



FEED MY SHEEP

PUBLISHED BY JAMES W. BRUGGEMAN
STONE KINGDOM MINISTRIES
P. O. BOX 6388
ASHEVILLE, NC 28816 U.S.A.

Issue #46

September 2002

The Jonathan Test and Saul the Prophet

Our study this month provides a stark contrast between the character of King Saul and his son, Jonathan, as they interact with David. Jonathan evinces a most noble character and gracious spirit as he acknowledges that he will not succeed his father as king. Saul, already king, gives way to jealousy which leads to paranoia that David intends to usurp his throne. These events are types which are very instructive for us today.

The Jonathan Test

Immediately after the great victory God gave David over Goliath, David was brought into the presence of King Saul.

1 Samuel 18:1 And it came to pass, when he [David] had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

This was a significant event. Jonathan's garments were not just off-the-rack blue jeans and a T-shirt from K-mart. Jonathan was the prince and heir-apparent. Accordingly, he was attired like royalty. In those days and long afterward in the East, the practice of giving one's garments and weapons to another symbolized the *transfer* of one's position to another.

Somehow Jonathan realized that God had chosen David as the next king instead of himself and so he performed this solemn act in recognition of David as the true heir to the throne in Israel. Unlike his father, Jonathan showed no sign of jealousy. Not a tinge of envy colored his brotherly love for David. He willingly accepted and gave himself over to God's will. Jonathan was acting like an overcomer. He showed true and virtuous character. He was gracious, not bitter. Can you imagine any ordinary man and how disappointed he might have been upon learning that even though his father was king, that he had been passed over in favor of another man?

As we seek to practice the principles of overcoming, can we act in a similar manner when we are confronted with circumstances such as these in our own life? Obviously, we are not literal heirs to an earthly monarch, but let's apply the general principle here. We can think of numerous circumstances which would apply. Let me share one with you from my own life.

Before I was in ministry, I was a general contractor and I was also active in civic affairs. I became vice-president of a Chamber of Commerce and chaired several of its committees. There were about a dozen of us board members from whom we elected our officers. When my term as vice-president was expiring, I ran for president. I felt that I was eminently qualified to serve. I had paid my dues, literally and figuratively. I believed that I could steer the chamber to greater success and frankly, that I could do a much better job than the man currently holding the office.

But I did not foresee the dirty tricks that the incumbent would use to promote himself and get himself re-elected.

Looking back, I now recognize that my opponent was clearly a Saul-type, and I must say that when he won, I was flabbergasted. It was a close vote and I had been betrayed by at least one person who had assured me of their vote. So in a sense, it was like I was the heir-apparent to the throne and when God made it clear that I was not to obtain that position, I confess that I did not handle the defeat as an aspiring overcomer should have. I was angry and bitter over the underhanded way I was defeated. Had it been fair, I would have been elected.

But this is another aspect of what being an overcomer is all about: How do we react when we have been treated unfairly? I blew it at that time. I resigned shortly thereafter, both from the board and resigned our company from the Chamber itself. I was the stereotypical “sore loser.” But do you know what I discovered? —and I’m being sarcastic because I am sure that many of us have discovered this method of our Father’s treatment of us when we fail. I discovered that if I don’t pass the test the first time, *I don’t get to skip it and advance* to the next stage. Father keeps bringing up refresher courses for us in this same general area from time to time.

He has in fact given me several more opportunities to pass this test over the years, and solely by the grace of God, I can tell you that He has brought me through those tests successfully. How does one pass the test? It depends upon the circumstances, but key ingredients are forgiving those who wrong you, blessing those who curse you, and by offering Him gratitude and praise for the uncomfortable circumstances and/or the hardship. (To be clear, I claim that I passed those tests, but I am certainly not claiming perfection or anywhere near it; I am only speaking here of being an overcomer in this one area in which He gave me “refresher courses and exams.”)

Well, that was an illustration from my life how the Jonathan test, as I call it, was applied. The applications for Christians in general are practically infinite. Perhaps you have been working very diligently at your job hoping to get a promotion, only to have to suffer the pain and disappointment of seeing a co-worker get the promotion. How did you handle it? I hope you did better than I did in the Chamber of Com-

merce test!

Perhaps you are a high school or college student. You have worked diligently all semester and submitted research papers worthy of an “A.” But the teacher did not like the “slant” you took, or just didn’t like you because you are a Christian, or just didn’t like you, period. He gave you a “C” (or worse). As you are entering adulthood, can you match it with spiritual maturity by thanking and praising God for this “left-handed blessing?”

Saul’s Jealousy

Now the focus of the story shifts from the relationship between David and Jonathan to that between David and King Saul. After the Goliath victory, David was promoted to command a large fighting force. His continuing victories not only brought him great popularity with the people in general, and the armies in particular, but he was even well-respected and well-liked by Saul’s ministers and personal staff.

If Saul were displaying the marks of an overcomer, he should rejoice that God has blessed the kingdom with such a multi-talented, capable individual as David. But the carnal mind surfaces in Saul and whispers: “Watch out for that David fellow. He’ll soon be more popular than you, oh great one, and then he’ll usurp your throne and the people will support him.” The Holy Writ records how upon returning from one particular victory...

1 Samuel 18:6 ...that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

7 And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

Saul gives way to the spirit of *jealousy* and *envy*. These traits are prominent in Saul’s (and a non-overcomer’s) character. Although the two terms are related, one of the key differences between jealousy and envy is that *jealousy* applies to the time when a person merely suspects that his perceived rival enjoys some advantage over him, whereas *envy* occurs when there is no doubt that a rival has indeed obtained some advantage. Furthermore, it is envy which induces a person to carry out some evil action against the perceived rival.

So in some respects, jealousy is the first stage of envy. If not surrendered and replaced with graciousness, jealousy can easily turn into full-blown envy, which leads to hatred and eventually, it can lead to murder. This is what happens in the case of Saul. First, Saul becomes *suspicious* that David is enjoying greater popularity with the people. As a result, he becomes *jealous* of David. Then events unfold which leave no doubt that David is *certainly* more adored and loved by the people.

8 And Saul was very wrath, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?

Saul is fearful because in his mind he attributes to David his own faulty character qualities. He is afraid that David will do what Saul himself would do if the positions were reversed; namely, to attempt a coup d'etat. With the popular support of the people and of the army, if David were a proud, ambitious and self-seeking person, he would seek to seize the throne from Saul. Saul, under the influence of the evil spirit, knows that if he and David's positions were reversed, he (Saul) would attempt a coup d'etat. Consequently, verse 9 informs us that...

9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

The NIV, which I find generally untrustworthy and unfaithful to the original languages, nonetheless, has the right idea here. It says:

NIV 1 Samuel 18:9 And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

NAS 1 Samuel 18:9 And Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.

Another probable reason why Saul eyed David with suspicion from that day on was because Saul now remembered what Samuel had told him back when he had refused to kill King Agag. Samuel had declared...

1 Samuel 13:14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: YHWH hath sought him a man after his own heart, and YHWH hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which YHWH commanded thee.

As Saul recalls Samuel's prophecy, Saul now feels quite sure that this shepherd-boy who has become the giant-killer is in fact the very man Samuel predicted. This is the man who will indeed be given the kingdom.

Saul in church history

1 Samuel 18:10 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house:

Notice how God inspired the human author to keep reiterating the fact that God is responsible for the *evil* spirit sent to torment Saul. [See FMS #44.] Returning to a major theme of these studies, we recall that Saul is identified with the feast of Pentecost. We have seen further how Saul and Pentecost are types of the so-called church age. The church age is the age of Pentecost. In other words, Saul is symbolic of the church during the last 2,000 years.

Because of this, we see that Saul represents some segment of Christians. He does not represent unbelievers or the heathen. Saul himself believed Yahweh was God. Saul's problem was that he wanted to rule *in place of* God.

Sound familiar? The church of Rome has for centuries called their popes "the vicar of Christ on earth," which means "in place of" Christ. Saul was indeed a believer in the God of Israel. He did not *deny* His existence. He was just a rebel,...disobedient,... proud,... angry, unfaithful and now we see he was jealous and envious of the man whom God had foreordained to rule in righteousness.

And so it has always been in the church age. The Saul types are jealous and envious of the David Company, those who attempt to get a closer walk with God. In doing so, the aspiring overcomers find they must go beyond or outside the pentecost church and leave behind the spiritually stifling dogmas and traditions of whatever church system the potential overcomer happens to be born into or finds himself in.

We must also recognize the fact that just because it says above in verse 10 that Saul was *prophesying*, that it was necessarily a good thing. False prophets also prophesy. Since it states in the very same verse that the evil spirit was upon Saul, we must conclude that Saul was prophesying falsely. This does not nec-

essarily mean that Saul was predicting the future like Jeanne Dixon or some other modern false prophet.

The gift of prophecy does not necessarily always mean predicting the future. There is another equally valid meaning for the verb “to prophesy” and that is it means to simply preach or teach the Word of God. The FMS is “prophesying” in that sense.

Therefore, we cannot be absolutely certain what Saul was doing when he was “prophesying,” but the fact that he was prophesying is again another reason to identify him with the realm of pentecost. Saul here is a type of the false prophet. And notice where he is prophesying—he is “in the midst of the house.” As we look at how this particular incident was a type and shadow, we understand this to refer to those within nominal Christianity who have taught false doctrine, the house symbolizing the nominal church. Indeed, the church under pentecost has seen its share of false prophets in the past 2,000 years. But this did not catch our Father by surprise. He inspired Peter to predict:

2 Peter 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

How many would “many” be? Close to *half* of the Christian world followed Arius back in the fourth century as he denied the deity of Christ. His spiritual descendants are found today in individuals in virtually all denominations—especially the more liberal ones—as well as the entire denomination known as the Jehovah’s Witnesses. We have discussed this doctrine in “Is Jesus God?”, FMS #5-8, which are still available. Since those writings, another very obvious proof of the deity of our Lord has come to our attention:

Exodus 15:2 The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation.

“The LORD” is in Hebrew “YHWH,” or as we vocalize it “Yahweh.” The Hebrew word translated “salvation” is “Yahshua,” which we translate into English as “Jesus.” Conclusion: Yahweh became Yahshua. In other words, God the Father became Je-

sus! A second and third witness are given in the same verse in Isaiah.

Isaiah 2: 2 Behold, God is my salvation [Yahshua/Jesus]; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH [Yahweh] is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation [Yahshua/Jesus].

Another group of early heretics were the Gnostics. They faded from the scene as a formal group, but much of their philosophy and beliefs are found today in what is generally known as the New Age movement. It is not a complete and perfect match but there is certainly a lot of overlap. Of course, the entire Roman Catholic church system in general is rife with heresy. Catholicism in practice “denies the Lord that bought them” (see 2 Peter 2:1 above) by relying on works for salvation.

Popes in general are heretics extraordinaire. They have declared themselves infallible when they speak on matters of faith and doctrine. What arrogance! But I suppose if you really believe you are “in place of God” on earth, or at least you want hundreds of millions of your followers to believe you are God on earth, then you had better declare yourself infallible.

The popes have declared themselves and the church of Rome to be superior to all other bodies of Christians. They have also declared the doctrine of the immaculate conception, by which they are referring to the alleged sinless condition of *Mary*, not the sinless condition of the *Savior*.

We produced an eight-tape series on the Roman Catholic Church some years ago, which goes into substantial detail on all that (tapes #133-140). The few examples we have given here and literally thousands of other examples from the Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox and all the other branches of Christianity could be cited which are fulfillments of Saul prophesying under the influence of an evil spirit “in the midst of the house.” (*To be continued.*)

Feed My Sheep is a part of the teaching ministry of James W. Bruggeman and is sent out freely upon request. The tithes and gifts of those who are fed by it make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts may be sent to P.O. Box 6388, Asheville, NC 28816.