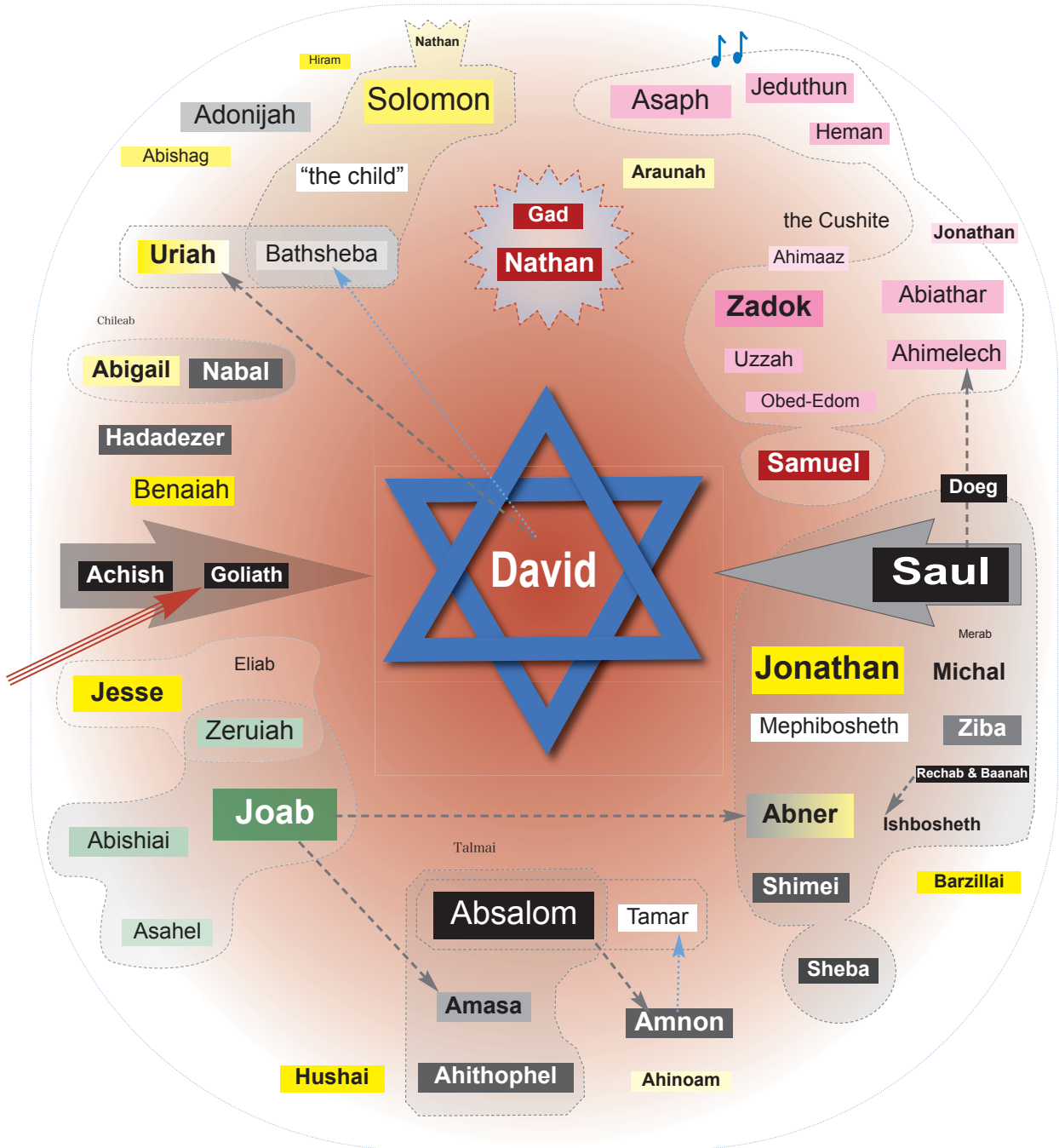


surrounded



people in the life of David

about Goliath

1. Goliath was a Philistine. And since this warlike collection of “sea peoples” were cast out of the land in the time of Joshua (Josh. 13:2) they continued to trouble the Israelites. No other enemy is mentioned nearly as many times during their early period in the promised land.

2. The Philistines were the main enemies in the time of Samson (Judges chs. 13 through 16) and the first enemies mentioned in First Samuel (chs. four through six). Thus, there had been a lot of interaction between them and the Israelites and Goliath must have known at least something about the God of Israel.

3. Goliath’s great size and the size of his equipment is described first in 17:4-7. Next his verbal challenge and its effect upon Saul and the people is reported in 17:8-11. All this is done before David is mentioned in v. 12.

4. Goliath was the “champion” of the Philistines (17:4 and 23). This word literally means “the man between the two.” There was a valley between the armies (17:3) and Goliath is introduced as coming to stand between the two (17:4). David, likewise, became the champion of Israel (18:7), standing between God’s people and their enemies.

5. In addition to the vivid battle scene in First Samuel ch. 17, Goliath is described, along with some members of his family in 1 Chr. 20:4-8. He was not the only giant that the children of Israel faced. (See Num. 13:33, Deut. 3:11, and 1 Chr. 11:23).

questions

1. Before he was killed and beheaded by David in vv. 50-51 what was Goliath to the other Philistines (17:4, 23)? What does their fleeing in 17:51-53 show about this?

2. What was Goliath to Saul and the other Israelites (17:11, 24)? What does their fleeing before him (17:24) indicate about their attitude?

3. How was Goliath defeated and by whom? Obviously, it was David who threw the stone and cut off his head (17:50-51), but that’s not the whole story.

4. Since there are other giants in the biblical record, is Goliath in First Samuel ch. 17 all that significant? More is said about him than the other giants, but that is probably only because he was the one who faced David. Why do you think he is often called “the Philistine” or “the giant” rather than by name?

5. The only other Philistine named in First Samuel is Achish, the king of Gath, in ch. 21 and chs. 27 through 29. (Thus, the Philistines were often a nameless collective enemy.) Achish is mentioned more than Goliath. So was he more dangerous, as well? In what way was he a danger to David that Goliath was not? (See 27:1 and 12.)

6. Who else in the Bible, like Goliath, terrorized and mocked the people of God? (See Isa. ch. 37 for one example. Also see 1 Pet. 5:8-10.) Who in history or in your personal experience seems to be like Goliath?

people in the life of David series, study #3

What's so great about Goliath?

as a key-person

The account of David fighting and killing Goliath in ch. 17 is the longest passage in the Bible regarding David. Goliath, himself, however, is not the subject of the story. The chapter actually emphasizes the fearful attitude of King Saul and the people of Israel compared to David, because of their lack of faith. Thus the chapter is more about faith than about Goliath.

as a Philistine

Goliath towered above the other soldiers, just as the Philistines stood out as the leading enemy of Israel in the time of David. Yet the greatest danger to David from the Philistines came later. In ch. 17 Goliath was a physical danger, but in ch. 27 David faced a greater spiritual attack, when he was pressured to abandon God's people and fight for the king of Gath against the army of Saul. Achish is named more than Goliath because he was more dangerous.

as a champion

The Philistine army chose Goliath as their champion, "the man between two." As such, Goliath was taller than anybody (even taller than Saul), well protected with his magnificent armor, and powerful with years of fighting experience.

In contrast to the Philistine giant, David stood by faith between Israel and the enemy. He had no experience as a soldier; nor did he have any armor. However, as a shepherd, David had experience standing between his father's sheep and wild beasts. Thus Goliath, the Philistine champion, was just another "wild animal" to David.

As Israel's champion David reminds us of the Lord Jesus who is the only true Mediator between God and man, according to First Timothy 2:5.

as God's enemy

King Saul, the people, and of course, the Philistines all saw how physically powerful Goliath was. Yet what David saw was only a single man defying God's army. So David saw that Goliath as God's enemy, rather than primarily his own. Thus he was certain that God was going to give victory to Israel through him. Thus it was God, himself, who defeated Goliath, and compared to God there was nothing great about the Philistine champion.

Summary and Application

We often fear people who look down on us and sneer at our faith. At such times, we are tempted to try to prove the strength of our belief. But what we truly need to understand is that when we are insulted for Jesus' sake, it is not us who are insulted, but God. We simply need to keep going, knowing that God helps those who trust in Him overcome *their* Goliaths.