

Exegetical Notes – 1 Samuel 11:1-11

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1 Samuel 11:1-11

Verses 1-3

¹ Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh Gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to him, "Make a treaty with us, and we will be subject to you."

² But Nahash the Ammonite replied, "I will make a treaty with you only on the condition that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you and so bring disgrace on all Israel."

³ The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days so we can send messengers throughout Israel; if no one comes to rescue us, we will surrender to you."

- Nahash laid siege to the Israeli city of Jabesh Gilead. The people of Jabesh asked for terms of surrender. Nahash replied that he would lift the siege on the condition that he gouge out the right eye of every man in the city.
- The elders of Jabesh asked for 7 days grace to appeal to their fellow Israelites for help. If no one came to their aide they would accept Nahash's terms and surrender.

Verses 4-8

⁴ When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these terms to the people, they all wept aloud. ⁵ Just then Saul was returning from the fields, behind his oxen, and he asked, "What is wrong with everyone? Why are they weeping?" Then they repeated to him what the men of Jabesh had said.

⁶ When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he burned with anger. ⁷ He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, "This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel." Then the terror of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out together as one. ⁸ When Saul mustered them at Bezek, the men of Israel numbered three hundred thousand and those of Judah thirty thousand.

- Messengers were sent throughout Israel by the elders of Jabesh to ask for help against Nahash. The messengers reached the town of Gibeah where

Saul, Israel's newly anointed king, lived. The people of Gibeah were highly distressed at the news from Jabesh. They wept and made a commotion.

- As they were crying, Saul arrived. He had been plowing his father's field with a team of two oxen. When he saw the commotion, he asked what was wrong.
- When he heard the reason for the commotion, the Holy Spirit came upon him again. He cut his oxen into pieces and sent the pieces throughout the land. The messengers sent with the pieces told the people of Israel that their oxen would be destroyed if they did not help Saul defend Jabesh.
- The people of Israel acted in fear of their new king. Saul summoned the men of Israel to gather at Bezek. 330,000 men responded to Saul's call.

Verses 9-11

⁹ They told the messengers who had come, "Say to the men of Jabesh Gilead, 'By the time the sun is hot tomorrow, you will be rescued.'" When the messengers went and reported this to the men of Jabesh, they were elated. ¹⁰ They said to the Ammonites, "Tomorrow we will surrender to you, and you can do to us whatever you like."

¹¹ The next day Saul separated his men into three divisions; during the last watch of the night they broke into the camp of the Ammonites and slaughtered them until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

- Saul sent messengers to Jabesh telling them that they would be rescued by noon the next day. They sent word to Nahash that they would surrender to him the next day.
- The next day, before dawn, Saul divided his army into three separate divisions. During the last watch of the night, the army of Israel attacked the unsuspecting army of Nahash. Israel slaughtered the armies of Nahash until noon that day.
- Saul, Israel's newly anointed king, had acted under the power of the Holy Spirit and he was successful. God gave Israel victory. Saul, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, acted as a king should act and God was faithful. He delivered Jabesh.

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