, because, as they judged, it was owing to David that they went along with Achish, and left the city defenceless, and because he had provoked the Amalekites by his inroad upon them, who took this opportunity of avenging themselves. Abarbinel is of opinion that it was his excess of sorrow for his two wives, and his remissness and backwardness to take vengeance on their enemies, that provoked them, and put them on talking after this manner:

because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters; as well as David; and they were very desirous of recovering them if possible, and of taking vengeance on those who had carried them captive:

but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God; took all patiently, and exercised faith on his God; he encouraged himself in the power and providence of God; in the promises of God, and his faithfulness in keeping them; in a view of his covenant relation to God; in remembrance of the grace, mercy, and goodness of God, and his former experiences of it; hoping and believing that God would appear for him in some way or another, and work salvation for him. The Targum is,

“he strengthened himself in the Word of the Lord his God;”

in Christ the Word of God, and in the power of his might, and in the grace that is in him, (^{<0160>}Ephesians 6:10 ^{<0511>}2 Timothy 2:1).

Ver. 7. *And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son*, etc.] The son of Ahimelech, who was slain at Nob by the order of Saul, (^{<0229>}1 Samuel 22:19); and Abiathar his son, who fled to David with the ephod, on the death of his father, (^{<0220>}1 Samuel 22:20), was now high priest in his room; and who it seems was with David when he went with Achish, and returned with him; for had he been left at Ziklag, he and his ephod, in all probability, had been carried off by the Amalekites, unless we can suppose him under the protection of a special providence: it is much David had not inquired of the Lord by him about his going with Achish; perhaps the present disaster brought to mind that neglect, and made him the more diligent now:

I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod; not to put it on himself, but that the high priest might put it on, and inquire by it before him of the Lord:

and Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David; for the sake of David, that inquiry might be made before him of the Lord by Urim and Thummim.

Ver. 8. *And David inquired of the Lord*, etc.] That is, by Abiathar, who reported his questions to the Lord in his name:

saying, shall I pursue after this troop? the large company of the Amalekites, as it appears by what follows they were:

shall I overtake them? two questions are here put together, and answers returned to them, contrary to a notion of the Jews; (see Gill on “^{<0231>}1 Samuel 23:11”);

and he answered him, pursue; which respects the first question:

for thou shalt surely overtake [them]; which is an answer to the second question, and a full one, giving full assurance of overtaking; to which is added more than what was inquired about;

and without fail recover [all]; their wives, sons, and daughters, and the spoil that was taken; or “in delivering thou shalt deliver”^{f555}, out of the hands of the Amalekites, whatsoever they had taken.

Ver. 9. *So David went, he and the six hundred men that [were] with him*, etc.] Encouraged by the oracle of the Lord:

and came to the brook Besor; which Adrichomius^{f556} places in the tribe of Simeon; it is thought to be near Gaza. Aristaeus^{f557} speaks of brooks that flowed by Gaza and Ashdod, places that belonged to the Philistines; some take it to be the river of the wilderness in Amos, (see Gill on “^{<3034>}Amos 6:14”):

where those that were left behind stayed: or a part of them were left, as the Targum; all the six hundred came to this brook, but two hundred of them were left here, (^{<0310>}1 Samuel 30:10) shows, and stayed here till the rest returned; for this is not to be understood of any that were left behind at Ziklag, for all came from thence to this brook.

Ver. 10. *But David pursued, he and four hundred men*, etc.] Not discouraged with being obliged to leave a third part of his little army behind; though it was doubtless a trial of his faith, with these to pursue an enemy, whose numbers he knew not, which must greatly exceed his; for

after the rout and slaughter of them, as many escaped on camels as David had with him, (^{
}1 Samuel 30:17);

for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint; through their grief and sorrow for the loss of their wives and children, and through their march from the camp of the Philistines to Ziklag, and from thence hither, that they looked like a corpse, as the word signifies; Procopius Gazaeus has it only seventy men:

so that they could not go over the brook Besor: being so weak and feeble; for this was not owing to fear of their enemies, and faint heartedness on that account, then it would rather have been said, “they would not go over”; the Targum renders the word “faint” by “restrained” or prohibited, as if they were forbid by David to go over, but were ordered to tarry here by the stuff, while the rest pursued; and, according to the Syriac and Arabic versions, they were placed there, that none might go over the brook; and it seems, by (^{
}1 Samuel 30:22), that they had a good will to go over, but were made to abide there; or as all Gideon’s army, but three hundred, were sent back, and not suffered to go with him, being too many, (^{
}Judges 7:2-8).

Ver. 11. *And they found an Egyptian in the field*, etc.] As they passed along, lying there, having been sick, and was half starved, almost dead:

and brought him to David; to know what was to be done with him; being in the habit of a soldier, they concluded he might be one of the company they were in pursuit of; but whether they should kill him, or make use of him for intelligence and as a guide, could they bring him to himself, they knew not, and therefore brought him to David:

and gave him bread, and he did eat, and they made him drink water; both which they had with them for their own use; had he been an Amalekite, and not an Egyptian, they might not have relieved or spared him, but must have destroyed him at once; (see ^{
}Deuteronomy 25:19).

Ver. 12. *And they gave him a piece of cake of figs*, etc.] That were dried and pressed together, and made into cakes:

and two clusters of raisins; or dried grapes, as the Targum:

and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him; he seemed to be quite dispirited, almost lifeless, but upon eating some food he was refreshed, and his spirits revived, and he was capable of conversing:

for he had eaten no bread, nor drank [any] water, three days and three nights; that is, one whole day, and part of two days, as appears from (^{<0813>}1 Samuel 30:13).

Ver. 13. *And David said unto him, to whom [belongest] thou?* etc.] To what country or people? and to whom among them?

and whence [art] thou? of what nation? where wast thou born? what countryman art thou? for his being called an Egyptian before seems to be by anticipation, unless it was guessed at by his habit; for until he had eaten and drank he could not speak, and so could not be known by his speech:

for he said, I [am] a young man of Egypt; that was the country he belonged to, and came from; he was an Egyptian by birth:

servant to an Amalekite; one of those that had invaded the country, and burnt Ziklag, as it follows:

and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick; which was very barbarous and cruel to leave him at all, when they had camels with them, (^{<0817>}1 Samuel 30:17); and no doubt carriages for their arms, provision, and spoil, and men; and more so to leave him without anybody with him to take care of him, and without any food, when he capable of eating any; but so it was ordered by the providence of God, that should be left to be the instrument of the just ruin of his master, and of the whole troop.

Ver. 14. *We made an invasion [upon] the south of the Cherethites*, etc.] The Philistines so called, or at least one nation of them, such that dwelt to the south of the land, (^{<0816>}1 Samuel 30:16); (see Gill on "^{<3015>}Zephaniah 2:5");

and upon [the coast] which [belongeth] to Judah; the south of Judah, where David pretended he had been, and had spoiled, and which was now actually done by the Amalekites, (^{<0270>}1 Samuel 27:10);

and upon the south of Caleb; that part of the tribe of Judah which belonged to Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and his posterity, and which was the southern part of it, (^{<659>}Joshua 15:19);

and we burnt Ziklag with fire; and then departed.

Ver. 15. *And David said unto him, canst thou me down to this company?* etc.] That is, show him, or direct him where they were:

and he said, swear unto me by God; the Targum is, by the Word of the Lord; but it is highly probable this man had no notion of Jehovah, and his Word, or of the true God; only that there was a God, and that an oath taken by him was solemn, sacred, and inviolable, and might be trusted to and depended on:

that thou wilt neither kill me; for he found now he was in the hands of those whose city he had been concerned in plundering and burning, and so might fear his life was in danger:

nor deliver me into the hands of my master; who had been a cruel one to him, and therefore would gladly be clear of him; and if he had nothing else against him, his late usage of him was sufficient to raise his resentment of him:

and I will bring thee down to this company; or show him where they were, having heard them say where they would stop, and make merry, and divide their spoil; and perhaps his master might tell him they would be at such a place at such a time, where, if he was better, he might come to them; the Vulgate Latin version adds, “and David swore to him”: which, though not expressed in the original text, was no doubt done by him; and the Syriac and Arabic versions begin (¹1 Samuel 30:16) thus, “when David had sworn to him”.

Ver. 16. *And when he had brought him down*, etc.] To the place where the company of the Amalekites were, or near it:

behold, [they were] spread abroad upon all the earth; they were not in any regular order, and much less in any military form, but lay about in the fields, scattered here and there, were in detached parties:

some eating and drinking; in one place:

and dancing; others, in another place, expressing their joy, and perhaps their thankfulness to their idols

because of the great spoil they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah; from Ziklag, and from the south of the

Cherethites, and the south of Judah, they had invaded, (^{Q114}1 Samuel 30:14); and here they were in the greatest security; knowing: that the armies of the Philistines were gone into the land of Israel, and were about to engage in battle with the Israelites, and David they supposed was with the Philistines, so that they had nothing to fear from any quarter; and thus it is often, that when men cry peace, peace, sudden destruction comes upon them.

Ver. 17. *And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day*, etc.] As there are two twilights, the twilight of the morning, and the twilight of the evening; this is differently understood some take it for the twilight of the morning, and that it was night when David came to them, and let them alone till they were drunk and asleep, and then early in the morning fell upon them, and smote them until the evening; so Josephus ^{f558} relates it; but others take it to be the twilight of the evening, and that he fell upon them that night, and continued the slaughter of them to the evening of the next day, with which agrees the Targum; nay, some take the next day, or the morrow, to be that which followed after the two evenings; so that this slaughter was carried on to the third day:

and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men that rode upon camels, and fled; that sort of camels called dromedaries, according to Josephus ^{f559}, and which were very swift, and much used by the Arabians, near whom these people dwelt, (see ^{Q116}Isaiah 60:6 ^{Q123}Jeremiah 2:23).

Ver. 18. *And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away*, etc.] The wives and children of the Israelites, and their goods, excepting the provisions they had eaten:

and David rescued his two wives; which is particularly observed, because a special concern of his.

Ver. 19. *And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters*, etc.] Not any of the least or youngest, nor any of them that were grown up; for as these were not slain but carried captive, so they were brought back, and not one missing, (see ^{Q114}1 Samuel 30:2);

neither spoil, nor any [thing] they had taken to them: except the food they had eaten and the liquor they had drank, as before observed; and perhaps what they had ate and drank were none of theirs, but the Philistines: so that

David recovered all; taken in the utmost extent.

Ver. 20. *And David took all the flocks, and the herds*, etc.] Which they had taken from the land of the Philistines, or which belonged to the Amalekites properly:

[which] they drove before those [other] cattle; which had been carried from Ziklag; first went the spoil taken from other places, and then those taken from David and his men, or what was found at Ziklag. Abarbinel supposes the meaning to be this, that the herds were driven before the flocks, that the oxen were led out first, and then the sheep followed, as being the weaker sort, and more easily to be driven, and carried off; but the former sense seems best:

and said, this [is] David's spoil; either the whole of it, it being owing to him that it was got or brought back; or this may respect some peculiar part of it made a present of to him; or it may design what the Amalekites had taken from others, which was at the disposal of David, as distinguished from what was taken from Ziklag, and was restored, or to be restored to the proper owners: it may be taken in the first and more general sense, as being the song, or the burden of the song, sung by David's men as they returned with the spoil, giving him all the honour of it, of whom, but a little before, they talked of stoning.

Ver. 21. *And David came to the two hundred men*, etc.] Left at the brook Besor:

who were so faint that they could not follow David; or, as the Targum, were restrained from going over after him; either through faintness of spirits, and weakness of body, or through the order of David that they should not follow him; and which seems to receive some countenance from what follows:

whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor; to guard the passage there, and to tarry by and keep the stuff:

and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that [were] with him; to congratulate them upon the victory they had obtained, and to see and receive their wives and children, and what portion of the spoil might be divided to them:

and when David came near to the people, he saluted them; asked them of their welfare, whether they were in better health, and recovered of their faintness and weakness, as it should seem they were, by their coming forth to meet him.

Ver. 22. *Then answered all the wicked men, and [men] of Belial, of those that went with David*, etc.] Who were ill natured men, and of covetous dispositions, as what is called their answer shows; and it seems by that as if the two hundred men had moved that they might have their share in the spoil, or that David had given some intimation that they should:

and said, because they went not with us, we will not give, them [ought] of the spoil that we have recovered: which was very unreasonable not to let them have what was before their own which was recovered; and indeed it was but right they should have their share in the spoil that was taken which was of others, as will appear hereafter: but they were of opinion and were come to a resolution, they should have no more,

save to every man his wife and his children; which was very unkind and ungenerous:

that they may lead [them] away, and depart; but whither? Ziklag was burnt, the land of Israel they would not return unto, where they must fall a sacrifice to Saul; these men cared not where they went, so that they were rid of them, that they might not have any share with them in the spoil.

Ver. 23. *Then said David, ye shall not do so, my brethren*, etc.] Though he saw through their wickedness, and disapproved of the bad sentiments they had embraced, yet he deals gently with them, calling them brethren, being of the same nation and religion, and his fellow soldiers; yet at the same time keeps up and maintains his dignity and authority as a general, and declares it should not be as they willed, and gives his reasons for it, that it was not fit they should do as they pleased:

with that which the Lord hath given us; what they had was given them, and therefore, as they had freely received, they should freely give; and what was given them, was not given to them only, but to the whole body, by the Lord:

who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand; it was not by their own power and might that they got the victory over the enemy, and the spoil into their hands, but it was through

the Lord only; and therefore, as they should not assume the honour of the victory to themselves, so neither should they claim the spoil as wholly belonging to them.

Ver. 24. *For who will hearken unto you in fit is matter?*, etc.] No wise and just man will take on your side of the question, and join with you in excluding your brethren from a share in the spoil:

but as his part [is] that goeth down to the battle, so [shall] his part [be] that tarrieth by the stuff; as these two hundred men did; they were placed to abide by and watch the carriages, the bag and baggage the rest had left there, that they might be the lighter, and make their pursuit more swiftly: besides, they guarded the pass here, and were also exposed to danger; for if the four hundred had been cut off, and the enemy had returned, they must all have perished; and therefore as they had their post assigned them, and were liable to danger, it was but just and reasonable they should have the share in the spoil; especially since it was not want of will in them they did not go with them, but weakness of body:

they shall part alike; this was David's determination and decision, and it was an equitable one: something similar to this was directed by the Lord in the war of Midian, (^{<08125>}Numbers 31:25), etc. and was practised in the times of Abraham, (^{<01424>}Genesis 14:24); and is agreeable to the light of nature, and what has been practised by the Heathens, particularly the Romans, as Polybius ^{f560} relates; who tells us, that every man brought booty into the camp, when the tribunes divided it equally to them all; not only to those which remained in battle, but to those that guarded the tents and the baggage, to the sick, and to those that were appointed to any service, (see ^{<08812>}Psalms 68:12); and so the Turkish historian says ^{f561}, that the Pisidians, who lived on spoil, gave a part not contemptible to those that abode at home with their wives.

Ver. 25. *And it was [so] from that day forward*, etc.] Or "upwards" ^{f562}, of old, formerly; and so may refer either to what was done at the war with Midian, (^{<08127>}Numbers 31:27); or in the times of Abraham, (^{<01423>}Genesis 14:23,24); and so Jarchi observes, it is not said, "henceforward", but "upwards", it being a statute and custom in the days of Abraham; the same he notes on (^{<01424>}Genesis 14:24); where he, David, learnt this from thence; though Josephus ^{f563} is express for it, that this law obtained from the time of David; and such was his authority, though as yet not king, but a wise and just commander:

that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day; it appeared so reasonable and equitable, that it was always regarded and attended to.

Ver. 26. *And when David came to Ziklag*, etc.] Perhaps with an intention to rebuild it, and make it still the place of his residence; and it is possible there might be some houses that escaped flames, and if not, tents might be pitched until the city was rebuilt, and it appears that he continued there some time:

he sent of the spoil to the elders of Judah: of that part of it which belonged to himself as a general:

[even] to his friends; such as had been kind to him when he sojourned among them; so that this was a piece of gratitude, as well as of policy in him, to make his way to the throne the easier, he perceiving the time drawing on for the expiration of the kingdom in the family of Saul; and besides, some in those parts he sent of the spoil to might have been sufferers by the Amalekites, so that it was but a point of justice to restore to them what had been taken from them; for they had invaded the south of Judea, and took spoils from thence, (^{
}1 Samuel 30:14-16); it was to his friends in those parts he sent, not to the inhabitants of Ziph and Keilah, which were places in the tribe of Judah; but these having attempted to betray him, were not entitled to his favours, though they were not the objects of his vengeance:

saying, behold, a present for you, of the spoil of the Lord's enemies; or a "blessing"^{f564}, which he sent them with a good will, wishing health and happiness to them; which they might without hesitation receive, seeing it was not the spoil of private enemies, or of what was taken from them in a way of private revenge, but the spoil of the enemies of the Lord, his and their common enemies; nor need they scruple eating and enjoying it, though the spoil of those that cursed the Lord, Abarbinel observes, since this they had with the blessing of the Lord.

Ver. 27. *To [them] which [were] in Bethel*, etc.] One part of the spoil was sent to them; not to those in Bethel, in the tribe of Benjamin, but in Kirjathjearim, called Bethel, or the house of God, because the ark was there, (see ^{
}1 Samuel 7:1 10:3); moreover, this place was also called Baalah, which some think is referred to here, (see ^{
}Joshua 15:9);

and to [them] which [were] in south Ramoth; a city of the tribe of Simeon, which lay within the lot of Judah; of which (see ^{<6908>}Joshua 19:8);

and to [them] which [were] in Jattir; a city of the tribe of Judah, (see Gill on ^{<6658>}Joshua 15:48”).

Ver. 28. *And to [them] which [were] in Aroer*, etc.] Not Aroer in the tribe of Gad beyond Jordan, where David is never said to be, but some city of this name in the tribe of Judah; the Greek version of (^{<6652>}Joshua 15:22), instead of Adadah, has Arouel:

and to [them] which [were] in Siphmoth; which very probably was in the tribe of Judah, though nowhere else mentioned:

and to [them] which [were] in Eshtemoa; a Levitical city given to the Levites by the children of Judah, (^{<6214>}Joshua 21:14).

Ver. 29. *And to [them] which [were] in Rachal*, etc.] Another city of the tribe of Judah, but nowhere else spoken of:

and to [them] which [were] in the cities of the Jerahmeelites: which lay to the south of Judah, (^{<6270>}1 Samuel 27:10);

and to [them] which [were] in the cities of the Kenites; who dwelt in the wilderness of Judah, in the south of Arad, (^{<6016>}Judges 1:16).

Ver. 30. *And to [them] which [were] in Hormah*, etc.] This was a city also in the tribe of Judah; of which (see ^{<6650>}Joshua 15:30);

and to [them] which [were] in Chorashan; or the lake of Ashan, which was in the same tribe, (see ^{<6650>}Joshua 15:42);

and to [them] which [were] in Athach; nowhere else mentioned; the Greek version has Nombe instead of it, which some take to be the same with Nob; but that was in the tribe of Benjamin.

Ver. 31. *And to [them] which [were] in Hebron*, etc.] A noted city in the tribe of Judah, in the mountainous part of it, and a city of refuge, and where David was afterwards anointed, first king over Judah, and then over Israel, (^{<6103>}2 Samuel 2:4 5:3);

and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt; where they had their walks, and went to and fro when persecuted by Saul; all such places, and the inhabitants of them, David had a grateful

remembrance of, who sheltered and relieved him in the times of his distress.