

## Second Samuel Chapter 21 - John Karmelich

For those of you who know me, I'm endlessly fascinated by Bible "structure". For example, there are 4 chapters at the end of this book that took place earlier in David's life. So why are they here? Why does God want us to know this stuff in essence at the end of David's story (the main subject of 2nd Samuel)? In other words, when we study a text we ponder, how does that affect my life right now?"

I bring this up as we'll see David deal with his problems asking God for guidance, and in the next case, having other people help him. In other words, when we got a problem, and we don't know how to deal with, our first response should be to ask God, "What's the deal? What do I do next?" Of course David's problems are not our problems nor was his solutions our solutions! Still, what we are to learn here isn't about the specifics of his problems, but how to deal with problems as we go through life. I think this is part of the "addendum" to the book because after we go through a book like this, we still have our own issues to deal with and God's reminding us He's still interested in guiding us just as He guided David. I would say with that out of my system, let's discuss the chapter itself:

The chapter opens with three years of drought and David realized, "This is a problem, let me bring it to God to see what the issue is!" David didn't get a response through one of the prophets. God somehow spoke to David directly to say in effect, "Back when Saul was alive, he and his sons broke a vow Israel made to a nation called the Gibeonites (back in the days of Joshua), that they would spare that group as to keep Israel's promise even after that group lied about their situation to Joshua. The issue is about us keeping our word no matter what! The Gibeonites required seven of Saul's descendants be killed to end the plague! A few thoughts: It doesn't mean to end the drought the world had like the summer of 2022 by find descendants of Saul to kill! Scholars also debate about the fact God's law states the children are not to be punished for parent's sins! (Deuteronomy 24:16). The text in Chapter 21 implies Saul's family took part in that crime! I'd argue God punishes the guilty, but it misses the point I'm focusing on: That is when we have problems, we got to start with turning to God and saying, "What's the deal?"

Obviously, God doesn't verbalize answers to us but it's good to do an "unconfessed sin inventory" as a first step when a problem occurs! God will sometimes do things to get our attention. We may not get an immediate solution, but making God the center of our lives is always the first step in dealing with a problem!

Meanwhile back to David: The Gibeonites told him to end the drought they require seven men killed of Saul's family. Therefore, this took place sometime (probably soon after the war where Saul died which was the last chapter of 1st Samuel). I suspect David was thinking, "I need this drought to end the water shortage for my country, if it means seven men must die, who am I to argue with God?" Obviously that was bad news for those men and next the text discusses mother of the dead men and how she dealt with it! Sometimes what God asks us to do to deal with a problem is painful! Still if it's the obvious solution and good things will occur if we take that hard step, we must go forward! Of course we don't know the future, but often trial and error is the way God wants to move forward through an issue!

The text mentions how David spared Jonathan's crippled son, as David promised him he'd be taken care of out of his respect for his late friend Jonathan. It's mentioned to show David wouldn't violate an oath to keep another one! The men to be sacrificed were named by name! For all I know they all may be in heaven as the eternal life is more important than what one was done in this one! One of the seven who were killed had the same name as David's son just to show it wasn't the same one that God is aware the sacrifice made here to end that plague!

The story switches to focus on the mother of some of the men who died. She wore sackcloth (that is an uncomfortable garment worn as a sign of mourning that culture). The text implies she was there from a date in the spring (when the harvest took place as mentioned) till the fall (when a separate crop's taken) to imply she was there for a long time! The text also stated she was there when rain came back (in the fall) implying the sacrifice of those men "paid off"! Another reminder God works on His timing!

David also got word that this woman sat there for a long time. He decided something needs to be done to honor her for her sacrifice. David ordered the bodies of Saul, his son Jonathan (who both died in the same battle) along with the men who were sacrificed to end the drought, will get their bodies taken to a family grave site! (That's another clue all this took place some time soon after that battle!) It also says that even though the drought was over, David still cared about those who honored God, so he made the effort to move the dead bodies! A reminder to us that even after our problem is solved, we still must go on with the business at hand and help those around us!

That leads to the second story that was combined in this chapter. Again, I asked why is this here? The common denominator is like the last story David "had a problem" that he couldn't solve on his own, so he got help! In the last eight verses of this chapter we learn Goliath (remember him) had a total of four brothers who were also giants. It also answers a great bible trivia question: When David wanted to kill Goliath, the text says he picked five stones to sling! Did it mean he didn't trust God for a first shot kill? Of course not. Many suspect the five stones is because Goliath had four brothers and he wanted to take on the whole family! (See 1st Samuel 17!) Bottom line is whenever this chapter took place, David was no longer the young fighting man, so we see others of David's soldiers who defeated Goliath's brothers in that battle! We don't read of David praying about this. Others just saw David's need, and they took responsibility to do what needed to be done! The point is one way God guides us is to bring others for help to do what needs to be done! We should never let our egos get in the way of letting a person who wants to help, help!

The text also mentions a few facts to verify it was really Goliath's brothers. The fact that a spear one of them used weighed between 6 and 8 pounds (only a big strong man could use). Another unusual fact is that one of them had six fingers on each hand and six toes! So why tell us that? I suspect it's just to tell us he was no ordinary man! Bottom line the evidence supports the fact these four were also giants and were of the same family of Goliath! Again, the underlying issue is David had a problem and he was not afraid to get help to deal with it. A great lesson for all of us.

In summary, of course our problems are not David's problems. The solutions are: To seek God first to guide us through tough situations and be willing to accept help to deal with our problems! That is why this appendix to David's story is here. There's still a few more chapters, that I'll deal with next lesson!

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