

Editorial: Not as Simple as it Seems

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The story of David and Goliath is a story of the honour of the Lord's name in the context of combat against evil. Goliath overshadows the story. He was big, bold, and boisterous. But we should not jump too quickly through the chapter and miss a different kind of enemy. Behind their giant champion, the Philistines were an insidious creeping intruder into the kingdom of Israel.

Israel's history with the Philistines was long and complex. The Philistines did not always present a threat to Israel, but they were always an enemy.

In Genesis 21:34, for example, Abraham lived among the Philistines and made a peace treaty with them. At this time, the Philistines were peaceful people living under a king (Abimelech). By the time of the Exodus, however, this had changed. They had settled around the area of Gaza (Exodus 13:17) and had developed into an aggressive war machine under five “lords,” according to Joshua 13:3.

God told Israel to destroy the Canaanites and the Philistines (Numbers 33:55). God’s instructions were clear: if you do not dispossess the Canaanites, they will dispossess you, or they will become a thorn in your side and splinters in your eyes.

Israel did not destroy the Canaanites or the Philistines. In the following

centuries, the Philistines pushed further inland until they were in the hill-country of Judah (1 Samuel 14:1ff). They became a thorn in the flesh of Saul throughout his entire reign (1 Samuel 13-14, 17, 23, 27-29, 31).

The situation in 1 Samuel 27 is especially complicated. On the run from Saul, David lived among the Philistines at Ziklag. There is no mention of God in this episode, but David's plan works out. He escaped Saul's pursuit, destroyed many enemy cities, and made a fool of the king of Gath. But the question is, was David right in doing this? Our relationship with the world is not as simple as it might seem, or as simple as we might wish. It is complex and it requires wisdom.

There are times when our relationship with the world will appear friendly. But

the world is always changing. This affects many aspects of life in our society: relationships, activities, politics, medical and social ethics. Yet every situation needs to be addressed from this single principle. The world is our enemy, and there is always a potential threat.

Brethren, let us be sober and vigilant (1 Peter 5:8). Let us know our enemy (2 Corinthians 2:11). There is always the danger of temptation or distraction. We can easily be tripped up (Galatians 6:1) or deceived (Jeremiah 17:9). We are engaged in a war. We can show up for the battle and not fight like Saul and the Israelites. Or we can fight by faith, look the enemy in the face, and take him down in the name of the living God.