

### I Samuel

#### Lesson 37 - Chapter 22 and 23

A terrible disaster is about to befall Israel and the people are none the wiser. King Saul has determined that the Priesthood (set-apart to serve Yehoveh) is to be exterminated. That means that the Word of God, as well as all of the vital ritual observances for cleansing and atonement, would no longer be available to them.

I have stated from the beginning of our study on Samuel that King Saul was not merely a poor choice for king, nor does he represent a “failed” king. King Saul is the anti-king; he is everything that humans desire and God hates in a government leader. King Saul was real, and what we read about him is true and it happened; but he is also a type, a shadow, and he established a pattern for the great Anti-Christ who is about to appear in the present era.

King Saul was among the most beautiful of men, we are told. He was a head and shoulders taller than any other man of his tribe, perhaps in all Israel. Handsome, strong, and charismatic with a natural bent for knowing how to manipulate and control he quickly abandoned the ways of His Creator for the ways of the human evil inclination and the spiritual dark side.

It was to be expected that as long as King Saul had no rival and didn't feel threatened, then his actions (while self-serving) wouldn't be terribly radical or seem suspicious to the Israelites at large. Saul's behavior and decisions were no different than the behavior and decisions of the neighboring nations and governments. But as soon as David arrived on the scene Sha'ul knew his time was near and his reign was threatened and so his true nature was suddenly exposed. This is generally what we read about the coming Anti-Christ who will rise to international prominence and receive the adulation of the world, and apparently even of the greatest portion of the institutional church (all having been deceived because they had gone so long without the light of God's truth being taught to them). But it is when Yeshua's messengers and then Yeshua Himself makes their appearance that all Hell breaks loose on planet Earth as Satan's eternal rival is now finally here to challenge him.

The rhetorical question is a timeless one: how is it that Satan, who Scriptures tell us at one time lived in Heaven in close proximity to God and as the most beautiful and intelligent of all heavenly creatures, could not only rebel against His Master and Creator but also honestly believe that he could defeat God? How could Satan not understand to his core that because of his choice to try and place himself on God's throne, that the only possible ending for him was eternal destruction?

Well, we see that same scenario being played out in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel as King Saul is fully aware that God has not only removed the throne of Israel from him, but has also completely and permanently abandoned him. King Saul is now God's eternal enemy. Did Saul honestly believe that he could defeat God's will and hang on to his earthly throne? Did Saul seriously think that he could kill God's Anointed One, David, in order to keep David from assuming his

God-ordained destiny as king over God's Kingdom? The problem with Satan and the problem with Saul and the problem with all leaders of government who think they can supplant God's justice and truth and morality with their own is a deep seeded spiritual irrationality. For the world, and especially for the elitist intelligencia, these human leaders seem to be nearly infallible and undefeatable; men to be followed without question (if not outright worshipped). So for us as Believers to think of Satan as irrational is hard to do when we see what he has accomplished over the last 6000 years. It's not as hard for us, though, to see Saul as irrational, and so perhaps that's why such an extensive account of his life and reign have been preserved for us in the Bible; it is so we can know what signs to look for and how to prepare when that coming evil world leader springs onto the scene.

Therefore just as King Saul decided that to eradicate opposition he had to eradicate the priesthood, so will the Anti-Christ decide that to eradicate opposition he must eradicate the priesthood of Believers.

Let's re-read part of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 22.

### **RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL 22: 16 – end**

King Saul has ordered the end of the Levitical Priesthood. He tries to get some of his Benjamite government council to do the dirty job, but as corrupted as they are even they aren't willing to go that far. So Saul turns to a foreigner, an Edomite, to accomplish his evil will. Do'eg is anxious and willing and so begins with killing all 85 priests and then in Machiavellian style murders their families. To send a message to anyone who might think to rise up and oppose the king, even the infant children of the Levite Priests and their livestock are destroyed.

We covered this last week, but I want to reiterate that because the Bible presents us with progressive patterns, we ought to look closely not just at Saul, but also his main henchman Do'eg. Do'eg was a descendant of Edom (Esau), and the Bible has much to say about the character and destiny of Edom. It is therefore not surprising to learn that when David's descendant Yeshua was born 1000 years after King Saul, another Edomite sought to kill those who would follow him. That Edomite was King Herod.

I proposed to you that it certainly seems possible, if not probable, that the so-called False Prophet (the main henchman) of the coming Anti-Christ will be of Edomite descent. I am not called to be a prophecy teacher; but occasionally there is no bypassing it and so I want to take a brief detour to examine the major Bible prophecy concerning Edom because it is entirely possible that some of us may still be living when this prophecy occurs in all of its fullness.

Turn your Bibles to the book of Obadiah. This book is a mere 21 verses so we'll read it all.

### **READ OBADIAH all**

The famous place called Petra (now part of Jordan) was in Edom. Thus in the 1<sup>st</sup> few verses of Obadiah we read of "you whose homes are caves in the cliffs"; this is referring to Petra and its

surrounds. I have been there and taken several people to see it and the size and scope of it takes your breath away.

Although Edom and Israel were related through Esau and Jacob, there was constant warfare between the two countries. David was the first Israelite King to conquer Edom. Edom revolted in the days of King Joram, installing its own king. Years later, Amaziah re-conquered Edom, and it was not until the days of Ahaz that the country regained its independence. In the 6th century BC Edom was conquered by the Babylonians.

Edom will play a major role in the End Times, regardless of what modern name it might go by. And it seems clear that a very prominent Edomite will also play a major role in trying to defeat the returning Messiah, just as has happened at least twice in the past (one of which we are reading about in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel). It may just be that Do'eg was the first of this type and shadow.

This bears repeating: while on the surface this is all about King Saul committing personal retribution against Ahimelech (who Saul felt was siding with David), that was a ruse. Saul was looking for an excuse to abolish the Priesthood. After all, what possible use could a man who is God's enemy have for a group of men whose job it is to discern God's will, teach it to Saul's people, and carry out God's ritual law? It has been the ways of men since time immemorial to create false crises or to come up with an excuse to carry out some kind of act that actually disguises a much broader and more sinister design and intent. If King Saul was going to defeat God, he would have to begin by eradicating God's servants. Church, for those who have an ear, pay attention to what I just told you. Inevitably the greatest danger comes from within, not without.

But God being God, He saved a remnant of one: Avyatar. Avyatar was Achimelech's son, and likely in line to be the next High Priest. Somehow he escaped the slaughter of the Priest of Nob and fled to David for protection. I doubt that Avyatar realized it at the time, but what happened at Nob was merely a fulfillment of something that had been prophesied several years earlier. Let's recall that prediction by looking at 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 2:27-36.

### **READ 1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL 2:27 - 36**

There are a couple of critical lessons and principles in this passage, the truth of which is now being made manifest in the later chapters of Samuel.

First is the principle contained in chapter 2 verse 30 and while it applied to Eli's descendants it also applies to all Believers in every age:

***CJB 1 Samuel 2:30 "Therefore ADONAI the God of Isra'el says, 'I did indeed say that your family and your father's family would walk in my presence forever.' But now ADONAI says, 'Forget it! I respect those who respect me, but those who despise me will meet with contempt.***

The number one requirement to receive God's promised blessings is abiding trust and respect in Him. When that ends, the promised blessings end with it. I cannot say it strongly enough;

this is NOT about belief. Eli's family did NOT stop BELIEVING in Yehoveh, God of Israel, but they did pervert their worship of Him and add sufficient paganism and manmade traditions and personal wants and desires to their lives that God counted it as lack of trust and respect. Where is that line, exactly, that we dare not cross over? No man knows. But when a man does cross over it, then expulsion from the Kingdom is the divine response.

***CJB Romans 11:19 So you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> True, but so what? They were broken off because of their lack of trust. However, you keep your place only because of your trust. So don't be arrogant; on the contrary, be terrified!***

The second lesson is found in verse 32:

***Samuel 2:32 At a time when Isra'el is prospering, you will see a rival in my Dwelling; and never will anyone in your family live to old age.***

Indeed Eli's family had a rival. There was another High Priest and priestly family in existence, the family of Zadok. Eli and his descendants were of the line of Ithamar (one of Aaron's sons) but they were NOT supposed to be the High Priestly line. Rather the descendants of Eleazar were to produce the High Priests. Zadok were the descendants of Eleazar. Even though Zadok became the High Priest, David allowed Avyatar to continue to serve; so there were rival High Priests for awhile (even though apparently Zadok held more power). This would be remedied when Solomon, who followed David and felt no such loyalty to Avyatar, deposed him and then only Zadok remained in office.

So here we see how the Lord allowed a terrible evil, perpetrated by an alliance between a Hebrew and a foreigner, to be committed upon the Priesthood. Yet this terrible evil not only punished what was actually a technically illegitimate line of Priests, but by wiping them out (all but one), it now paved the way for the much smaller and lesser powerful line of Zadok to ascend back to their rightful legitimate place. And in later chapters we'll see David appoint Zadok as High Priest to complete the circle.

The lesson: just because an institution that claims to be of God (and in some manner seems to follow His ways) is divinely allowed to exist and prosper for a long time doesn't mean that it is legitimate or will it always prosper. It may just be a tool for the Lord to use to achieve His will, just as was Pharaoh. A religious veneer often hides a false core that will one day be exposed.

When Avyatar arrived at David's encampment with the devastating news, David instantly knew that his own lies and deceptions and lack of concern for the people of Nob led to their murder. He openly admitted it and pledged to guard and care for the only surviving priest from Nob, Avyatar.

Not only that, but David now had in his charge the sole remaining link to Yehoveh so that, along with the ritual vest that carried the precious Urim and Thummim, David now had a means to discern God's will.

Let's move on to chapter 23.

### **READ 1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL CHAPTER 23 all**

David was probably still somewhere in or near an area called the Forest (or Woods) of Hereth located in the region of Judah called the Shephelah. This is the long coastal plain that begins at the Mediterranean and spreads out eastward until the foothills of Judah begin to rise up.

Scholars have had a difficult time locating this area. In fact some doubt that this area of woods ever existed because none was known there for the past several hundred years. But they don't take two things into account: first, the land only prospers and remains fertile when God's people are living there (this is the spiritual influence). And second, the trees were intentionally eradicated by men (the fleshy, physical influence). Once Muslim rule over the area began (as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century), one of the primary means of taxation to support the Caliphate was a tree tax. Every tree on a piece of land had a levy placed on it. Since much of the land was owned by absentee Muslim landlords who had no interest in the productivity of the land they owned or in contributing to the Caliphate's coffers, they ordered the trees cut down. No trees, no taxes. Thus vast tracts of wooded areas disappeared. This of course hastened soil erosion and before long the Holy Land was as denuded of its vegetation as is modern day Haiti. They couldn't grow any but the poorest of crops because the exposed top soil was blown away in the seasonal dry eastern winds. In but a couple of decades the land was useless; it was either swamps or desert and it remained that way until the Jews returned, reforested the land, and turned it into the beautiful place we visit today.

David received word that the Philistines were attacking Ke'ilah and plundering the threshing floors. The place of Ke'ilah is well known and is the modern day town of Khirbet Qila, located about 8 miles southwest of Hebron. Technically Ke'ilah was part of Judah, however at this time it was under Philistine military control.

The city of Ke'ilah was a walled city; but notice that is not what was being attacked. The threshing floors were the target of the Philistines, not the city or its inhabitants. The threshing floors were always outside the cities and towns, next to the fields. The Philistines weren't interested in land acquisition and empire building. They also weren't mindless barbarians that rather enjoyed destroying things and creating mayhem. Rather their strategy was to lord over areas in order to control commerce and thus benefit economically. They were coming to Ke'ilah to confiscate the grain. That means that harvesting was nearly complete and the threshing process had begun (it would have been pointless to attack while the grain was immature or still in the fields on the stock).

They wanted the grain because they could capture it without doing much work and sell it both to their own people and abroad. The Philistines were in the shipping business and they needed a ready supply of goods and commodities. Plundering it from their neighbors and then turning around and selling it was the common method of that era. To destroy cities, villages and fields would have been counter-productive.

Verse 2 seems straightforward enough but there is a little hidden gem in the first 3 words:

“David consulted YHWH”. Immediately thereafter the question asked of God is recorded for us: “Should I go and attack these Philistines (meaning at Ke’ilah)”? To inquire of God is most often to employ the two ritual stones called the Urim and Thummim. These were stored inside a special pocket sewn into the High Priest’s ritual vest. And sure enough we’re told in verse 6 that Avyatar had brought his father’s (Achimelech’s) ritual vest with him when he came to David. One give-a-way in Scripture to help determine if an inquiry involved the Urim and Thummim is the format of the question; it has to be binary. In other words, only two answers are possible (yes or no, go or stay, left or right, up or down, etc.). The answer God gave by means of the two ritual stones was, yes, David should go and attack the Philistines who were plundering the grain from Ke’ilah.

David had no doubts but the refugees from Saul who were with him in the Woods of Hereth weren’t in the same frame of mind. Here they were trying to elude Saul and stay alive, and now they’re supposed to become a militia and go and fight the Philistines? For what? Why?

The resistance of the people sends David back to Avyatar and the two stones and he asks the Lord a similar question about what the result of this excursion would be because the people are afraid. God says that He will hand the Philistines over to David. Now let me caution you that the words with quotes around it that make it appear that these are the words that Yehoveh spoke to David are in fact what an editor wrote. The effect and meaning of the Lord’s response is entirely true, but remember the inquiry is through the Urim and Thummim. The stones certainly did not speak and there is no evidence that God spoke to David face to face and audibly. Rather the stones answered a question that was structured to give a yes or no answer, perhaps by one glowing and the other not. So David must have asked something to the effect of “will we win”, with the answer being, “yes”.

David went back to the men and they followed him to Ke’ilah where a great victory was achieved. It’s interesting that livestock (of the Philistines) is mentioned. A good question would be why is Philistine livestock present here at a battle? The answer is that probably they brought the animals to graze in the fields that had already been harvested. We have to not so much picture the Philistines as a hardened army coming to fight a war, but rather an armed contingent of men simply arriving in a show of force to confiscate the grain over a several day period, and during that time to let their cattle graze and fatten up on the leftovers. I suspect there was a mixture of Philistine soldiers (to more or less act as guards and intimidators) to oversee a large contingent of Philistine civilian workers to gather the confiscated grain and prepare it for shipment.

There is also a result of this episode that although not spoken would have been well understood. David acted as a king; he led the people into battle and rescued a town of fellow Judahites from the enemy.

Verse 7 says that King Saul got word about Avyatar fleeing to David and David leading some men to rescue Ke’ilah. Saul’s response was that this afforded him a good opportunity to capture David because David would have been trapped inside a walled city. But there is even more here. The delusional king actually believed that the God of Israel had actively handed David over to him. More literally, verse 7 has Sha’ul saying: “God has alienated him (meaning

David) from himself and into my hand....". What chutzpah! Sha'ul thinks that the Lord has rejected His own anointed king in favor of the anti-king. From Saul's viewpoint all he had to do was to send a sizeable battalion of troops, surround the city, and demand that David be handed over. If the city closed the gates and refused, then Saul's troops would put the city under siege. They probably wouldn't attack it; rather they'd just wait it out until the city folks ran out of food or water or both. Time was on Saul's side.

For Sha'ul, that David would be trapped inside Ke'ilah was sufficient for now. Sooner or later David would have no choice but to surrender. David figured that Saul was going to do something, because news of David rescuing Ke'ilah and saving their food supply would have spread like wildfire. So David (from inside the walled city of Ke'ilah) summoned Ahyatar and had him consult the Urim and Thummim with a couple of yes/no questions. The first question was if King Sha'ul would bring troops and try to capture David there. God's answer through the ritual stones was "yes". The second question was if when Saul and his troops showed up, would the people of Ke'ilah turn David over to Saul? God's answer was also "yes".

With that information David gathered his men, now numbering around 600, and left Ke'ilah.

I wonder how David must have felt knowing that the citizens of Ke'ilah would so readily give David up to Saul after he had risked his own life, and the lives of 600 men, to rescue them? How quickly the people who benefited from David's selfless act on their behalf were ready to turn their backs on him. But is this not typical of the way that both the type of Messiah (David) and the actual Messiah (Yeshua) would be treated by the very people that should have rallied around them in gratitude and love?

David and his 600 flee to the great expanse of wilderness that is the Judean desert. We'll follow him there next week.