

## Second Samuel Chapter 1 - John Karmelich

Most of us can recall the time when someone significant in our lives died. Not only must we reflect on their deaths, but also how will it impact our future! In this chapter David finds out Saul (King of Israel) is dead. David also knew that years ago a prophet (Samuel) told David he will be the next king. Along with Saul, David also lost his best friend (Saul's son) in that battle! It is interesting ancient history, but that's not the main reason it's in the bible. The story here teaches us a little about how to properly deal with major news and how to reflect upon it. I realize it doesn't apply to each of us daily. Still, dealing with a significant death's a part of all our lives and the lessons from this chapter can help all of us deal with things like this when it occurs!

The chapter focuses on a few key points: 1) David finding out Saul and his son Jonathan are dead! We read of David "killing the messenger" not for the news, but for either lying about what occurred or just the fact he thought David would be pleased by it. The guy who brought the news was an Amalekite, an enemy of the Jewish people and God ordered in the bible that this group had to go! 2) After all that the second half of Chapter 1's a poem David wrote to honor both Saul and Jonathan. For the newcomers, I need you to realize David spent years on the run from Saul, still David realized many people respected him as the leader, so it was a good idea to write this dirge and even to spread copies of it around Israel! Keep in mind that 73 of the 150 Psalms are associated with David, so "writing is what he did!"

Before I get into all of that, let me talk a little about 2nd Samuel as a whole! Keep in mind both 1st and 2nd are in effect one book. They're named after Samuel (who dies in "1") because he anointed both the first king (Saul) and second king (David). Samuel was first "big prophet" in Israel. As best we can tell the books were split in two, as they were too big for one scroll! The split was at good spot as Saul died in the last chapter of "1" and "2" covers the years David was king. Consider that the Bible tells us more about David's life than anyone else and "close" to Jesus in details. David was a key ancestor of Jesus as in this book God tells David he'll be the father of a line of kings that will lead to the Messiah coming in the world! While "1" dealt with the life of Samuel, Saul and David, "2" is on David's rise to power and it ends with his death at the end of the book. I've love explaining the fact that Saul's a model of fear (he didn't fight Goliath and died by suicide as two prime examples). David's a model of faith despite all of the mistakes he makes! David lives to an old age as we'll see by the end of this book. "2" mostly takes place in Jerusalem other than the start of the book. If you don' know, the authors of "1" and "2" were a handful of prophets including Samuel as told in Chronicles.

OK then, back to Chapter 1. You may recall from the last part of "1" a war was brewing between Israel and the Philistines (an enemy living in their land). While that occurred David lead 600 men to fight the Amalekites a nomad tribe that lived south of Israel. That group raided David's hometown and took the women and children captive. Anyway. David defeated them, got all their stuff back and returned to his hometown. On his third day back (things had quieted down by then) someone showed up to tell David about Saul and Jonathan's death. This messenger was dressed like someone in mourning! I am sure he was thinking he'd be rewarded for bringing that news! Here we read the story of Saul's death from that messenger's perspective. A question will arise if he's telling the truth! Let me continue:

In the last chapter of "1" it clearly said that Saul died by falling on his own sword in battle. This guy is saying Saul was still alive after doing that, and this messenger "finished the job" as Saul was in pain! It is debated if he was telling the truth or not. The main point is this Amalekite knew Saul was king. He's also aware that Jonathan was dead as well. In the later part of "1", Saul led the Israelites to fight those Amalekites and killed lots of them! I'm sure the messenger knew that history!

After this guy told David where the battle took place, he also gave David Saul's crown. Again, he was thinking he'd be rewarded for this. As I said the chapter focuses on David's reaction to all this! David then ripped his clothes (a Jewish way of mourning) plus other things such as weeping and fasting. All of his men had the same reaction. Remember they're Israelites so it wasn't just the loss of the king, but the loss of that war!

This led to David questioning the messenger. He asks about his background and finds out that he is an Amalekite. Since this guy knew Saul was the king, David asked why he wasn't afraid to kill him? The short version is David had him killed after that. So whether or not he was telling the truth, either way it was a death sentence as he either killed Saul or took his stuff thinking that would please David. A key point is David did the research, and made a proper decision based on it. Obviously, it doesn't mean for us to "kill the messenger", just to react in proper ways about dealing with tough news.

The last 10 verses of this 27-verse chapter was the "dirge" David wrote to honor Saul and Jonathan. It says the dirge should be taught in the land of Judah. Remember that Israel was divided geographically into 12 areas, one per tribe. David couldn't live where he was (in Philistine territory) anymore now that he will be king of Israel. David's next logical step was to increase his popularity in Judah, the area that David was a part of within Israel. Therefore, he wrote the poem and copies were sent all of Judah.

After an introduction, the text says for the Philistines not to rejoice over this victory. I am sure David is trying to encourage his brethren after this tough defeat! The idea is God will always be victorious after we turn back to Him so the song was meant to be encouraging. The text has lines remembering Saul as a leader as well as Jonathan. Remember how hard Saul tried to kill David in "1"? He's telling Israelites in effect, no hard feelings about Saul. I'd rather focus on the good he did and the fact he was king! We read how they fought together to the death for Israel and that is what should be remembered. We get no "That idiot wasted years trying to kill me" but positive thoughts of the good he did! David is acting this way is he wants people in Judah to respect him. Think like a funeral, it is easy to find fault! It is better that "good things" be remembered at death.

As far as Jonathan, the poem mentions how David loved him more than any woman. It is not meant in any sort in homosexual feelings. The original Hebrew is clear on that. It just means David considered Jonathan his best friend even though they were separated the probably the last decade of their lives. It is a great way to respect someone one is close to. For what it's worth I believe it is essential in life for adults to develop good friendships. I read that one should "shop for friends" like "shopping for a wife" (male perspective) and I believe that! I've got friends who I have been close with for decades and I am grateful for them as much as David was for Jonathan.

As far as the dirge, I think since David was sharing this with those in his country, he wanted to show it was no "hard feelings" Saul's son was dead and in fact, David loved him as a friend.

OK John, nice story about Saul's death and how David handled it. We can see David made good moves in terms of gaining political favor in that area. We can see he grieved the loss of his best friend and we see he held no bad feelings over the man who spent probably over a decade trying to kill him. Time to ask how does any of this affect us? Obviously, you can see Godly wisdom on how to deal with a tough bit of news. Death is something we all must deal with, and the bible gives us lessons on handling stuff most of us would struggle with. There's no easy way to deal with this kind of bad news. It's the kind of thing one must grieve their way through, and then make the best decisions we can with the information at hand. Hope that helps.

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! If you'd like you can read the rest or stop now. Either way, I'm grateful for you reading this. To see the other one, click on one of the two links on this web page. Thanks again, John