

# David and Goliath

Notes for 1 Jun

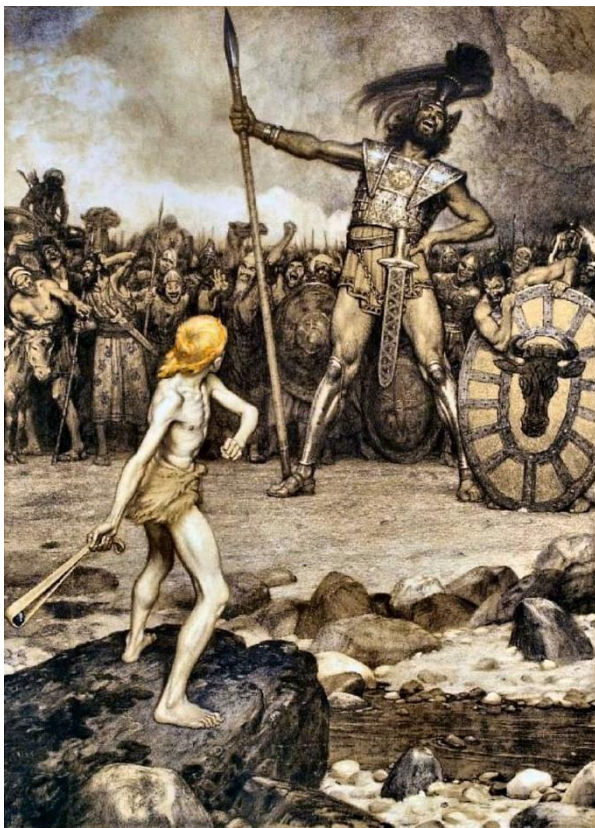
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Read: [1 Samuel 17:1 -58](#)

This is the beloved story from children's bible study classes in Sabbath or Sunday School. Which, when you think about it, is rather odd. David kills Goliath, after much taunting, and then *cuts his head off!*

A useful moral tale, I'm sure...

## The Story



The Philistines are camped on one side of the valley of Elah, with the Israelites on the other. It appears that they might have been there some time. Every day Goliath, the Philistine, comes out to taunt the opposing army, "When are you all coming to fight?!".

David shows up, leaves his belongings with 'the keeper of supplies' and, after some discussion as to what might be in it for himself, ends up before King Saul. An argument ensues but eventually Saul sends David in to battle the giant.

David abandons the king's armour, and selects 5 stones from a stream and heads off. The taunting from Goliath begins. David retorts with a claim that the Lord God of Israel is on *his* side, puts a single stone in his sling and despatches the giant. David cuts off the dead Goliath's head.

The battle is over, the Philistines run away and are roundly slaughtered. Saul calls for David, to try and figure out who he is. David shows up, still carrying the giant's head, and the story is over.

# Discussion

## David's motivation for fighting Goliath

- v26: Not particularly noble (get a reward and a daughter of the King for marriage)?
- Is he really doing this for the glory of God? Or is he wanting to show off? A young arrogant so and so? Read v28 and the comments of David's brother Eliab:  
*"What are you doing around here anyway?" he demanded. "What about those few sheep you're supposed to be taking care of? I know about your pride and deceit. You just want to see the battle!"*
- Similarly to his Psalms - it's all about me?
- In v36 David makes a nobler claim to be acting because of Goliath's disrespect of the 'living God'. In his earlier conversations with the troops he doesn't mention this at all - he seems much more concerned with the potential rewards.
- What has been David's motivation for anything up until this point? What do we know from the opinion of those who knew him. Samuel clearly saw something...?
- In vv45-47 David makes an explicit claim of being a representative of the "Lord of Heaven's Armies - the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" and that Goliath needs to be defeated because of that defiance. What do you think of David's motivations at this point?

## The aftermath

- David gets introduced to Saul. Does he not already know who he is?
- Is the chronology a bit mixed up here? The previous chapter ends with David being the minstrel at court, and being loved by Saul. What's happening here that Saul doesn't appear to know who he is?
- David doesn't give his name - only that he is a son of Jesse.
- What do you think of the theory that Goliath's skull was taken and buried in Jerusalem at the place later known as Golgotha?

## Analysis

Brueggemann presents the whole story as primarily a theological dissertation. The cast, the dialogue and the action is secondary to the theological meaning - ie the details don't particularly matter, what matters is the overall story arc. The story is only about the killing of a giant in passing. It's actually about the transfer of power and legitimacy from Saul to David. What do you think of this?

A recent BBC 'Storyville' documentary was entitled "[Praying for Armageddon](#)". Whilst the documentary is about the power and influence of American Evangelical Christians as they seek to fulfil the Armageddon prophecy, I was struck by some of the language used - 'God needs warriors'. *Does God need warriors?* Should we be standing up for God in our godless world using the same language as David? If not, why not?

What Would Jesus Do??