

Chapter 30 records an amazing series of events when the Amalekites attacked Ziklag, the town where David was staying. Everything was stolen and all the women and children were taken as captives. However, when David encouraged himself in the LORD and sought His guidance, the LORD enabled him to pursue the Amalekites and recover everything and everyone that had been taken.

1 Samuel 27: Despite Saul's assurances (1 Sam. 26:21), David still believes that the king will once again seek to kill him and decides to hide in the land of the Philistines (1 Sam. 27:1). David befriends Achish, the king of Gath, who gives him the city of Ziklag for him and his men to live. From there David launched attacks against the enemies of Israel, leaving no survivors. When he returned home in Ziklag, king Achish would ask about his battles that day and David would tell him that he had attacked various regions of Israel. With no survivors to contradict David's story, Achish believed that David was proving that he had turned his back on Israel and would be loyal to king Achish.

1 Samuel 28: The Philistines are gathering to fight against Israel and Achish wants David to accompany him into battle as his life-long bodyguard. Meanwhile Saul is afraid of the Philistines and since Samuel was now dead, he had no one that could consult with the LORD for him concerning the upcoming battle. He decides to find "a woman with a familiar spirit" (a medium) that could raise up the spirit of Samuel so that Saul could ask for his help. Saul meets with the woman, who brings up "Samuel" from the dead and Saul then desperately pleads for guidance. Samuel points out that the LORD has become Saul's enemy due to Saul's disobedience and that Israel would be defeated by the Philistines. He also reveals that Saul and his sons would die the next day.

1 Samuel 29: David is prepared to march with the Philistines against Israel, but the princes of the Philistines do not trust David and insist that Achish send him and his men home. Achish apologizes to David and sends him home to Ziklag. The LORD's hand here is evident, because 1) David is prevented from being put in a position of having to fight against his own people (although he likely would have turned against the Philistines), and 2) he is able to return to Ziklag in time to regain all that the Amalekites had taken.

1 Samuel 30

1 And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

When David and his men returned home to Ziklag, they find that it had been attacked by the Amalekites, who had destroyed it. David had attacked Amalek during some of his raids launched from Ziklag (1 Sam. 27:8-9) and this attack may have been in retaliation.

2 And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried *them* away, and went on their way.

The hand of the LORD is again evident because the Amalekites did not kill anyone in their raid, but took everyone captive. David had not left any survivors when he had attacked the Amalekites, but the LORD apparently insured that the Amalekites spared the lives of all that were at Ziklag.

Verses 3-16: When David and his men saw all that they had lost at Ziklag, they wept until they could not weep any more. Then the men began to blame David and talk of stoning him because of the grief of losing their wives and children. However, David "encouraged himself in the LORD his God" (v. 6) and began to inquire of the LORD. Under the guidance of the LORD, David and his 600 men set off in pursuit of the Amalekites that had attacked Ziklag. When they were crossing the brook Besor, 200 of his men were too exhausted to continue the pursuit and remained behind. David, with the remaining 400 men, continued until they encountered an Egyptian who was servant to an Amalekite that had left him behind because he was sick. The man had not eaten in three days, so after they fed him the Egyptian was willing to guide them to where the Amalekites were camped. When David and his men found the Amalekites, they saw them feasting, drinking and dancing in celebration of the all the spoils they had taken from their recent raids.

17 And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.

"And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day" – "Twilight" can refer to either sunset or sunrise. Since David's men were already tired from the pursuit, it is more likely that David waited until dawn the next morning to attack and fighting until evening, instead of starting his attack immediately and fighting 24 hours until sundown the next day.

"and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled" – The way this statement is phrased implies that the 400 who escaped on camels represented a small fraction of the total Amalekite force. This suggests that the total number of Amalekites may have been in the thousands, making the victory that the LORD gave David and his 400 men that much more impressive.

18 And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. 19 And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any *thing* that they had taken to them: David recovered all.

The LORD gave David total victory over the Amalekites. Not only did he kill everyone except for the 400 who escaped on camels, but David recovered everything that the Amalekites had taken. All captives were rescued (wives and children) and the men regained all of their personal goods that had been stolen. None of David's men were missing anything or anyone that they had before the Amalekites had attacked Ziklag.

20 And David took all the flocks and the herds, *which they drave before those other cattle*, and said, *This is David's spoil*.

Among the recovered livestock that had belonged to David's men was livestock that the Amalekites had stolen on earlier raids. Apparently David's men, who had earlier spoke of stoning David (v. 6), have now changed their tune because they have taken this additional livestock and declared it to be "David's spoil." They were evidently showing their appreciation for his leadership in recovering all that had been taken by the Amalekites and was crediting him for the victory. It was called "David's spoil" because he enabled them to capture it, not because he would be keeping all of it.

Verse 21: On the way back to Ziklag, David and his men returned to the brook Besor to reunite with the 200 men that had remained behind because they were too exhausted to continue the pursuit of the Amalekites (v. 10). When David saw the men again, he "saluted" them (asked of their welfare). He obviously did not hold these men in contempt for not keeping up with the rest of the men in their pursuit of the Amalekites.

22 Then answered all the wicked men and *men of Belial*, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them *ought* of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead *them away*, and depart.

"Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial [worthless], of those that went with David" – A certain segment of the 400 men who had helped David defeat the Amalekites and regain what was stolen had no compassion for the 200 men that had remained behind due to their exhaustion. They apparently felt that these men did not carry as much of the load as they did and therefore were not willing to show any grace or kindness to them.

"and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered" – An argument could be made that these 200 men might not have claim to any of the spoil that was above what the Amalekites had stolen from them, but it seems that these men did not even want the 200 to even have their own property returned to them that had been recovered.

"save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart" – These wicked men believed that the 200 men were only entitled to regain their wives and children. Apparently they also believed that they no longer deserved to be a part of David's band of men, so they should take their wives and children and go. They apparently believed the strongest should survive and these 200 that stayed behind represented the weaker and thus had no place in David's band.

24 For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part *is that goeth down to the battle*, so *shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike*.

In v. 23, David declares that the stuff that was recovered was given to them by the LORD, and therefore they had no right to withhold it from whomever they decided was undeserving.

"For who will hearken unto you in this matter?" – Those who didn't want to share the spoil were in the minority. The rest of the company did not share the same opinion as these men and would not listen to their arguments.

"but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike" – David declares that everyone would have the same share in the spoil. Each had their fulfilled their own responsibility. Some had fought in the battle and others remained behind to guard the camp and protect what was there. Each responsibility was important and so all shared equally in the spoil. Perhaps if a portion of men had been assigned to remain behind at Ziklag when David and the rest had assembled with the Philistines (1 Sam. 29), then it might not have been pillaged and burned.

25 And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.

The Hebrew word translated "statute" means "a prescribed task," which may refer to a rule that David enforced as leader of these 600 men. At this point in time David was not yet king, but he apparently decided that anyone under his command would do things this way. The Hebrew word translated "ordinance" refers to a legal decision, implying that David may have promoted the rule into a written law after he became king. The statute and ordinance required that the spoils of war be shared equally with all who were in the army, whether they took part in the battle itself or not.

Verses 26-31: Greed may have been one of the motivations that caused these wicked men of Belial to not want to share the spoils with the 200 that remained behind. Splitting the spoils 400 ways instead of 600 would have given them a larger share. However, David demonstrates his lack of greed by sending a portion of the spoils to the elders of Judah that had been friendly to David during his flight from Saul. David was not interested in amassing a fortune for himself but instead shared the blessings that the LORD had given him with others. Perhaps David was the inspiration for the writer of the fictitious Robin Hood, whose leading character stole from the rich and gave to the poor. Like David, Robin Hood also gathered a force of men who were "criminals" (falsely accused and otherwise) and other malcontents.