

A SIMPLE SERMON ABOUT SMOOTH STONES

1st Samuel 17:40

And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

Introduction

God moves in mysterious ways. Last Sunday I received several calls from some of my pastoral friends. They had questions from their members about the Sunday School lesson. I was totally surprised because the lesson was a familiar passage: the story of David and Goliath. After sharing what I knew about the Scripture, I was led to preach about it today. Hopefully, no one will read into this that the Antioch-Lithonia Sunday School teachers did not do an adequate job last Sunday. Our teachers are excellent. Through it all, the motif of the stones kept floating in my head. So here is a review of what we already know.

Exposition

1. The Creator of Stones

2. The Choice of the Stones

3. The Characteristics of the Stones

4. The Count of the Stones

5. The Champion's Use of One Stone

Closing Thoughts

David recognized and proved to others that God's strategy is perfect. Human prowess with sword and spear is irrelevant and often unnecessary. Think about it again! A small boy armed with a staff and a sling should have been no match for a gigantic, seasoned warrior equipped with the latest and best armament. Yet the shepherd boy was the victor. It was over as soon as it got started. God's ways are certainly not our ways. Let me close by referring you to a portion of Zechariah 4:6: "Not by power, nor by might, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Give God Glory! Give God All the Glory!

End Notes

1. Our English word “smooth” does not completely translate the Hebrew in this context. The same word can mean different things in different contexts. Of course, this is true of every language, but especially in Biblical Hebrew. Here’s an example: The Hebrew word “yad” means “hand” when referring to a human, but it means “paw” when referring to an animal. Likewise, the Hebrew word “challuk” has many meanings but when used to describe “slingstones” it implies a spherical shape with a smooth surface. Not just a smooth surface, but also a ball-like shape. The reasoning is obvious; just about everything we throw today is a ball or is shaped like a ball. This takes advantage of the aerodynamic laws of physics. Actually, the first footballs were spherical (round) until they realized it was difficult to tuck the ball under the arm and run. They were recycled soccer balls. So, they changed them to the present shape.

2. Why did David take the staff with him when he had his sling? There were three reasons. First, the brook was really a “wadi.” A wadi is the bed of a stream that is usually dry except during the rainy season. Thus, it is a seasonal stream. During the rainy season, the water is crystal clear and the bottom of the stream is visible. As the rainy season begins to recede the water becomes muddy and the bottom is not visible. After the rainy season, the soil in the bed becomes very hard because of the heat of the sun. Shepherds knew the best place to find “slingstones” was in the wadis. When the stream was muddy, the staff was used to poke around to locate stones. When the wadi was dry the staff was used to dislodge the stones from the “clay-like” formations. So, the staff was used to help David locate the stones. As a parenthetical insert, the brook Cherith that Elijah used for a source of water was a wadi. It dried up and Elijah had to find another hiding place. See 1st kings 17:1-7. Secondly, the staff was a decoy, either intentionally or unintentionally. Goliath gave all of his attention to the staff. In verse forty-three, Goliath ridiculed David for coming to fight him with sticks. He did not give the sling any consideration. He may not have noticed it. To his surprise he was zapped with a stone from the sling. Thirdly, it was probably just force of habit. Shepherds always carried a staff, so he probably felt comfortable with it in his hand. A good habit is an asset.

3. Why did David select five stones? Some people believe that David chose five smooth stones so that if he missed his first shot, he could use one of the others stones to complete his mission. This still does not answer the question. Why did he select five stones? Why not two, three, or four? What was significant to him about five stones? The answer is found in 2nd Samuel 21:22. Goliath had four sons. David was prepared just in case they would come out when he killed their father. That is why he picked up five stones: one for the father and one for each of his four sons. He did not need the other four stones because God always gives us more than enough—even when we don’t realize it.