



FEED MY SHEEP

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The Bible on Beards and Buttocks

David's wars, which occurred 3,000 years ago, provide us with many practical lessons for our daily lives as Christians today. Our studies now bring us to where the historian of 2 Samuel records David's conquest in the seventh and final war.

2 Samuel 8:13 And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men.

We will comment on the literal history in a moment, but first I want us to notice the voice of the verb: David gat [got] him a name. The New American Standard version says:

2 Samuel 8:13 So David made a name for himself when he returned from killing 18,000 Arameans in the Valley of Salt.

The verb is in the active voice, which means that the subject of the sentence, David, is doing the action. David made a name for himself. I point this out because this relates to one of the popular objections some people raise when first confronted with the issue of God's sovereignty and His complete control of all things. Some of these good brothers and sisters have trouble accepting God's control of all things because of verses like this. The objection arises in their minds because of their underlying *assumption* that if God is in control of all things, then we don't have to do anything because it is all predestinated to happen anyway.

We dealt with this objection in our series on the sovereignty of God, but not with this particular verse, so let us review the principle for the veteran readers and

hopefully explain it simply, if not in depth here, for the new readers. The assumption is false, of course. It does not follow that since God is in control of all things, that we don't have to do anything; that we can do nothing. The fact is: every person is going to do exactly what God wrote for him or her in the Script—no more, no less.

The fact that we do not know from day to day or from hour to hour what the Master Script has written for our part is what gives us this notion that we have free will. We make choices every minute of our lives, and it *appears* from *our* perspective that we have made our choices freely, but the fact is that from *God's* perspective, whatever we do, was planned that way before the foundation of the world.

But then our dear Christian brother or sister would object further by saying: "Well, if that is true, then I may as well go out and live like the devil, because I am not responsible; God is." We answer: Yes, God is *ultimately* responsible, but His plan is such that we are held accountable and responsible for our actions or inactions, based upon the knowledge that we have. In other words, we are held responsible to a point, to a certain level.

The fact that God is *ultimately* responsible is why no person can commit enough sins in a 70-year lifetime to warrant *eternal* punishment. We exposed the fallacy of the hell fire doctrine in great detail in our album #A-103, ten audio lectures (tape format: \$33 ppd. CD format: \$43 ppd.).

Furthermore, regarding this objection that "I

may as well go on and live like the devil, because I am not responsible,” Paul answered this brilliantly and briefly when he stated in Romans chapter six, verse one: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!”

And again, the Bible says that we shall reap what we sow. Therefore, if we delude ourselves into what is called fatalism; i.e., thinking that since everything is predestinated, that we can be totally passive and do nothing, or to live like the heathen; then we shall surely reap what we sow. Moreover, if we do nothing, we will surely accomplish nothing. So in the end, if a person wants to think that he has free will and is thereby in control of his life, then I say “fine.” But when his life goes out of control for a while, and things just don’t seem to happen the way he had planned, then he should just look upon it as a reminder from Father that we are not in control after all.

But remember also, that this does not mean that we are to do nothing. And that brings us directly back to this verse 13: Did David do nothing? No, he went out and accomplished great things in his life. He was active. He made a name for himself. He reaped great fame and prestige in his lifetime. So no matter what your calling in life is—in motherhood and raising children, in a trade or profession, operating a business—act righteously and strive to attain to the highest level your aptitude and skills will carry you. Do all as unto the Lord.

In a previous FMS, I pointed out that chronologically, chapter 7 came after some of, or perhaps most of the wars listed in chapter 8. So that at some point later in his life, after David had been active in conquering all the nations round about him, he had rest for a time. At that time God spoke to him and said:

KJV 2 Samuel 7:9 And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight,

Question: Who is claiming credit for cutting off the enemies? God is! But who physically wielded the sword and bow against these enemies? David did. You see, David did it— but ultimately, it was God who did it. Let’s continue in this verse. This is God speaking:

And [I] have made thee a great name, like

unto the name of the great men that are in the earth.

This is the principle which the Bible teaches: that man is active and takes credit or responsibility to a point, but God takes *ultimate* responsibility and credit for everything that happens. So in chapter 8, verse 13, we read that David made a name for himself—David did it. But here, years afterward, God says that He made David’s name great. Both are true! But let us never forget who is ultimately responsible, who is really in charge of everything.

Once more, looking at chapter 7, verse 9, God says that He made David as famous as the *great* men on earth. About 700 years after David came a military genius by the name of Alexander the Great. David’s military exploits would compare favorably with those of Cyrus and Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar; perhaps not in terms of geographical scope, but certainly in terms of military genius and audacity. Today, David’s name is as famous as anyone.

Incidentally, in verse 13, the valley of salt is located in the land of Edom down by the southern end of the Dead Sea, and that word “Syrians” should probably read Edomites. In Hebrew, the two words are so close as to be almost indistinguishable. A number of Bible versions in fact translate it that way. It also follows logically with the context of the next verse:

2 Samuel 8: 14 And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David’s servants. And YHWH preserved David whithersoever he went.

This indicates that Edom was a particularly pesky problem for David. The fact that he had to station soldiers at various places all over the land of Edom tells us that the Edomites were likely to rebel and refuse to pay tribute if Israel’s soldiers were not there. Some people need more discipline than others to submit to the kingdom of God. And obviously, at this time, it is a very unwilling submission. Next is a summary verse which leads into a brief description of David’s administration.

15 And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people.

That is a rare tribute to a king: that he was truly

just and fair to all the people in his domain.

16 And Joab the son of Zeruah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder;

17 And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests; and Seraiah was the scribe;

Here I only want us to make note of the underlined names because they play key roles in the events to come. There were actually two high priests in Israel at that time. After Saul had ordered the slaughter of the priests at Nob, he appointed Zadok as high priest. But we recall that Abiathar, the son of the slain high priest, Ahimelech, had fled and joined up with David. Now here it says “Ahimelech the son of Abiathar.” This was either a scribal goof in transposing the names, or more likely, Abiathar had a son whom he named after his grandfather, and the son is now assisting his father in the high priestly duties.

18 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David’s sons were chief rulers.

Since David’s sons were chief rulers, they had to be at least 20 years old, so this is another evidence that the wars in this chapter span a considerable length of time. Chapter nine is the story of Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth, who was lame in both feet, and you will recall that we spent some time dealing with this story in our audio lecture called *The Blind and the Lame*, and so we are going to skip over it for now. Of course, there is much more left to be explored in the story of Mephibosheth, but it will also come back into play much later in the life of David. But at this juncture, we now come to a rather bizarre incident.

2 Samuel 10:1 And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead.

2 Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father shewed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David’s servants came into the land of the children of Ammon.

Despite the fact that much of David’s 40 year reign was involved in warfare, David waged war only

out of necessity. He would much rather have preferred a tranquil political horizon. Thus, here David finds an opportunity to offer friendship to a neighboring nation.

We are not told what the occasion was whereby Hanun’s father had shown kindness to David, but David uses this occasion of Nahash’s death to send ambassadors to Hanun to comfort him on the death of his father and at the same time congratulating Hanun on his accession to the throne and offering friendship.

Incidentally, this Nahash was probably the same Nahash that we encountered very early in this series just after Saul had been named king. At that time, Nahash wanted to pluck out the right eyes of all the men of Jabesh-Gilead. Saul then went and defeated them. So maybe it was because Nahash hated Saul that he had opportunity to show kindness to David when David was on the run from Saul, just as Achish, king of the Philistines, had shown kindness to David. So David sends his ambassador and some other men to accompany him for the purpose of offering friendship to Hanun, king of the Ammonites. But...

3 And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?

Politics and paranoia often go hand in hand, don’t they? King Hanun was probably quite young at this point, and certainly inexperienced; and he had some advisors surrounding him who were bloodthirsty warmongers, Machiavellian manipulators of the monarch.

4 Wherefore Hanun took David’s servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away.

This was shameful treatment. From ancient times even to our day, a nation’s ambassadors are considered untouchable in the sense that they are never to be harmed or treated shamefully.

Our embassy buildings are considered to be the sovereign territory of the United States and thus the building itself is sacrosanct. So too, with the ambassa-

dor who is in charge of the embassy. He holds an almost sacred position. But hostile nations do not always play by the rules of international statecraft.

The Mosaic law forbade the men of Israel from cutting off the edges of their beards, and so to have half of it cut off was a severe insult. But it was more than that. To the Israelites, the beard was a symbol of manhood, and so attacking the beard was equivalent to attacking the man. Since these men represented the nation of Israel, attacking them was attacking the nation they represented.

When I first read this verse about cutting off their garments to the buttocks—I pictured that they were covered from the waist down and were sent home with their chests and backs naked. But as I researched, I found that, except for the priests, the men of Israel wore no breeches, no underwear. They simply wore robes. One simply cannot cut off the top half without the bottom half dropping to the ground. Nevertheless, what I think happened was that the Ammonites cut off their robes at the buttocks—from the bottom up—so that the diplomats were left to depart essentially wearing only shirts, with their hinder parts exposed. (Cf. Isaiah 20:4.) It was embarrassing and humiliating. By these actions, the Ammonite counselors to Hunan were clearly signaling their desire for war. And that they received. We will skip over our coverage of that, due to space limitations. The full story can be heard on *The Wars of David*, our two-part lecture, #419, 420. (Audiotape \$10 ppd. CD \$12 ppd.) Let us view this insulting action from the types and shadows perspective.

2 Samuel 10:5 When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return.

Return to where? To Jerusalem, of course, the capital city. The old Jerusalem is a type of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city. The New Jerusalem is not *in* heaven; it comes down *from* heaven (Revelation 21:2). Jericho is a type of the church. How do we know that? Because Jesus is the Sun in a symbolic sense, isn't He? He is the source of life and light. The Bible says He is the sun of righteousness with healing in his wings (rays). The word Jericho means "moon." The moon has no light of its own. It can only reflect the light of the sun. So Jericho symbolizes the church in this perspective. Paul tells us in ...

2 Corinthians 5: 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

So David the king sent ambassadors to the heathen Ammonites to offer friendship and peace. David is a type of Christ. The Ammonites represent a rebellious world. As followers of King Jesus, we are ambassadors for Christ proclaiming to the rebellious world that David-Christ wants peace with them.

Just as ambassadors in statecraft throughout history are often insulted, sent packing, or worse—it's a sometimes dangerous job—so also ambassadors for Christ are frequently scorned by the world. Christians are mocked and ridiculed as our garments cut off (man's righteousness shown to be no righteousness), and our backsides are figuratively exposed; that is, our carnality. We are not welcome in "the world;" we are sent packing, sometimes worse things happen (i.e., martyrdom). It's a dangerous job. And like David, Christ and His government are being attacked when they insult His ambassadors.

When our beards are partially cut off, what does Jesus tell us, His ambassadors to do? Tarry in the church (realm)¹ until you have reached spiritual manhood; i.e., when the manchild comes to birth in you (at resurrection). Then come up into the New Jerusalem, the higher dimension, the higher realm, and rule the world with Me. There are other implications in this as well, but I will leave that for you to ponder.

FOOTNOTE

1. By "tarry in the church," I do not mean that we must remain in denominational "churchianity," where spiritual growth is often stifled by rigid orthodoxy. Rather, I mean only that, in these mortal bodies, we cannot yet attain to complete maturity of spirit, soul and body.

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