



FEED MY SHEEP

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

Issue #65

April 2004

The Sins of the Fathers

This is part of our continuing studies in the life of Saul and David. We began with the coronation of Saul as the first king of Israel and now we come to his tragic end. We have a special focus within the general exposition of these sketches in Israel history. We are paying special attention to the *character* qualities of Saul and David because these men are types and shadows of two kinds of believers. Saul symbolizes believers who are not overcomers. David represents the believers who do attain to the high calling of overcomers. Since we all want to be overcomers, it behooves us to see what it is that makes one an overcomer.

In the November and December, 2003 issues of FMS, we made some observations into just how astonishingly pervasive witchcraft actually is in the church... much of it being practiced in total ignorance by otherwise "good Christians."

In the past two issues, we examined one of the two threads of the story which were available for us to follow as David and his men were told to depart from the area in northern Israel known as the valley of Jezreel. This was God's providence saving David from having to go to war against his own kinsmen or alternatively, to betray Achish the Philistine king. David did not wish to do that either since Achish had been very kind and generous to David.

So we saw how David and his men returned to their homes at Ziklag, found them burned to the ground and their wives, children and material goods all missing. Again, through the providence of our Father, an Egyptian slave of the Amalekites was discovered abandoned and dying in the wilderness and he was able to

provide the intelligence information which enabled David and 400 men to conquer a much larger force of Amalekites.

We saw how 400 Amalekites escaped on camels and we gave our best understanding of what these types and shadows signify for us in the 21st century. (Actually, due to space limitations, we had to omit many other correlations which are discussed extensively in our tapes #403 & 404, *Witchcraft and the Amalekites*; \$10 ppd.) We noted that the two wives of David which were kidnapped by the Amalekites symbolize the two wives of Christ, Israel and Judah.

Now we can pick up the other thread of the story. While David and his men are marching their two or three day trek back to Ziklag, it is likely that the Philistines began their attack on Israel that very same day. Remember, the Bible is a very condensed version of historical events and so not every detail of timing and not every person involved in an event is necessarily given space in the Holy Writ.

Remember also, that it is likely that on the night before the battle, Saul, in a desperate attempt to get *some* kind of supernatural guidance consulted the witch at Endor. Although the forbidden practice of necromancy (which means calling up the alleged spirits of the dead), although that practice is absolutely forbidden by God's law, nonetheless, God uses it to inform Saul that on the morrow he and his sons will die in the battle with the Philistines.

Saul and his armies were up on Mount Gilboa which was actually the primary peak among the chain

of the mountains of Gilboa. There was a very large valley and the Philistines had encamped up on the *southern* slopes of Shunem, almost directly north of Saul and his army. Shunem is part of a range of mountains called Little Hermon.

Remember also how Saul was so desperate to consult the witch that he risked going very close to the Philistines in the middle of the night to get around them to get to Endor, which is located on the *northward* slopes of Shunem and Little Hermon.

The enormous and wide valley between the Philistines and Israel is called by several names: the Plain of Esdraelon, the Valley of Jezreel and most famously today, the Valley of Megiddo. This is the location where fundamentalist prophecy preachers believe the so-called Battle of Armageddon is going to take place. Armageddon is the Anglicized form for Har-Megiddo. Now to our text.

1 Samuel 31:1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

2 And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons.

3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore [severely] wounded of the archers

4 Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

5 And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.

6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together.

These first six verses deal specifically with the battle itself to the point where Saul dies. The rest of the chapter deals with the aftermath. The Philistines had appeared at the Valley of Jezreel both with much larger numbers and with better armaments. This is what so frightened King Saul.

The Philistines had horsemen, chariots and archers—in massive numbers, comparatively speaking. While Israel certainly had some archers, there is no evidence to my knowledge that Israel had many horsemen and chariots at this time. My visualization of the way the battle went is that the armies of Israel came down to the valley, the wide plain of Megiddo, hoping to engage the enemy in hand-to-hand combat with swords and spears.

But the Philistines, having great numerical superiority of bowmen, were able to cause many casualties among the Israelites before they even got close enough for much hand-to-hand combat.

Thus, the text says that many Israelites fled and many were slain. My surmise is that at this point, King Saul called for his troops to retreat back up the slopes of the Gilboa mountain range and he himself went the highest point, actually called Mt. Gilboa, where he and his special guard attempted to stave off the enemy.

It would appear from verse 2 that the Philistines specially targeted King Saul and his sons. They did this knowing that *their* deaths would create great consternation, confusion and ultimately the defeat of the Israelite forces.

Saul's sons, Prince Jonathan, Prince Abinadab and Prince Malchishua are all slain. It does not tell us whether they were hit and died in the sight of Saul or not, but can you imagine the utter despair that Saul must have experienced if he saw his sons slain before his eyes? We can be certain that the prediction he had heard the night before, that both he and his sons would die the next day in battle, was dominating his mind the whole day.

And so that when he saw his sons slain, he absolutely knew that he would die before sundown as well. We can deduce that Israel must have put up a valiant fight for some hours before fleeing in retreat because it tells us that the Philistines did not attempt to strip the slain until the next day. Therefore, the battle must have continued until quite late in the day.

King Saul might have suffered several arrow wounds in the battle. But he was able to retreat up into a hiding place on Mt. Gilboa. Although he knew his wounds would ultimately prove to be fatal, he also knew that his wounds were not going to cause his

death *quickly*.

He was getting weaker and weaker from loss of blood, and he realized that he would soon no longer have the strength to fight, so he tried to hide among the rocks and crags. But soon he saw that the Philistines had spotted him and he assumed, no doubt correctly, that they would love to capture him so that they could torture and humiliate and disgrace him before his wounds or the torturing and dismemberment would kill him.

Saul cannot bear the thought of that so he commands his armor-bearer to run his sword through him. The armor-bearer's job, however, is to guard the life of the king, and so he was afraid to kill him. Let's read verses 4 and 5 again because of a tiny detail or two. Note my emphasis on the details.

4 Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

5 And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.

Curiously, Jewish tradition says that the armor-bearer was none other than Doeg the Edomite. We do not know if that is true or not, but *if it is*, it provides an ironic touch to the whole story. Let's assume that it is true just to see the ironic aspect here. (See the April 2003 FMS for the story of Doeg.)

Doeg was Saul's chief *herdsman*, as opposed to a chief *shepherd*. In order to ingratiate himself further with King Saul, Doeg committed a heinous crime. To review—

Doeg had seen David communing with the high priest at Nob, the city of the priests, where the tabernacle was located. So Doeg went back and "ratted" on David to Saul. The king then ordered Ahimelech the high priest and all the priests at Nob to appear before him. After accusing them of treason, Saul ordered his Secret Service guys to kill the priests. They recognized it as an unlawful order and refused to draw their swords.

But Doeg, being a bloodthirsty sort, volunteered

to slay the high priest and the other 84 priests there. But that was not enough for him. He then went to the city of Nob, the city of the priests, and massacred every man, woman and child in the town. However, Abiathar, the son of the high priest, was the only one who escaped and he then took the sacred ephod (meaning the Urim and Thummim) and he, Abiathar, the new high priest, then began to accompany David in the wilderness.

So notice here in verse 4 that Saul does not fall on his *own* sword but on Doeg's sword, and it is my opinion that Doeg then pulled his sword out of Saul and fell on his own sword also. Thus *he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword*; and in this case, if indeed Doeg was Saul's armorbearer, then the very sword which slew all the priests and the innocents in Nob was the very same sword which brought the end of both Saul and Doeg.

Verse 6 tells us that Saul, his sons, and "all his men" died together that day. It is obvious that the *sons* refers to only the *three* sons who went with him to battle, because Saul's other son, Ishbosheth, later was placed on the throne. The words "all his men" in verse 6 refers to those of his personal bodyguard detachment, because it is clear that many of the army of Israel had already fled. Moreover, Abner, Saul's top general, who was also Saul's cousin, was also a survivor because he figures prominently in the stories to come

Those are the facts of the story through verse 6. This is *powerful* literature and the lessons therein are manifold. One lesson which stands out is that this is a stellar example of how the sins of a father are visited upon succeeding generations. We feel great sympathy over the demise of Jonathan.

For here was a man who in every word of Holy Writ concerning him evinced nothing except the high and nearly-pure character of an overcomer. And yet, because of his *father's* continuous rebellion to Yahweh, the son's hopes were dashed and his dreams were dissolved into nothingness when an arrow pierced his flesh upon the mountains of Gilboa. Jonathan's hopes and dreams of seeing his friend, David, crowned king, and for Jonathan himself to sit next to David as his second-in-command, these desires were obliterated because of the failures of his father.

Although Jonathan saw only too clearly the dis-

astrous consequences being brought on Israel by his father, yet in true filial loyalty to both his father and devotion to his country, Jonathan stood and fought valiantly to the end. This was a case of an overcomer whose destiny had been to live and die in the house of Saul. To live and die in “the house of Saul”—The antitype of this was undoubtedly fulfilled in myriads of men and women in the Dark Ages. They were born, lived and died in centuries when the despotic Roman Catholic “Saul” church was the only game in town.

With education, transportation and communication very limited in those times, most people lived and died in an area no bigger than a typical county in the United States. Certainly, there were numerous saints of God who, like Jonathan, had the hearts and souls of overcomers, but were essentially doomed to die under the confines of the Saul church. Nonetheless, it is this writer’s opinion that they, like Jonathan, will be found in the ranks of the overcomer company at the first resurrection.

Who can counsel the Almighty? It was Divine providence that Saul’s three most energetic sons be killed, in order to clear the path for David to ascend to the throne. But it was especially needful that *Jonathan* be removed from the scene since his sterling character would have attracted a great number of his countrymen to push for *his* coronation.

Had he survived, we can imagine that Jonathan would have tried to cede the crown to David, but it might have been extremely difficult for him to do so with the political pressure upon him to retain the crown in the House of Saul. The House of Saul was predestinated to fall.

In applying this lesson to ourselves, we can generalize it to include both fathers and mothers. While we recognize that the father bears the ultimate responsibility for the family, it is also true that the sins of mothers also influence their children and grandchildren.

We will not take the space to cite examples, because it is certain that we all can look at our own parents and see specific failures on their part which have brought pain and suffering—either physical or emotional, or both—to us. Furthermore, all of us who are parents can look at our own lives and see the results of our own failures in the struggles that our children undergo. As we reflect on our track record as

parents, if truly our failures be few, and we are blessed with children, and some of us with grandchildren, who are blood-bought Christians, children who are upright in their daily walk, and who are blessed with few tragedies of moral failure, then give God the glory for those precious blessings.

But if you are like most of us, who have many regrets of what we did or did not do in our younger years in raising our families, and in the intervening years—even as we ourselves may have grown closer to the Lord, yet we now witness the fruit of our earlier failures being manifested in our children or grandchildren; then know that our God, Yahweh, is our *Father*. He is the *perfect* Father. He makes no mistakes. And though He disciplines us as needed, He is also One who is kind and gracious and merciful, who knows our regrets, and who provides His grace that we may receive his mercy even in our remorse and regret for things which cannot now be changed.

For those readers who are still approaching or just entering the stage of fatherhood and motherhood, let the lesson of Saul’s failures and the resultant tragic demise of Jonathan be a strong and persistent part of our knowledge base that we may learn and avoid the sins of the fathers (and mothers).

Let us, above all else, remember one of the most important differences between David the overcomer-type and Saul, the non-overcomer-type; namely, that when we fail, when we fall short, when we sin, that we not despair, that we be ever-mindful of the infinite mercies of our heavenly Father, and that we continually get up after we fall and in repentance, once again seek the face of our Father.

Let us not be like Saul, who *gave up trying* early on, who quit turning to God for mercy, who instead turned himself over to backsliding until the day of Mt. Gilboa when God removed him from this earth. God was patient with him for 40 years, 40 being the number of testing and trial. But when that time came, it was unavoidable. Let us learn from the negative lesson of Saul, that we be not like him.

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.