

July 17, 2016
1 Samuel 17
"Israel's Champion"
Rich Lusk

1 Samuel is a goldmine of biblical theological links. Obviously, in the OT, everything is webbed together with everything else, and it all points to Christ and his church. But this story has particularly strong connections with everything that comes before and after. The sermon touched on a few of these links; I will repeat some of that here as well as point to a few other connections. It is especially useful to look for Adam, Joseph, Joshua, Daniel, and Jesus connections.

David is presented in the story as a kind of new Adam figure. He tames wild beasts, like the lion and bear. But then he also crushes the head of the scaly serpent, Goliath, reversing Adam's fall. Of course, this links 1 Sam. 17 not only to Gen. 1-3, but also Dan. 7, where the Son of Man (= New Adam) tames the beasts (= pagan empires). 1 Sam. 17 is a key link in a series of new Adam texts.

Goliath is not only a giant he is scaly serpent. Just as Saul faced a snake in 1 Samuel 11 (Nahash = snake), so David must also face a snake figure. The first Adam was defeated by a snake, and Adam figures always stand or fall by how they handle the snakes that invade their gardens.

David moves from his victories over the lion and bear to the certainty of his victory over Goliath. In other words, David views Goliath as subhuman and bestial because he is a blasphemer. Also note that lions were used as symbols of Egypt and Philistia.

1 Sam. 17 is part of the background the vision of Daniel 2. In that vision, a huge metal man representing the pagan empires is struck by a stone, which grows to fill the earth. Goliath is the prototypical metal man, dressed in armor from head to toe; the statue in Daniel 2 is an expanded and enlarged Goliath. But David's small stone – a miniature altar – brings him down.

Goliath is also a kind of counterfeit priest, who blasphemes God rather than praising him. His metal armor counterfeits the metal breastplate of the high priest. The high priest wears a stone of gold on his forehead (Zech. 3:9). David puts a stone in Goliath's forehead.

David picked up 5 stones because Goliath had 4 relatives (fellow giants, it seems). These are mentioned in 2 Sam. 21:16-20. As it turns out, David's 4 "mighty men" end up defeating these 4 giants, following in their leader's footsteps. This is a pattern for the church: following Christ's lead, we crush the serpent underfoot as well (cf. Rom. 16:20).

David kills Goliath with a rock, and that rock was Christ.

If we are in union with Jesus, then David's story becomes our story because David's story is really Jesus' story.

Why does Saul try to fit David into his armor? It is interesting that after the battle, Jonathan gives David his clothes (another sign of David's ingrafting into the royal family and his investiture). In 1 Sam. 18. Saul seeks to clothe David in armor that mimics Goliath's armor, which shows how he believes Israel's battles have to be fought: in the strength of the flesh, with weapons like the nations.

Goliath is a blasphemer in the land. Blasphemers must be put to death by stoning according to the law. David's execution of Goliath fulfills the law.

At the end of the story, Saul asks, "Whose son is this?" It's an odd question because David has already spent time in Saul's court in the previous chapter. I think at least part of the solution is found in the legal transition that is taking place. Saul has promised various benefits to the family of the man who defeats Goliath, so Saul is making public note of that. David will no longer pay taxes; he will receive them. But Saul's question also has to do with identity. Just as Saul was in some sense adopted by Samuel and the prophets in 1 Sam. 10, so David is being adopted by Saul. In some way, David becomes Saul's son, and thus a lawful heir to the throne. Thus, his eventual ascent is not revolutionary, but orderly.

We read in Judges 20 that the Benjamites were skilled with slingshots. Why didn't Saul use a sling to defeat Goliath? David shows himself to be the true Benjamite, the true heir to the throne. David is to Saul as Gandalf the White (not Gandalf the Grey!) is to Saruman. He is what the other should have been. David becomes what Saul should have become, but failed. The two Adam theme, in which the first Adam falls so a second Adam has to come take his place, structures the whole of 1-2 Sam.

We can look at David both horizontally (as a model disciple) and vertically (as a type of Christ). But the vertical is the basis of the horizontal in this case. David as Christ-type is foundational to David as model disciple.

David is one of the truly great Christ figures in all of literature.

David is a new Joseph. Just as Joseph was a despised younger brother, mistreated by his siblings, but then exalted to reign over them, so it is with David. David is despised by Eliab (1 Sam. 17:28-30). He is lowly and humble, but after long suffering patience, eventually emerges victorious, and ultimately becomes a king, ruling over his brethren.

When Goliath saw David come out to fight it, he thought it must be some kind of joke (1 Sam. 17:43). Of course it was – but the joke was on the Philistines.

Some have said David didn't fight fair. After all, he did not engage in the kind of hand to hand combat Goliath was expecting. He ran forward, like he was going to engage

in close combat, but then slung his stone (1 Sam. 17:44-49). Of course, if it was deceptive, it was a prelude to the cross, which was the greatest sneak attack in history. Augustine called the cross God's mouse trap: Jesus set the trap and Satan took the bait. Just as David stripped Goliath of his armor and carried it off in triumph, so Jesus vanquished the principalities and powers, stripping them of their power (Col. 2:15).

Just as giants kept Israel out of the land right after the exodus, now a giant threatens to take them out of the land. The Israelites have forgotten their giant-slaying heritage, the legacy of Caleb and Joshua. They have forgotten they serve a God greater than giants. The 40 days of taunting remind us of the 40 years Israel spent in the wilderness, fearful of the giants in the land. David alone remembers his history and so David gets the victory. Ultimately, it is not the sling, but the Spirit, that brings David victory.

Saul, like Goliath, has a spear and becomes progressively (starting in 1 Sam. 18) more and more Goliath-like, as he uses his spear against David, just as Goliath wanted to. Note also Saul has iron weaponry, which was rare in Israel, but common among the Philistines. Saul becomes a pagan, Philistine-ish type of king – a king like the kings of the other nations, an Israelite giant all too much like the Philistine giant.

After defeating the Philistine giant, David has to do battle with the Israelite "giant," Saul, which takes up the next stretch of narrative space in 1-2 Sam.

Credit must be given where credit is due: Glen Scrivener's various sermons on the David/Goliath story were VERY formative of my sermon. Peter Leithart's work on 1-2 Samuel was also very helpful. In addition to his commentary, check out his article "The Quadriga or Something Like It," which uses 1 Sam. 17 as a test case (found in the book *Ancient Faith for the Church's Future*). Gordon Keddie has a fine commentary on 1-2 Samuel entitled *Dawn of a Kingdom*. I also like Tim Chester's *Exodus for Everyone*. Ralph Dale Davis' *Looking of the Heart* is helpful on literary and theological aspects of the text but is strangely lacking any Christological typology. Joel McDermon has written an interesting commentary that focuses mainly on the political and practical application of the stories in 1-2 Samuel. While it is far from a complete commentary, it is also chock full of interesting (and often controversial or dubious, but still thought provoking) applications of the text to contemporary life and society. On connections between David and Jesus, see especially James Hamilton's paper: http://jimhamilton.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/SBJT-V16-N2_Hamilton.pdf.