

# David returns to the Messiah's track

## *1 Samuel 30*

With 'the Messianic track' I mean the road that leads to the coming Christ and on which David portrays the style of the coming Christ. The outline heading implies that David has wandered off that Messianic track. To see how he wandered off that track, you have to go back to the beginning of chapter 27. David decided to seek refuge in the land of the Philistines. Apparently, he simply let himself be guided by his own insight. He did not seek the guidance of the LORD to come to that decision. The direction of his steps did not display a trust in the LORD. Just compare his decision with the words he spoke not long before (see 26:24). Do you notice the difference? Realize also that David already has ventured into this area before (21:10-15). He experienced his return to Israel as a deliverance (Ps 34:5,7). However, now he goes to the Philistines again.

*Question 1: In what respect does David's flight differ from the escape of Joseph and Mary with Jesus to Egypt (Matt 2:14)?*

Things can go from bad to worse if you let yourself be guided by your own insight. David managed to keep himself alive in the land of the Philistines by using cunning and lies (27:10). Following the track of his own choice, David ends up in deep trouble. In chapter 30 we see him, in our mind's eye, standing among the ruins of his dwelling place, while his own men are threatening to kill him. How good it is then, to read about David's return to the LORD (v. 6b). He does not continue to rely on his own insight (vv. 7,8).

### **1. Verses 1-8**

Usually it is assumed that David and his men returned to Ziklag with great relief because they didn't have to fight alongside the Philistines against their own people. Personally, I think that at least David was disappointed. In my opinion, he was serious about joining the Philistines (29:8). In doing so, he obviously intended to choose the side of his own people at a crucial moment during the battle. That is exactly what the Philistine army commanders expected (v. 4). Now that he has been rejected, he is not able to participate in the battle that is of such extreme importance to Israel. You have to understand that it was actually the LORD who prevented David from participating. God wanted this battle to result in defeat for Israel and in the death of Saul. That was his judgment of the dead-end road of Saul's kingship. It was also his judgment of the wrong choice, which his people had made (see introduction to Outline 2).

It appears later that what happened in Ziklag had been an act of revenge committed by the Amalekites (27:8). At the same time God puts David to the test. The threatening attitude of his men serves the same purpose. God desires David's heart. He wants David to seek him once again. That is exactly what happens. When David threatens to lose communion with fellow human beings, he strengthens himself in his communion with God.

*Question 2: Why did David's men turn themselves against David?*

### **2. Verses 9-20**

It has been correctly pointed out by some, that the Egyptian receives a lot of attention in this account. You can even read in much detail about the food and drink that he receives from

David. In this action you can recognize the future shepherd of Israel. This caring style is characteristic of the king anointed by God. This is the Messianic style.

***Question 3:** To what extent do you recognize a portrayal of the Christ in this account? In this context, what parable are you reminded of? How could you apply this to your own task of ministering?*

Notice the words ‘everything’ and ‘nothing’ in verses 18 and 19. Amazement over the goodness of the LORD resounds in those words. God puts his people to the test, but in perfect measure.

### **3. Verses 21-25**

In this beautiful passage you observe again the Messianic style of the future king. Apparently without a problem, David left those 200 men behind (v. 10). Unwillingness cannot be tolerated in the church, but inability is taken into account. God does not press you into fulfilling tasks you are not able to do. Yet, these men who are left behind are not without a task; they have to watch over the parcels so that the others would not have to lug them. And don’t you think that they supported their brethren in prayer? In this manner, both the front-line soldiers and those who are left behind each have their own role in the same battle of the LORD.

***Question 4:** ‘God does not press you into fulfilling tasks you are not able to do.’ How does this correspond with HC, LD 4, Q&A 9?*

David’s announcement of a new rule (v. 25) does not imply that something completely new is introduced here. Once, the LORD gave Moses a command that was written in the same vein (Num 31:25,26). In the book of Joshua we find it too (Josh 22:8). At this point, David makes it an official rule. It is a typical church ruling. The ‘evil men and troublemakers’ want to employ the rule of the world. Among other nations, reserving the spoil only for those who had fought for it was commonplace. You notice that, for instance, in what the king of Sodom says to Abraham in Genesis 14:21. In David’s rejection of this worldly rule we see his concerns for two matters:

- a) In the church everything does not depend on **your own accomplishments** (with the result that the weaker brethren miss the boat). All saints live together, relying on **God’s grace**. The “evil men” would say, “we will not share with them the plunder we have recovered”. David focuses on “what the LORD has given us”. Do you notice the difference?
- b) In the church there ought not to be any individualism (everyone fights for his own possessions). We live in a communion; this means keeping an eye out for each other and being concerned about another’s welfare. Because together we live by God’s grace, we also share with each other in that grace; no one is considered less worthy than another.

Christ, the Son of David, employs the same rule in his kingdom as his forefather David did. All faithful citizens of his kingdom, whether strong or weak, whether ‘first’ or ‘last’, share in the same salvation. That is the case now and after this life.

***Question 5:** In this context, would you be able to mention a parable of the Lord Jesus?*

**Question 6:** *When I spoke about weak brethren who still have a task, what kind of people do you think of?*

**Question 7:** *What are the implications of this account for the way we treat each other in the church? What is the implication of this for your study society?*

#### **4. Verses 26-31**

David's gesture was probably an expression of gratitude for the services that these cities had rendered to him and his men during their wanderings (v. 31). Whoever thought that David is solely concerned about his immediate followers knows better now: other fellow countrymen may also share in the joy. At the same time, the gesture forms a clear indication whose side David is on. While he dwelt among the Philistines it was not always clear that he was on Israel's side. In this manner also, David shows that he is back on the Messianic track.

#### **5. The work of the LORD in this account**

You see how the LORD makes a distinction between Saul and David. Both of them are on the wrong track. If the Messianic kingship were to depend on people, nothing would come of it. However, God turns David away from his own path to bring him back on the right track. Yet the path that Saul chooses leads to death. From this it becomes plain that God is faithful to his promises; the way that leads to Christ runs through David. For that reason God did not forsake David when he was in the land of the Philistines. When you keep in view the wrong tracks that David has followed, you can only exclaim, 'It is pure grace that the LORD is still with David.' That grace is the only basis on which Christ's coming was made possible. And Christ died in order that both you and I may apply that golden rule: everyone may share in that same salvation.

#### **For the introduction**

1. Take note of the name 'Amalek'. It is remarkable that it was precisely the Amalekites who take revenge. After all, David had opposed a number of other nations (27:8). God had already started the court procedure against this nation (see Ex 17:14-16). When David attacks and kills the Amalekites (v. 17), he is fighting the battle of the LORD. It is important that enough attention is paid to this point. Otherwise, all you see is an act of revenge in response to another act of revenge. That could cause some to question David's right to respond in such a harsh manner.
2. Because the battle is the LORD's, the victory belongs to him also. Even though the action of people has a place in this battle, the victory is not the result of human endeavour. Strictly speaking, the LORD has retrieved the spoil in order that he may distribute it again, both to those who fight and those who remain with the baggage. Emphasis lies on the fact that those who remained behind were not deserters. Deserters should not expect the LORD to share his gifts with them!
3. The gifts we receive from Christ could be regarded as 'Divine spoils of war', which is distributed to us. If you get the opportunity, it would be good to explain that. If you do this you should have a good look at Ephesians 4:8 and Psalm 68:19 with the aid of a Bible commentary.

4. It is fruitful to show that David's action (v. 21ff) is in agreement with the law for the king (Deut 17). You could highlight the first words of Deuteronomy 17:20. In this account we clearly see David standing beside his brethren, not exalting himself above them. Also notice his hearty welcome of the brothers who had been left behind (v. 21b). (Incidentally, in verse 23 David also addresses the 'evil men and troublemakers' as 'my brothers'. In doing so he appeals to them, 'Brothers, keep the brotherhood in mind!')
5. You could run ahead to the last outline in this series of outlines, which deals with Psalm 72. This psalm contains elements about David's actions, which you can also encounter in 1 Samuel 30. I will not mention them at this point; eventually, you can probably find them yourself.

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