

### I Samuel

#### Lesson 33 - Chapter 20

We concluded 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel chapter 19 in our last meeting and we'll begin exploring chapter 20 that has much more to it than meets the eye. We're going to dissect it rather carefully so as not to miss some of the important information it conveys.

Last week's lesson ended with the odd supernatural event that happened at a place called ***Naioth***, near Samuel's residence in Ramah, located in the territory of Benjamin, Saul's tribe. There David had fled from Saul and his henchmen; informed Samuel of what had transpired and fully expected that it wouldn't take long for Saul to learn of his whereabouts.

Sure enough David's location was discovered and Saul sent a group of (what was probably) his loyal bodyguards to capture and/or kill David. But something amazing happened; they arrived to find a congregation of prophets, led by the chief prophet Samuel, prophesying. The result was that the soldiers, too, began to "prophesy" and were so overwhelmed with God's Word that they could not carry out the plot against David.

A second group of men and then a third were sent, but with the same results. Finally Saul decided that if you needed a job done, sometimes it was better to do it yourself; so he left the comforts and safety of his palace to personally arrest David. He, too, encountered the prophesying congregation of prophets and had an even more dramatic experience with the power of Yehoveh than did those 3 companies of soldiers he had sent. Overcome with the inspiration of the oracle of God that was being spoken, Saul stripped off his royal robes, laid them down before Samuel (the supreme earthly messenger of God's Word), and began to prophesy just as the 3 groups of his soldiers. So not even the king could bring about his own evil plan, because it was not within God's will that it should happen.

We discussed how a similar event would occur some years later when David called for the Ark of the Covenant to be brought to him and David stripped off his royal garments and danced in an ecstatic state before the Ark of God. However he also donned the simplest of priestly garments, the ephod, as he symbolically laid down his kingly authority and demonstrated his true position before God as a joyful and willing servant. With no allegorizing whatsoever needed, here in the contrast between David and Saul's circumstances and inner spiritual conditions is a breathtaking illustration of how it is that every person born on this planet, wicked or righteous, redeemed or lost, will eventually lay down the authority over our own lives before God for judgment. Even King Saul, the early shadow of the Anti-Christ, was brought low and laid down his authority at the feet of the God of Israel.

So the only issue each and every human will have in this regard is whether the garment of authority that naturally accompanies the free wills we are born with are willfully given up (as an act of our humility) in exchange for the garment of a servant to the Most Holy One; or whether that garment will finally be taken from us in all of our defiance as an act of our shame before

God. Our personal decision on that cosmically and eternally important matter will dictate our present and future lives and determine whether we will live productively as useful vessels shaped and molded by the master potter, or as distorted and unclean ones, tossed aside and useful only to the Great Adversary.

I'd like to quote for you a moving excerpt from an essay written by the acclaimed Christian novelist, and dear personal friend, T. Davis Bunn that I think eloquently captures the essence of willing giving up that one thing that every man values above all else: loyalty to, and authority over, ourselves.

***“Our churches are filled with hungry hearts, people dissatisfied. We blame the minister, we blame the church. We blame the infighting, the human dimension, the absence of this or that.***

***We blame everything and everybody but ourselves.***

***Desiring change is not enough. We cannot reach out and take hold of what God offers without first making that one intensely challenging step.***

***Letting go.***

***So long as we maintain our two-fisted hold upon whatever it is in our lives that remains out of synch with God's divine plan, we are shackled to the spot where we stand. Dissatisfied, yearning, critical, wanting more and yet terrified of doing what we must in order to move forward.***

***Letting go.***

***Entering the season of divine change means that we must first move from where we are. And there is only one way of doing so. By understanding that God calls us not merely to freedom, but rather to freedom in Him.***

***Our redemption is not a liberty to remain isolated and independent. This is our willful nature at work, redefining the world in a manner as perverse as the Pharisees.***

***Remember what we studied earlier about God's concept of liberty. God frees us from the prison of sin through the act of eternal sacrifice. This liberty has granted us eternal freedom. And something more. Something vital.***

***To fulfill God's purpose in us, to bring ourselves to the full harvest, we must accept God's concept of liberty. Not ours. God's. And what did we say God's definition of liberty contained?***

***The freedom to live within His purpose for our lives.”***

King Saul defied God and determined to live his life for his own purposes. He used his liberty

as a redeemed Hebrew, even as one originally chosen by God, not to rule as God's submissive agent over God's people; but to rule as an independent, selfish, power hungry dictator subject only to his own whims, following his own heart, and resulting in being permanently separated from the God the Israel. Such is the nature of the spirit of the Anti-Christ; a spirit that desires its own way, its own authority, and rejects the Lord's.

Let's read 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel Chapter 20.

### **READ 1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL CHAPTER 20 all**

David had been rescued from Saul's treachery, but it would last for only a moment. Even though at Naioth, when God's Word in all its power had pushed the Pause button on Saul's murderous ambitions, as soon as the prophesying ended so did his wickedness return. Oh what yet another lesson leaps off the page about how the Word of God can affect a person only insofar as that person allows. And further how deceived we can be about our own true condition as seen in Yehoveh's eyes.

How often I've witnessed a person hear the Gospel, rush down the aisle for prayer as if drawn by an invisible string, and fall down on their face knowing they have heard the truth. But only days later the old nature prevails; no lasting change had occurred. God's Word was so compelling at that moment that they could not resist it; but out of its presence it was like a man looking at himself in a mirror and then, walking away, he forgets what he looks like.

Yeshua captured what happened to Saul at **Naioth** (and what happens to so many who hear God's Word) in a well known parable. Let's read it together.

Turn your Bibles to Mark 4.

### **READ MARK 4:1 – 20**

The Divine Sower had sent His seed of the holy message to Saul, who heard it and could not resist its potent truth. But quickly, as the prophesying of God's Word ended, so did the effect of the message upon Saul. Did Saul consciously think of himself as a man who had heard God's message and believed it, but was actually wicked by choice and remained that way? Did he think that perhaps because he had himself prophesied (he knew and spoke God's Word), and reacted to it in obedience for a short while, that this was sufficient to indicate permanent harmony or at least restored fellowship with God?

Saul was fully deceived as a result of his own insistent rebellion. It was an irrational rebellion that was now aimed squarely at David. It was a rebellion against God that was so incomprehensible to any rational person that Jonathon didn't trust his own eyes and ears; he just could not accept that his father's rash words were real and David couldn't understand what it was that Saul hated in him.

So in verse 1, after David returns to Gibeah from Ramah and seeks out his friend Jonathan, he pleads to him, "What have I done?" And of course the naïve Jonathan responds, "Heaven

forbid! You're not going to die!" The Hebrew word that Jonathan replied with was **chalilah**. It literally means "far be it from me", not Heaven forbid. It is an idiomatic Hebrew expression indicating total rejection of the thought. This same expression is often translated in our Bibles as "God forbid", but in reality the person of God or sanctity of Heaven is never called upon or is it mentioned when this Hebrew word is used. So when we encounter Heaven Forbid or God Forbid in the Scriptures generally no reference to God or His spiritual domain is actually there. It is just that **chalilah** is the strongest possible expression of shock and surprise and denial of whatever it was that was proposed.

David, however, being on the receiving end of Saul's homicidal rages isn't so willing this time to accept Jonathan's reassuring response. He tells Jonathan that his father isn't telling him the truth and is hiding from him his real intentions. Jonathan is still skeptical but his attachment and loyalty to David compels him to agree to do whatever is necessary for David's protection. So David suggests a plan to try and ferret out what Saul's mindset is, with a kind of certainty that both Jonathan and David no longer have to doubt.

The plan revolves around a festive meal that apparently happens at each Rosh Hodesh; that is, at each new moon. Thus from a Biblical perspective this is a once per month affair since the Hebrews employed the lunar cycle to determine months. By the way, let me pause here for a moment to explain that it is often said in Christian circles that the Hebrews used a lunar calendar; that is not correct. They used a solar-lunar calendar. That is they used the moon cycles for determining months, but they used the solar cycle for determining years and seasons. If they didn't do this, then the 7 Biblical Feasts would quickly become problematic and disconnected from their purpose. Those feasts are all based on agricultural seasons but at the same time the Bible also calls for specific days of the month for their observance. We covered this quite some time ago but let me refresh your memory since understanding time and seasons are so important in Bible study.

A lunar cycle is slightly over 29.5 days. The Hebrew system is that one lunar cycle equals one month. Since you can't have months that employ "half-days" the Hebrew calendar generally calls out 6 months of 29 days and 6 months of 30 days. But in reality, one of the named months (**Cheshvan**) can be either 29 or 30 days depending on when it is time to add a day to the Hebrew calendar to keep it properly aligned with the moon cycles.

Further, because a solar year is 365.25 days, then if you subtract from it 12 lunar cycles of 29.5 days each (which totals 354 days) you get 11 days left over (365 minus 354 is 11). In other words, 12 lunar cycles (12 Hebrew months) do not add up to one solar cycle (1 Hebrew year). While I'm not going to explain the system in depth, the earliest Biblical Hebrews devised a system whereby every few years they would adjust their calendars by adding days or even a full month (that's right, every few years the Hebrew calendar has 13 and not 12 months). Since Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits are all agricultural based springtime feasts, Shavuot is a summertime agricultural feast, and Yom Kippur, Yom Teruah, and Sukkot are all fall feasts, if the Hebrews didn't constantly adjust their calendars for the differences between lunar and solar cycles very quickly the season wouldn't match the agricultural purpose of each set of feasts. You'd have the Firstfruits observance eventually occurring in the dead of winter when nothing was growing, for instance, and there would be no firstfruits to celebrate.

But let me also address something that lately, for some reason, has created a problem for some Christians that have begun to study their Jewish roots. Weeks (7 day cycles) were completely independent of months and years and never ever changed. Never were days added or subtracted to adjust weeks. This is something we should fully understand because that is how our modern calendars work. We don't have weeks that vary in length or one 8 day week every leap year for example, just because a day is added to a month (February) to make our calendars line up with solar cycles. Weeks don't line up with months, rather they can and most often do overlap. I say this because some have created this theory that in Bible times the beginning of each new month was either day one of the week, or it may have been the Sabbath. Thus Shabbat wasn't actually in practice every 7 days; it could vary. It would be as though (on our modern calendars) that the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month reset the beginning of weeks; thus the 1<sup>st</sup> day of every month would always be Sunday (the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week) or perhaps Saturday (Sabbath) depending on which theory you held to. Thus a week might end abruptly at Wednesday if it happened to fall on the last day of the month, and then the next day (the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the new month) starts with either Saturday or Sunday (again depending on which theory you hold to). Thursday and Friday would simply disappear. In other words these new theories suppose that weeks were altered so that they lined up with months.

I must tell you that this is very far fetched, has no Biblical or known historical backing, and really doesn't properly characterize the Biblical or modern Hebrew calendar.

Anyway, verse 5 explains that it was the last day of the month when David and Jonathan were hatching this plan to get King Sha'ul to expose his true intentions towards David. Thus the next day (the new moon, Rosh Hodesh, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the new month), there was a festive meal at which the members of the top echelon of the King's court were expected to dine with the king. The plan was that David wouldn't go to the dinner as was usual, and Jonathan was to gauge his father's reaction to David's absence and to perhaps engage him in conversation and find out his mindset after a few cups of festive wine had been drunk.

Here we get a sad view of how Israel (or at least some in Israel) had contorted, added to, and subtracted from the Biblical instructions for holy days. This new moon feast of Saul's must have been something invented by Saul or others who surrounded him because it doesn't follow the Biblical pattern. And certainly the Biblical instructions of Numbers 10 and 28 do not instruct a multi-day feast as is described here. Here King Saul is even the officiator of this holy day, but according to the Law all holy days are to be officiated over by the priesthood. Whatever was being practiced could be classified as Tradition and of course as the centuries roll on we find Hebrews and eventually Christians sort of making it up as we go. Did the Law prescribe that there was to be a Rosh Hodesh observance and sacrifice each month? Yes. Were the nuts and bolts of the holy observance spelled out in the Torah? Yes. Was it to last more than 1 day? No. Was a king or some other civil authority to preside over its holy rituals? No.

So as usual we find Saul involved with some kind of ceremony or event that has a pious or self-righteous tone to it, even perhaps based on a Scriptural commandment, but it has been so perverted with changes and men's thoughts and pagan elements that one can't really call it a holy celebration to Yehoveh any longer (even though that's what they felt they were doing).



This is a major warning light for us all. Thankfully many are stopping today to honestly re-examine our church celebrations to see if they are truly God authorized to begin with. And if they are, are we keeping them properly. Or have we mixed our preferences and some heathen elements with what God ordained and naively expect God to accept as good whatever it is that we are presenting to Him because we like it?

The plan continues that David would go into hiding and wait for word from Jonathan on the outcome. But another part of the plan also involves a blatant lie; David asks his dear friend to tell his father that David was instructed by his eldest brother to come home to Beit Lechem for an annual sacrificial feast and that Jonathan OK'd it. The Hebrew word for this particular sacrificial feast is **Zevah**; it is of the **Shelamim** class of sacrifices, which means it is voluntary and a Hebrew can have one of these any time they have a reason to honor Yehoveh. Further the worshippers can eat the bulk of the meat, so it is indeed designed for festive meal occasions.

Apparently David's family had some kind of annual family celebration. But the thing is, no sacrifice to the Lord is to occur except under the auspices of a Levite priest. And a sacrifice is only supposed to occur upon the Brazen Altar at the central sanctuary (first the Wilderness Tabernacle and later the Temple). What we can know is that the main sanctuary site had for many years been Shiloh, but it was now defunct. We know that in Saul's time several competing sanctuary sites had been set up at Gilgal, Bethlehem, and Nob just to mention a few. Even more there were competing priesthoods. There were even at least 2 competing High Priests that we're aware of: the descendants of Ithamar and the descendants of Zadok. Zadok was the proper Biblically authorized line of High Priests, Ithamar was not. Samuel's mentor, Eli, was of the line of Ithamar. I only tell you this to briefly demonstrate how fractured and decimated was the priesthood, how barely recognizable were true Biblical Hebrew practices, and how infiltrated with manmade traditions and customs from other religions the Israelite worship system had become. Every man was doing what was right in his own eyes.

It's important to notice how whatever it was that was occurring and deemed as a holy observance was taken for granted as being normal and good. There seemed to be no questioning or concern over it. Following God's religious ordinances with any degree of faithfulness seems to have been long ago discarded by the time of King Saul's era. And we find that even God's favored and anointed king, David, was no different. I hope alarm bells are going off within your soul as we read of this apostasy that is eerily similar to what surrounds us today.

In verse 8 David invokes the covenant of friendship and loyalty that he and Jonathan had entered into, and says that in light of that covenant Jonathan ought to show him kindness. The Hebrew is **chesed** and translating that into "kindness" misses the impact. Fidelity or faithfulness is more the sense of it as used in this context. Kindness for us means, "being nice". But fidelity or faithfulness means following through with something good that is owed and promised. It is acting in a righteous manner. To NOT follow through with the **chesed** that the covenant between them demanded would be a breach of the covenant (a serious act of disloyalty that essentially dissolved the covenant). According to covenant legal terms, a divine penalty for the covenant breaker was usually in order because Yehoveh was the guarantor of

any covenant or oath made in His name.

Jonathan swears to tell David that if he discovers anything that would be a threat to him he will inform him of it. Again David is leaving nothing to chance and asks Jonathan if it will be him personally that informs him of the outcome (that is the sense of verse 10, “**who will tell me in the event your father gives you a harsh answer**”). This is an important question because if Jonathan plans on asking someone else to deliver the message to David, he needs time to be sure that this person is reliable. Involving anyone else adds a serious element of risk to the operation.

Now comes a pivotal moment. In verse 13 Jonathan painfully acknowledges that God is not with his father, but He is with David. Verse 14 thus leads up to the creation of yet another, and different, covenant between the two friends. In what must have been a very emotional scene, Jonathan reveals something that he has instinctively been suspecting and harboring in his heart. He reveals that he sees David as the future king of Israel. He doesn't say this directly, but it becomes obvious in his request of David to make this new covenant with him. And the request is that David is to show not only Jonathan but all of Jonathan's descendants **chesed** once the Lord has eliminated all of David's enemies. This covenant is to remain intact whether Jonathan is alive or dead. Even more, David would vow to do nothing to cause Jonathan's death.

This might seem a bit cryptic on the surface, and a rather strange request considering the close relationship between David and Jonathan, but the meaning is quite transparent. Jonathan realized David is going to be the King of Israel. Since **Adonai** is behind it, nothing can stop it. This is a very bitter pill for Jonathan to swallow with such grace as he seems to be. After all, his own father is the current king and by custom Jonathan would automatically be the king to succeed his father. By Jonathan ceding the throne to David, recognizing God's will in this situation and being obedient to it, Saul's dynasty will end before it ever really gets started.

This matter of David promising not to harm Jonathan reflects a rather usual practice whereby members of the previous royal dynasty would be killed off by the new one. That way there would be no ongoing contention for the throne by a family member of the former dynasty or his loyal supporters.

So Jonathan (who was probably a married man even though it's not discussed), was concerned for the safety of his family once David assumed the throne. As it turns out, he had no reason to doubt David's faithfulness to the covenant.

Turn your Bibles to 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 9.

### **READ 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL 9:1 – 7**

David was not a perfect man, but he remembered his promises. His dear friend Jonathan, who forsook loyalty to his own father and the right to inherit the throne of Israel, in favor of David, was dead, killed in battle. David would now perform the **chesed** to Jonathan's family that he had sworn to so many years earlier.

We'll continue this story of the rise of David to the throne of Israel next week.