



Today we are taking a break from our God-Designed Marriage series to focus back on the theme that we have for this year of trusting more and fearing less. Every now and then throughout the year we revisit this theme with a special message. Today's message is one that I think the Lord has been putting together for several months now and even though I wish I had more time to work on it, I'm excited to share it with you.

Several years ago, I was part of a mission team where we each took one of those strengths-finder tests to help us understand our team better. To be honest, I don't remember much of the results of my test except that it confirmed I was more of a historian than a visionary. I think this is accurate, although ever since then I've thought, "Shouldn't a visionary be a good historian in order to be a good visionary?" Without history, we struggle to understand the present and make informed decisions. The past is the key to the present.

We can see how the writers of the Old Testament understood that by the way they talked about "the works of God" or "mighty acts of God." These "works of God" are usually referencing God's work in creating and sustaining the world or God's work of redemption, like delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt through the ten plagues and the Red Sea miracle. They understood that God has a faithful *past* track record that produces trust in Him in the *now*. Even though His program may change as it progresses (such as going from the Old Covenant to

the New Covenant) He is the same God then as He is today. He has not changed or lost His power. He is the same faithful, Living God.

I think this is why my interest in archaeology has grown over the years in my study of the Bible, and one of my dreams to take part in an actual dig in Israel. The past is key to the present. Archaeology digs up the past in a good way, showing us we can trust the Word of God and therefore, the God of the Word. One of my favorite parts of studying the Bible to feed the flock every week is digging into the historical, cultural, and geographical contexts, and finding those archaeological nuggets of evidence that coincide with the passages we are in because they make the Bible come alive! They help illuminate the Bible for us, help us interpret the Bible more accurately and more profoundly, and packs some convictional punch into the application.

The earthen proofs that we dig up encourage our faith and stiffen our resolve to apply its teachings to our lives because our study and application of the Bible is inextricably linked to our conviction that the Bible either is or isn't the Word of God. If I believe the Bible is God's Word, I'm more likely to take it seriously. If I don't trust the Bible, I might still treat it like a unique book but not necessarily something to reorder my life and worldview around. Recently I've come across some fun and interesting archaeological digs and discussions involving artifacts related to David and Goliath, an account that matches our theme for this year of trusting God more and fearing less.

Who doesn't know or love this biblical account? you're probably familiar with this thrilling story about a young, humble shepherd boy with a sling who defeats an arrogant, war-hardened giant who is equipped with the biggest and baddest weapons around.

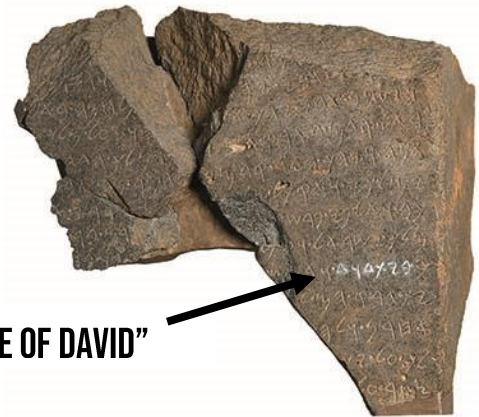


While all the Israelite army is reeling with fear of Goliath, David runs at the giant and with one lethal shot, sinks a stone right into his forehead! It reminds me of a story one man recently told me at a men's retreat. He was golfing up in the Black Hills and his golf ball smoked a marmot (you know, one of those groundhog critters) right between the eyes, leaving him dead as a doornail! Funny thing is, that man told that story over the lunch hour just minutes before I was getting ready to preach on David & Goliath and he had no idea! It made for a perfect illustration. While some might be suspicious of my friend hitting a marmot between the eyes with a golf ball, many throughout the centuries have been suspicious of the account of David & Goliath as well, thinking it just a "tall" tale. So, I thought I'd give us "the scoop" on some of the archeological evidence related to it that would suggest it's not a "tall" tale after all, even though it involved a real giant. We're going to look at some evidence that increases our trust in the Word of God and then pull out the teaching on trust in God.

EVIDENCE #1 – THE DAVID STELE

In archaeological terms, a **stele** is, "a monument stone or wooden slab erected for commemorative purposes, usually inscribed with writing and decoration, but occasionally painted."ⁱ In 1993

during an excavation at Dan, one such stele was found dating back to the 9th century BC, shortly after David lived. The stele was likely 3 feet tall originally and would have been placed at the entrance to the city of Dan. On it is written the "house of David". That phrase "house of" was a common designation for a royal family or dynasty, indicating kingship. 2 Samuel 3:1 says, "Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David." King David is mentioned on this stele, along with some other kings found in the book of Kings.



"HOUSE OF DAVID"

For many years, skeptics claimed King David was fictitious due to the lack of archaeological evidence. Since David is a major Old Testament personality who also wrote 75 psalms in our Bible and one of the few men that God promised Messianic lineage, that makes this an extremely important discovery. Since the Tel-Dan stele, other artifacts like a 9th century Mesha Stele was found to reference the house of David as well.

EVIDENCE #2 – THE GOLIATH OSTRACON

An **ostrakon** is a piece of pottery with some form of writing inscribed into it or written on it, usually with black carbon ink. One relevant ostrakon discovery was found in the ancient city of Gath, Goliath's hometown, dating back to the 10th or 9th century. Again, this is right around the time period David and Goliath lived.



This ostracon contains two names on it and the first one is the etymological equivalent of Goliath, proving that Goliath was a common Philistine name in Gath during the United Monarchy of Israel.ⁱⁱⁱ

Now, here's where it starts to get really fun! 🖱️

EVIDENCE #3 – SLING STONES AT SHILOH

In a current archaeological dig going on at Shiloh today (where the tabernacle once stood!), they found an ancient **sling stone**. Now, this is nothing new or rare so that's not what makes this a significant find. The significance comes from many such sling stones have been found throughout Israel, affirming for us that slinging was very common in Israel's history.



I remember when I was a kid, spending a whole summer with my beloved hunter's orange slingshot (wrist-rocket) and shooting things I wasn't supposed to. I thought that slingshot was even cooler than my BB gun! I always think of that slingshot when I read about David and Goliath. However, David's sling was very different, and his stones were much larger than the small marbles and rocks I used to use! In biblical times, slinging was common for sport, for shepherding, for self-defense, and for warfare. Even

though slings were a much cheaper, humbler type of weapon than a sword or spear, even so they were a formidable, lethal weapon. They were also a common weapon as one could wear it around their waist for a belt or around their head as a headband. Every major military like the Greeks, Carthaginians, and Romans would have had slinger units. In the movies, the highlight is always on the archers, but slingers were the mercenaries and marines of these armies who could outrange archers. Hannibal, the great general of Carthage, was very successful using slingers against Rome.



Instead of a catapult style slingshot like mine, David would have used a flexible linen or leather strap with a pocket fit for a stone. In the pictures above, you can see a sling found in Egypt dating back to 800 B.C. and King Tut's sling that was found in his tomb. In the picture below (next page), a demonstrator is seen using a sling in the West Bank in 2012. As you can see, slingers swing the stones around their head or on their side using centrifugal force to create speed. Depending on the length of the sling and the skill of the slinger, a modest person can launch a stone over 100 mph!



For ammo, 1 Samuel 17:40 says David used some stones from the brook in the Valley of Elah that had been smoothed by the waters. Comparatively, armies were known for doing just that. Instead of wasting time and energy making a bunch of perfectly round and smooth slingstones, they would stockpile river stones.^{viii} In David's day, it was common to use massive, 2 to 3-inch stones made up of limestone or lead. Some, like one found at another recent dig in Khirbet El-Maqtir were even bigger than baseballs!



As time went on, the Greeks and the Romans started to use smaller, conical or tear drop shaped stones to do long range damage. They called these bullets or pellets and were manufactured in mass quantities. Sometimes they had holes drilled into them so that they would make a whistling sound as they flew through the enemy lines, producing a psychological effect. Some of the bullets might have symbols etched into them like a lightning bolt or a comical inscription such as, "Ouch!", "Take that!", "Fruit for Dessert!" and "Here's a sugar plum for you!"^{xi} This is not much different than soldiers today writing on bullet casings. Soldiers are still soldiers! Imagine

pulling a bullet out of your leg with the sarcasm to boot! "Here's a sugar plum for you!" Ancient medical texts talk about addressing sling stone wounds and extracting stones.

Depending on the size of the stone, the length of the sling, and skill of the slinger, stones could be launched 100-400 yards (nearly ¼ mile) with surprising accuracy. Roman historian Livy who lived in the first century said that Achaean (Grecian) slingers could hit "not merely the heads of their enemies but any part of the face at which they might have aimed." That reminds us of the Benjamites from Judges 20:16 of which it was said, "Among all these were 700 chosen men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss." Neither David's accuracy nor the stone penetrating Goliath's forehead is a stretch.

EVIDENCE #4 – GIANT WEAPONS HOARD AT KHAFAR MONASH

The Bible talks unapologetically about giants in the land of the Bible. The most famous, Goliath, is described as over 9 feet tall! If that seems a bit unrealistic, just think that the tallest man in indisputable, recorded history was Robert Wadlow, who in 1940 measured 1 inch shy of 9 feet. He makes Shaquille O'Neal look short at 7' 1"! Even though Wadlow's abnormal height was a non-hereditary form of gigantism, there are other people who through normal human variation would fit the description of a giant. The giants of the Bible are spoken of as more hereditary giants, like the Nephilim or Anakim or Amorites. Amorites were descendants of Noah's son, Ham (Gen. 10:15-16; Amos 2:9-10; Deut. 9:2; 1 Chron. 20:4-6). The stature of the sons of Anak were so impressive that the 12 spies felt like grasshoppers in comparison and spent 40 years in the wilderness after refusing to go up and fight them (Num. 13:33).

The chronological descriptions of giants in the Bible indicates that as time went on, giants were becoming increasingly rare, moving from entire people groups

known for being gigantic, to a remnant, to rare and unique individual giants like Og of Bashan, the last surviving giant of the Rephaites whose bed was 13 feet long (Deut. 2:20-21; 3:11). It was Joshua’s utter destruction of the Anakim giants in the conquest of Canaan that set the stage for David vs. Goliath, who was a son of Anak (Joshua 11:21-22).^{xii}

If giants still seem to be a tall tale, think of the creatures of the past and of today who have giant counterparts within their kind. For example, the *magenaura* was an extinct dragonfly that had a wingspan over 30 inches. The giant spider crab can live up to 100 years, weigh over 40 pounds, and have a claw span over 12 feet. *Glypotodon* was a 13-foot armadillo. *Jaeklopterus* was an 8-foot sea scorpion. *Megatherium* was a 20-foot sloth that outsized mammoths. *Megascalides* is a giant earthworm growing over 6 feet in Australia today. *Archelon* was a 16-foot-wide, 15-foot-long, 5,000 lb. turtle found in South Dakota Pierre Shale, 45 miles south of Rapid City. It is currently on display at the National Natural History Museum in Vienna, Austria.^{xiii}



xiv



xv

It seems apparent to me that before the Noachic flood, and indisputably before the fall into sin, this world’s climate was much more hospitable and temperate,

allowing men to live longer and in some cases, allowing creatures to grow bigger than we know of today. Before the fall into sin, the ground was fertile and soft. Now, the ground and all of creation is cursed and man struggles just to provide a living (Gen. 2-3; Rom. 8:19-21). Don’t blame capitalism – blame sin! These giant animals seem unrealistic because we’re only familiar with their smaller counterparts. If all we had today were house cats, we would be shocked to hear about lions and tigers as a giant cat kind. They too, would be unbelievable! These examples put the giants of the Bible in perspective. The Bible is also not alone in its accounts of giants, either. Tim Chaffey with *Answers in Genesis* writes, “Nearly every place around the world has legends of giants dwelling in the land... These records are not limited to European mythologies or only to the ancient past. African and Asian peoples also have legends of giants, as do Native Americans.”^{xvi}



xvii

Now, back to the giant weapons! In 1962, a hoard of unnaturally large copper weapons was discovered near Khafar Monash when a farmer was expanding his fields. The hoard of giant weapons includes several **spearheads** and scale **mail coat armor** which many have dated to be thousands of years old (4,300 years or more).^{xviii} These items are currently on display at *The Israel Museum*.

The smallest of the spearheads is only 13 inches long, but even this is described as “huge” in the journal article. The average spearhead is only around 6 or 7

inches long. The largest spearhead found at Monash measures 26 inches long (that's over 2 feet) and weighs in at 5 pounds! It is the largest spearhead found in all the land of the Bible, beating another found at Megiddo by 6 centimeters. 2 Samuel 21:16, speaking of one giant, says, "*Ishbi-benob was a descendant of the giants; his bronze spearhead weighed more than seven pounds, and he was armed with a new sword. He had cornered David and was about to kill him.*" His spear was very similar in weight. 1 Samuel 17:7 says Goliath's spear was, "*tipped with an iron spearhead that weighed 15 pounds.*"

Archaeologist Joel Kramer, an adjunct archeology professor at *Shepherds Theological Seminary* and founder of *Expedition Bible*, quotes the original journal article on the Monash hoard, saying, "*Spears were used in war and fighting... In the case of the Monash spears, however, their unusual size and weight would appear to be an obstacle rather than an aid to anyone carrying them. We would like to suggest that these spears would have been used in another way.*"^{xx} So because of the journalist's secular worldview, they suggest these giant spears might be decorative, but at the same time admit that the spears show signs of heavy use – especially the biggest one! As Bible-believing Christians, we understand from the eyewitness accounts in the Bible that these spears would be suitable and appropriate for a biblically defined giant.



In addition to the spearheads collected is the **mail coat armor**. The journal writes: "*A remarkable feature of the Monash hoard were small, thin, ridged copper plates, of which about eight hundred were found. All are shaped like sections of circles of various diameters and are vertically ridged... We suggest that these copper plates are scales of*

armor." Interestingly, 2 Samuel 17:4 tells us Goliath's bronze coat of armor weighed 125 pounds. The article goes on: "*The only parallel for the Monash scales was found at Tel "Gath", where identical copper scales, also forming a package, were uncovered in the area of the city wall.*" Kramer says, "*Isn't that amazing that the only other body armor like the armor found at Monash has been found, is at Tel Gath, the hometown of Goliath who is the giant in the Bible whose body armor is described for us and we're given its weight.*"

I don't know about you, but I found these artifacts to be fun, interesting and encouraging to my faith. The archaeological evidence continues to show us that **we can trust God's living Word** (Heb. 4:12). It is reliable. But the story of David & Goliath also teaches us to **trust in the Living God of the Word** in a day of battle when fear is crippling everyone else around you. Is fear crippling people today? Sure it is! We've seen fear overwhelm many people ever since covid arrived on the scene and everything that came with it. Similarly, fear overwhelmed the Israelites when Goliath arrived on the scene to battle it out in a one-on-one battle called a *monomoxia*^{xxi} (similar to *Achilles and Hector* from Homer's *Iliad*).^{xxii}



1 Samuel 17 very descriptively narrates the scene for us. Instead of saying, "*David killed Goliath and that's the end,*" the Spirit-inspired author took 58 verses to tell us *how* David killed Goliath – not because he needed that many verses but because the author is doing something with what he is saying. He is using the descriptive narrative to teach us truth. Abraham Kuruvilla, a homiletics teacher at Dallas

Seminary, has pointed out how 1 Samuel 17 describes **3 characters: Goliath, Saul and David**, depending on **3 elements for victory: stature, resources, and experience.**^{xxiii} The writer describes these 3 elements in detail and repeatedly emphasizes the word “man”. We are looking for a real man in 1 Samuel 17. *Who is the real man who overcomes fear? What does a godly man trust in for victory? In what or in whom does he trust?*

GOLIATH

In **stature**, Goliath is 9 ½ feet tall. For **resources**, he has 5 personal armaments: Helmet, scale armor, greaves to protect his legs, a saber, and a massive spear. He is well equipped to fight. On top of that, he has a shield bearer. In **experience**, Goliath is known for being a champion (v. 4) and a warrior since youth (v. 33).

SAUL

Saul is the second major character. He is not considered a giant, but twice we are told in chapters 9 & 10 that his **stature** is head and shoulders above the rest. For **resources**, chapter 13 tells us that the weapons of Saul’s household were the best in Israel. As royals, he and his son Jonathan were privileged to have swords and spears. In verses 38-39, when David goes to try on Saul’s gear, the description of his gear is very similar to Goliath’s: a bronze helmet, heavy armor and a sword. David was weighed down by them and felt restricted so he took them off. For **experience**, chapter 11 tells us about Saul being filled with the Spirit to defeat Nahash, another enemy king who threatened to gouge out the right eye of every Israelite. Back then, Saul fought the Lord’s battles.

If anyone is fit, equipped, and experienced to fight Goliath, it is Saul. Saul and Goliath are helmet for helmet, armor for armor, sword for sword, and experience for experience. That’s how man thinks, isn’t it? Weapons must be countered with equal weapons, fire with fire, and chariots with chariots. In man’s mind, that’s the only way to win. We trust in our strength, our resources, and our experience. We

look to human strength, money, and ingenuity. The humanistic superhero, Batman, is the poster child of this mindset. He doesn’t possess supernatural powers. He defeats the bad guys with muscles, money, and innovative manmade tools. How quickly in the church we let this same mindset creep into the Christian life and ministry. There’s nothing wrong with a nice building and tools and resources that God gives us, but we must not trust in them for effective ministry and service.

DAVID

Our last character is David. At first glance, it appears David is an inadequate, ill-equipped youth. In **stature**, he is overlooked, literally. For **resources**, all David has is a shepherd’s staff, a sling, and 5 stones. No armor. In **experience**, Goliath is a warrior since his youth and David is mocked as a youth. But is this all there is to David’s stature, resources, and experience? Only what meets the eye? The answer lies in the previous chapter, chapter 16, when the prophet Samuel is told to anoint a new king from the sons of Jesse. It says in 1 Samuel 16:6, *“When they [the seven sons of Jesse] entered, [Samuel] looked at Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before Him.”* But how did the Lord respond to Samuel’s thought? *“Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his **stature**, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the **heart**.”*

David had a stature you couldn’t see: a **heart-stature** of faith. While according to verse 32, Goliath’s fear-inducing shouts caused the men’s hearts to fail, David’s heart was tall and strong in faith. His **resource** was the unlimited God who in past **experience** had shown Himself to be a Living God. Not just the God of his fathers or the God who worked in the past – but the God of the now – the Psalm 46 God who is a mighty fortress, a shield, our strength, and a very present help in time of need. But we must trust in Him like David. Verse 45 says, *“David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a saber, but I come to you in*

the name of the Lord of armies, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or spear; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands."

Nothing pleases God more than trustfully relying on Him. We are saved by relying on (trusting in) His sacrifice for our sins and we live the Christian life and do ministry by relying on the power of His grace in Christ. Apart from Him, we can do nothing (John

ⁱ Titus Kennedy, *Unearthing the Bible: 101 Archaeological Discoveries that Bring the Bible to Life* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2020), 242.

ⁱⁱ Picture: <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/the-tel-dan-inscription-the-first-historical-evidence-of-the-king-david-bible-story/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Kennedy, 94.

^{iv} *Shiloh Network News-Episode Two: Reporting from Israel* (June 1, 2022),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KaSXjdRDdRw>

^v Photo: 2015 University College London.

^{vi} Photo: Dale Dunlop,

<https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2021/06/11/top-ten-discoveries-related-to-david/>

^{vii} Photo: Daboos hassan, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons; <https://patternsofevidence.com/2020/11/13/david-and-goliath-showdown/>

^{viii} *Taking Down Goliath: Digging for Truth Episode 126*,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7p0jtMy4iwY>

^{ix} Photo: The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Neta Dror

^x <https://www.forumancientcoins.com/numiswiki/view.asp?key=sling>

15:5). Zechariah 4:6 says it's " 'not by [man's] might nor by [man's] power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts." The J. Vernon McGee translation is, "It is not by brawn nor by brain, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

What battle do you find yourself in? Who are what are you trusting in for victory? Trust the Living God in your present battle and battle in such a way that everyone knows there is a Living God who makes a difference.

In Christ with you,

Pastor Justin Schefcik

^{xi} <https://imperiumromanum.pl/en/curiosities/messages-on-missiles-to-sling/>

^{xii} Tim Chaffey, <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-characters/giants-in-the-bible/>

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Photo:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Meganeuradae.jpg>, accessed July 8, 2022.

^{xv} Photo: Black Hills Institute of Geological Research

^{xvi} Tim Chaffey, <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-characters/giants-in-the-bible/>

^{xvii} Joel Kramer, *Expedition Bible*,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIUJxNFyRBM>

^{xviii} Ibid.

^{xix} Ibid.

^{xx} Ibid.

^{xxi} Kennedy, 95.

^{xxii} Photo: The British Museum.

^{xxiii} Abraham Kuruvilla: *Reading Scripture for Application (Part 2)* [Talbot Chapel],

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s15K6H-lc0I&t=2173s>