

2ND SAMUEL

Week 33, chapters 21 and 22

Last time we concluded the disturbing story of King David's solution for ending a famine (that had been caused by a 3 year drought). There is no doubt that the drought was of divine origins because David inquired of the Lord and the Lord plainly said He was causing the drought. The difficulties for us begin when YHWH also tells David that His withholding of the rains was due to blood guilt caused by King Saul and his household when they unjustly committed mass homicide upon certain members of the Benjamite city of Gibeon. These certain members were not Hebrews, but were ethnic Amorites whose ancestors had made a peace treaty almost 4 centuries earlier with Joshua. One of the complexities of our story is that this ancient peace treaty had invoked Yehoveh's name as the guarantor of its terms, and so when Saul killed the Gibeonites he also defiled God's holy name by violating the covenant of peace.

After David turned over 7 men, descendants of Saul, to the Gibeonites for them to execute for blood revenge they were killed, impaled on stakes, and then left to rot. But Rizpah, a former concubine of King Saul and mother of 2 of the victims, camped out at the place where the 7 men's bodies were disrespectfully being displayed in order that she might discourage birds and jackals from picking at the decaying flesh. She faithfully remained there from around April to (probably) August. We are told that once the seasonal rains began, she took this as a heavenly sign that the curse of the drought had been lifted and so went home to Jerusalem.

David was so impressed by Rizpah's faithfulness (and no doubt to some degree or another felt that her dedication had something to do with God once again allowing water to fall from the skies) that he too was moved to action and so he not only had the skeletal remains of the 7 corpses retrieved, but he also sent a team of men to Jabesh-Gilead to bring the ashes of King Saul and Jonathan back into Israel for a proper burial in their home tribal territory of Benjamin.

When all this is done we get the words in 2nd Samuel 21: 14 that "only after that was God prevailed on to show mercy to the land". The usual Christian theological conclusion of this episode is that thus we see that human blood had to be shed (painful as it was) in order for the

blood guilt caused by Saul to be atoned for. And many ancient and modern Hebrew theologians see it generally the same (although not necessarily for the same reasons). And to all this I said I strongly disagree because these conclusions completely ignore the Torah Laws that would govern this matter (you can review last week's lesson for the details). Rather what we actually see here is a horrific (but rather par-for-the-course) illicit mixing of God's laws with manmade doctrine, political expediency, religious superstitions, and paganized thoughts. And as we wind down the Book of 2nd Samuel, and David's life, this is the general condition of God's chosen people in the era of the Kings.

Before we finish chapter 21 I want us all consider that before we shake our heads in sadness or disgust at these ancient Hebrews, modern Judaism and much (though by no means all) of modern Christianity is on a parallel path. Manmade doctrines that purport to speak for the Scriptures often override God's holy Word. Historically pagan symbols and rituals have been woven into our worship practices, holidays, and even into our speech. And unless we determine to carefully examine even the most basic tenants of our faith, and compare them to Holy Scripture, we have no idea such improper ideas and foreign beliefs are even there.

David reacted on impulse and normal religious and social protocol for his day; this is what we tend to do as well. He determined that he was doing what was right, solving a problem that the Lord had put before him. But had he thought to consult God's Word, instead of relying on embedded cultural traditions or the council of men whom he considered to be religious experts, no doubt the route he took to try and expiate the blood guilt caused by Saul would have been very different. I also have no doubt that had he taken the course of action that is prescribed by the Torah that he would have faced nearly universal resistance from his royal court and from his people. Why? Because it would have been unfamiliar to them.

Today many of you (us) who have for a long time sensed that something is not quite right about where we have arrived in our journey with the Lord, and that something essential is amiss within our cherished religious institutions, have pressed the Pause button. You have determined to go to the source, the Bible, and see what God has to say about things, rather than continuing to rely on what men have to say about what God has to say. And you are meeting a lot of resistance, aren't you? You try to show others what the Word of God says, and they look at you like you have horns and are snorting fire. You are accused of causing disunity in the Body, or even of rejecting Christ. Sometimes your family becomes greatly concerned for you, perhaps even shuns you. Your pastors and ministers do all they can to remind you that you are merely a layman and that they are the ones who are the experts and the keepers of God's truth; for you to study Holy Scripture (especially if it includes the Old Testament) is a danger to your spiritual health and well being.

You and I have the same choice before us as David had: seek God's Word and in obedience do what is right in the Lord's eyes (and certainly encounter resistance). Or we can continue with what has become normal and customary within our Western society and religious circles because then we'll not disrupt our comfortable and familiar situation; or even worse, we'll not have to admit our wrong, repent, and make changes to our lives and lifestyles.

READ REVELATION 3:1 – 6

This message from Messiah was written to End Times worshippers of the God of Israel and the primary message is: Wake up! We have strayed onto the wrong path, think everything is fine, but are in the greatest danger of being removed from the Book of Life. We have been operating on Auto-pilot for so long, placing our confidence in doctrines and religious institutions, that we have stopped looking to the Word of God (who is Yeshua) for truth.

Let's move on and re-read the final verses of 2nd Samuel chapter 21.

RE-READ 2ND SAMUEL 21:15 – end

This appendix that lists various happenings of David's life continues with a series of notices of wars that David fought with the Philistines. These brief accounts were compiled from various chronicles and are given to us at this point as practical proofs that on numerous occasions the Lord graciously delivered David from the hands of his enemies. In fact, in retrospect, it probably would have been better to conclude chapter 21 at verse 13, and then to attach this final part of chapter 21 as the opening of chapter 22. And the reason is that here we have the recounting of these marvelous deliverances of David as preparation for a song of David that glorifies God as the one who delivers him.

No doubt the reference in verse 15 about David leading the battle and getting tired is at a time of middle age for David, when he spends most of his time tending to state matters and little time training his body for the rigors of combat. Whereas David was always rescuing someone

else earlier in his life (especially before he became king), now we have his nephew **Avishai** having to rescue David (in a nick of time I might add).

It is interesting to me that we are reminded of the giants of Gath (Gath was a major Philistine city/state). In fact we see Goliath's name mentioned here, and it has caused some needless consternation among Bible teachers because they see a conflict between the time when David as the young shepherd boy battled and beheaded the warrior Goliath. But it seems that **Golyat** (Goliath) was a common name among this race of people and so it was another and different Goliath that is being spoken of here.

The result of this near miss on David's life prompted his generals to insist that he stay home in the safety of his palace fortress called the City of David and this because he is the "lamp of Israel" and thus too important to take risks. More than likely this term equates to how we might today say that a particular leader is the "heart and soul" of a nation or a family. It isn't meant to be taken terribly spiritually, but rather is an epithet meant to eulogize someone for their great merit and importance to the community.

Verses 18 onward (to me) seems mainly to chronicle the demise of this declining race of giants that had thrown in with the Philistines and contributed greatly to the air of invincibility that had propelled the Philistine war machine for so long. In the Bible the race is called the **Anakim** and alternately the **Rephaim** and they eventually died out as their limited gene pool shrank into oblivion not long after David's time. Why they died out rather quickly is easily explained; they were always upfront in every battle. Since they were so large and fearsome they were put at the vanguard of every conflict as a means to frighten the enemy. Thus they were also always the most vulnerable.

We are even told of one of these giants who had 6 fingers and 6 toes and such a medical phenomenon of having an extra digit on an extremity is actually quite common among people who are unusually tall.

One statement in verse 18 bears a little more scrutiny because when properly translated it helps us to better understand the intent. Where most Bibles (as with our CJB) will say, "one of the sons of the giant", what it actually says in the original Hebrew is, "**yalid ha Rapha**". This translates literally to, "born to **Rapha**". The ancient Hebrew sages explain that **Rapha** is the name of the father of the race named after him the **Rephaim** (or in another way to spell it, Raphaim). So as an analogy this would be like calling David, "one born to Israel". Jacob called

Israel isn't David's biological father, but rather this is a means of explaining ancient family ties that today we would call a race of people (in David's case called Israelites).

Let's move on to chapter 22. This is a long chapter, and although we'll read it all in one sitting, we'll later on re-read portions as we go.

READ 2ND SAMUEL 22 all

First notice (as I mentioned earlier) how the first words of this chapter speak to David's deliverance from his enemies; and this immediately follows the short listing of battles with the Philistines in chapter 21. So we would be far better to begin this chapter by starting at verse 15 of the previous chapter in order to see that it was all intended to flow together as a single thought.

This chapter is known as David's Psalm (or Song) of Thanksgiving and is also duplicated in its entirety in the Book of Psalms as Psalm 18. There are some differences between 2nd Samuel 22 and Psalm 18, but they are generally few and minor. Some regard this song as sort of David's last words; but perhaps it is more of a summation of what he has learned over his lifetime about God, about kingship, about God's kingdom, and there are even some prophetic utterances of a future king and a future kingdom that are Messianic in nature.

Almost certainly this was written in his old age as he is reflecting on the full range of dangers and deliverances that he experienced. Much of this is written using figurative and poetic speech. Thus we have (for instance) God riding upon a Cherub, shooting arrows, and breathing smoke and fire. None of this is real; rather it is just a way to express a principle or a characteristic using common illustrations that people of David's day would understand. Further, sometimes particular words were chosen in order to achieve the rhythmic and metered attributes of poetry rather than for a precision of meaning.

The other thing that becomes obvious in this Psalm is that we see the ultimate cosmic conundrum expressed that both Judaism and Church have struggled with mightily; it is that God has two primary attributes that are totally at odds with one another, and thus seem

impossible for the same being to hold simultaneously. On the one hand YHWH mercifully and lovingly watches over His worshippers and saves and delivers them from trouble; and on the other hand He is a fierce and ruthless warrior-God who punishes and destroys (usually his enemies but at times His own worshippers who have become unfaithful). These are characteristics that are Biblically associated with the Messiah as well that again both Judaism and Christianity have struggled to harmonize or (sometimes) even to accept.

Judaism calls the saving attribute of God that is manifested in the Messiah as Ben Yosef (son of Joseph). They call the fierce and ruthless warrior manifestation as Messiah Ben David (son of David). Thus Judaism solves the problem by saying that since it is impossible that a single being could harbor these opposite attributes then there will be two Messiahs (one that is a Deliverer, the other that is a destructive Warrior). Christianity has generally solved the problem by saying that Messiah is ONLY a Deliverer, and the Warrior attribute is dead and gone and belongs only to the Old Testament God. Thus the Church tends to apologize for the former blood thirsty God of the Hebrew Bible who has (thankfully) been replaced by the loving and self-sacrificial God of the New Testament. As I once reminded a dear friend of mine who indeed is the poster child for this view that our New Testament Messiah's character is a singular one of mercy, peace and love; then who is this mysterious person who leads the saints into the battle of Armageddon, personally killing millions of the enemy, until blood in that enormous valley of their conflict rises to the level of a horses' bridle?

Therefore this Psalm of David is actually looking ahead to one Messiah that appears in two manifestations at two different times; or as modern Evangelical Christians call it, the 1st coming and the 2nd coming. In the 1st coming of Messiah (the Messiah of the Gospels) he is indeed the loving Deliverer. In the 2nd coming (the Messiah of the Book of Revelation) he is a fierce ruthless warrior and a king over all mankind (not just Israel) who will annihilate his enemies and rule the entire earth with a rod of iron.

OK. So let's dissect David's Song of Thanksgiving.

In verse 1 David is thanking Yehoveh for delivering him from all of his enemies and from the power of Saul. Thus David considers his "enemies" as those who are attacking him on a national basis for a national purpose. That is, they want to rule over Israel, or they want to absorb Israel into their foreign empire (as the Philistines), or they want to destroy Israel. David distinguishes them from King Saul who (if he is even considered an enemy) attacks David on a personal level for personal purposes. David never disputed that Saul was the rightful, God appointed king. Rather it was that the paranoid and delusional Saul saw David as a rival to be squashed at a time when David had no ambition to rule over Israel and was totally loyal to King

Saul.

In verse 2 we start seeing some beautiful and grand figurative and metaphorical expressions that describe Yehoveh. And, by the way, over and over in this piece (even though our Bibles obscure it) the Lord's formal name YHWH is expressed as opposed to the words of our English translations such as God or Lord or Adonai. The first expression used describes God as a Rock. The Hebrew word used in this instance for rock is **selah**. **Selah** refers to a cliff or a crag (a rocky outcropping) located upon a high place. It is meant to be coupled to the next description of the Lord as David's fortress and Deliverer, and then in verse 3 as the place of refuge. So the mental picture that we are to get is of God bringing David up to an impenetrable high place and protecting him. The ancients all thought of their gods as living on mountain tops (this included the Hebrews). Thus the first Biblical name or title given to God is **El Shaddai** (God of the Mountain). And we have Moses meeting God on a mountaintop (Mt. Sinai). The 2nd use of the word rock is a different Hebrew word: **tsur**. And **tsur** more refers to a boulder (the way we typically think of a rock). **Tsur** is regularly used in the Bible metaphorically as a symbol of stability and strength.

Verses 2 -4 is a kind of summation of the theme of the entire Psalm; divine deliverance from David's agitated life so full of its ups and downs. How many times David must have thought that there could be no hope for tomorrow, and at other times how tomorrow seemed so secure and certain. And these various descriptions of God are not only about WHO God is (deliverer, defender, savior) but also what God DOES. So David is glorifying the Lord not just for His character but for His actions.

Verse 5 presents water as a violent flood of death enveloping David, and also poetically terms them the floods of **Belial** (your Bibles may say destruction). We've encountered the term **Belial** a number of times, usually in the phrase **bene Belial** (sons of worthlessness). The idea is of evil, satanic, so it is the Adversary who is using various proxies to try to kill David. In fact by New Testament times, **Belial** had actually become a formal name for Satan.

CJB **2 Corinthians 6:15** *What harmony can there be between the Messiah and B'liya'al? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?*

David envisions the “ropes of Sheol”, the grave, the underworld of death, already binding him and dragging him down into the bowels of the earth so certain did the prospect of death at times seem. But when all seemed hopeless that no restoration or rescue was possible David called out to Yehoveh, whom he terms “my **Elohim**” (**my** god as opposed to other gods). And “out of His temple” (his **hekal**) the Lord heard (**shema**) David’s voice.

God’s **hekal**, His Temple, is referring to God’s heavenly abode. At this time no earthly temple for Yehoveh had yet been built. But now that God sees David’s dilemma, and that the Evil One is trying to destroy God’s anointed king, God acts. And when God acts all nature re-acts. When God moves, the universe must respond; but the invisible spiritual sphere is also affected. So a picture is painted of the earth shaking (like an earthquake) but also of heaven quaking as God rises to an irresistible wrathful fury. These are all metaphors for utter destruction being brought upon the enemies of God’s chosen. Smoke from God’s nostrils, fire shooting out from His mouth, hot coals, these are all common Biblical idioms expressing rage and anger. In fact it was and still is a common Middle Eastern idiom to speak of a person who is angry as one whose nostrils heat up.

One more time let me say that these expressions are all figurative. God does not have nostrils or ears, or a hand to hold a sword. He doesn’t have a mouth of hot coals that spews fire. In fact to speak of God as angry is stretching matters a bit. God is spirit. He is without form. He is without emotions as we think of them. He does not bounce from happiness to sadness to anger and back again as the situation changes. God is NOT a man; He is not even a Super Man. God is a whole other being that comes to us from another dimension beyond time and space. But what else did the ancients have or what else have we moderns to relate to God with, other than the terms of our own human existence within the context of our familiar surroundings? Yet we must be very cautious in attaching human attributes to God and should instead at times merely accept His awesome mystery and our inability to comprehend Him. When we carry human familiarity with God one step too far it is foolish and irreverent, if not idolatry.

Verse 10 begins a decidedly Messianic picture of God that Hebrews and Christians both acknowledge. God comes down to earth with a thick impenetrable darkness between He and mankind. We don’t have the time to read all of the portions of Exodus that describe this same phenomenon, but I will read this:

(Exo 19:17-20 CJB)

¹⁷ Moshe brought the people out of the camp to meet God; they stood near the base of

the mountain.

¹⁸ Mount Sinai was enveloped in smoke, because ADONAI descended onto it in fire- its smoke went up like the smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently.

¹⁹ As the sound of the shofar grew louder and louder, Moshe spoke; and God answered him with a voice.

²⁰ ADONAI came down onto Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; then ADONAI called Moshe to the top of the mountain; and Moshe went up.

It was up into this thick darkness (here figuratively described as smoke) that Moses ascended to receive the 10 Commandments. The darkness is a type of veil between God and man for man's own protection because no man can see God's face and live. Thus there was also established a veil, the ***Parokhet***, between man and the innermost chamber (the Holy of Holies) in the Tabernacle and Temple.

Verse 11 gives us another figurative picture of God coming down to earth, and this is of Him on the back of a Cherub, a ***Keruv***, and He was seen as on the wings of the wind, the ***ruach***, which also means "spirit". Because the Lord's Temple in heaven is the incomparable original and the model after which the Wilderness Tabernacle on earth was patterned, the Cherub adorns the lid of the Ark of the Covenant that the Lord rides above (and uses the lid as His footstool.....figuratively of course). The Ark was literally, however, where God met with Moses when the Lord called him. And notice the reference to the spirit, the wind, the ***ruach***, which is the MEANS by which God manifests Himself on earth (or in a figurative sense, **transports** Himself to earth).

Let me pause here for a moment to point out that what is being described in this passage is a time when the Lord God becomes so enraged at the treatment of those who are His chosen and elected people; when the Creator decides to move decisively and destructively against the forces of wickedness who were on the verge of winning the eternal battle against the righteous, that He became personally involved. This is not an event that happens every day. In fact the next time this happens will be when Our Lord and Messiah Yeshua returns. David is describing the Day of the Lord.

And notice that verse 12 says that God comes with darkness as a canopy around him, with

thick clouds in the skies dense with water. I'm going to finish with this thought and I hope it will give you pause to contemplate it, if not noticing the chills running up and down your spine.

I have taught you all that the 7 Biblical Feasts are prophetic of milestones in Messiah's redemptive work on behalf of Yehoveh. I have taught you that the first 4 of the Feasts have been fulfilled exactly as foretold. The New Testament teaches us plainly and without equivocation that Yeshua died on the Feast of Passover, went into the rocky tomb on the Feast of Matza, and arose from the dead on the Feast of Bikkurim (Firstfruits). Further, after Yeshua ascended the Holy Spirit came to indwell men on the 4th of the yearly feasts, the Feast of Shavuot.

Thus I can only conclude that all remaining acts of redemption will occur on the 3 remaining Biblical Feasts, the final one being Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths. The two main features of the Feast of Sukkot are the Sukkah (the booth) and the water libation ceremony at the Temple, which is essentially a plea to God for rain. Look at verse 12. Adding back in a few Hebrew words we find that it says, "He (God) made **choshek** (spiritual darkness) His **sukkah** (His booth) around Him, and thick clouds in the skies dense with **mayim** (water, rain). The Day of the Lord will in the End Times (we are told) be as the day of darkness was in Egypt. That horrifying darkness in Egypt that shook Israel's captors to their core was not **layil** (the benign and regular darkness of nighttime) but rather **choshek**, a spiritual darkness, obscurity, denoting divinely caused calamity.

Thus we have an event in David's Psalm of Thanksgiving when God comes to earth with a Sukkah around Him and bringing rain water with Him. It is at this moment that He comes to deliver His chosen and anointed from the throes of annihilation at the hand of evil, and also to destroy His enemies. I cannot say it with 100% certainty, but for me this lends further credence to the Day of the Lord, and God's pouring out of His wrath on the earth, and thus the entry of God's people into Messiah's Millennial Kingdom, as being directly related to the Feast of Sukkot.

We do not know the year of our Our Lord's return, but we can know the season. And the season is the Fall Feast: the Feast of Tabernacles.

We'll continue with this next time.