

Unfolding Unveiling: Studies of Christ Revealed in the Types of Joshua, David, and Solomon

Part Five: Saul

Chapter Fourteen: The Rejected King

A Self-Centered View

The situation that took place in I Samuel 13 is our first indication that Saul has no intention of following the Lord, and that the principles by which he chooses to govern will result in his kingdom not being established in the earth. The issue is that the enemy looked like they were pressing in and were going to beat the Israelites. Samuel had promised Saul to meet him at Gilgal before the battle and offer sacrifices to the Lord on behalf of Israel to petition the Lord for victory. Because Samuel did not show up at the time Saul thought he ought to, he chose to move apart from the Lord. We must understand that the Philistines had not yet attacked. Saul did not have to do anything because nothing had happened. He just got nervous, so he offered the sacrifice instead of letting Samuel execute his priestly duties.

Of course, the Lord always tests us when we are in unbelief. He will permit things to go a little further than what is comfortable for us so that we can see whether we will trust the Lord or not. When we do not, the provision comes in right after we make the decision to take care of matters ourselves. He uses this exercise to show us how much we assume that we have to take care of our own lives by ourselves. We do not realize how independent we are from the Lord and how dependent upon Him He desires us to be.

Such behavior is a manifestation of the self-life. The self-life thinks that it must take care of itself in every situation, especially if the circumstances look rough and it appears as though things are not going to come through the way we think they ought. The self-life says, "I am a responsible individual, I have a responsibility, I have to take care of myself. I am going to take matters into my own hands and make sure that I get taken care of." To the world's eyes, that does not look wrong. It looks good. It looks normal. It looks like a healthy, self-sufficient individual life that does not want to live off of welfare. But in light of this situation, we see how much this mentality is against the Lord, so much so, that the Lord decided that He was not going to allow Saul's offspring to sit on the throne of Israel.

Now what was it exactly that convinced the Lord of that? Was it that a priest was not offering the sacrifice? Perhaps. Verse 14 says, "...thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee... the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people." It was not so much that Samuel had to be the one who offered the offering, though this was true

enough. The main point is that to Saul, winning the battle was more important than relating to the Lord the way He wanted to be related to. To Saul, making sure he had a decisive victory over the enemy was more important than doing things God's way.

You would think that if Israel were living in defeat in the Land when they were supposed to be living in victory, that the most important thing would be to insure victory. But not in the Lord's mind. Always with the Lord, first and foremost is that we relate to Him the way that He desires to be related to. The sacrifices were simply used on Saul's part to make sure that he was covered. He covered himself instead of trusting the Lord to be His victory and trusting the Lord to fight his battle, to protect him, and to bring Samuel in time.

Much more important than who was delegated to do what is the heart condition of the believer. Saul had no intention of keeping the Lord's commandments. He wanted to make sure that he won a battle. It is very subtle, but it is only subtle if the self-life is ruling us on a regular basis. It is not subtle if you are David or Joshua. Joshua was very consistent at drawing from the Lord and believing His Word.

He wanted to make sure of victory because he saw that the people were scattered and hiding. He saw that Samuel was not coming at the time Saul thought that he ought to be there. He saw that the enemy was ready for battle. He lived after the seeing of his eyes and decided that if he was going to be a good king then he had to take matters into his own hands and make sure everything got taken care of. This is an independent mentality, and it is not how God governs His people. When God is in government over us, then He is the one upon whom we are solely dependent.

A man after God's heart would care more about the Lord's commandments than the situation that he was in. He would care more about how God wanted to do things, and if the Lord's provision was Samuel offering sacrifices first and then the king fighting the battle, then it would be more important to Saul to wait on that than to make sure that the battle was won. A man after God's heart will do things God's way at his own expense, and Saul was not doing that.

In order for us to become dependent upon the Lord, there must be a division He works in us concerning the difference between us taking care of ourselves out of a lack of trust of which we may be unaware and knowing how to completely abide in Christ and draw from the Lord for everything that we need. The Lord puts us in situations like this where we are put to the test, where it looks like the enemy is going to come in, like help is not going to come through, and that whatever we had gathered to ourselves is fleeing away. He puts us there to see if we will trust that He is our salvation.

For the first time in quite awhile, God reveals His own intentions, that He was seeking a man after His own heart. Through the book of Judges, He had only found this in Samuel. There is no man after God's heart, except His Son. The one who is going to satisfy God's heart in the Old Testament is the one who is a type of Christ. That will be David. A man

after God's heart cares about the Father's business and does His will first, and that is what Saul failed to recognize.

It probably did not occur to Saul that he was doing something wrong. He was unaware of the ramifications of his actions throughout his reign. In this particular instance, he was not trying to be malicious. It never occurred to him that he and God held conflicting viewpoints because when self is king, it is the only viewpoint he sees. When self is on the throne, we will not consider God's viewpoint. It takes the Lord working in our hearts for us to tell the difference.

When God told Saul that his kingdom should not continue (cf. I Sam. 13:14), it was because he was not a man after the Lord's heart, meaning that he did not care for the things of God; he only cared about winning his battle. More important than winning a battle is relating to the Lord after His order. A man after God's heart cares more about the Lord and His way of relating to us and us to Him than about anything else. This is what the Lord desired, and yet no one during the time period of the Judges was a man after God's own heart, with the exception of Samuel (who knew how to properly relate to the Lord, as we saw in I Samuel 7:1-14). And of course, no one can be a man after God's heart, except the Son. David was a type of that Son, who cares about the Father's heart and came to do His will (cf. I Sam. 16:7).

Seeing Saul in Light of David

To study Saul is to contrast him to David since Saul's qualities can only be seen for what they are in light of seeing David for who He is. How true this is for us, too! We only see how unacceptable our self-life is to the Lord in light of Jesus who is acceptable. Taken alone, the self-life looks so good, but when we compare how the self-life does things to how David operates, the self-life's shortcomings, sins, and dark side become clear. It is for this reason that even though we are studying Saul, we will begin to study David, as well.

I Samuel 14:47 gives us some more insight into the workings of Saul's kingdom. First of all, this Scripture says that Saul took the kingdom over Israel. In chapter 13, the Lord told Saul that his kingdom would not continue, but in 14:47 it says that Saul took the kingdom. From whom did he take it? From the Lord Himself. It does not say that the Lord gave him the kingdom; it says that Saul took it. This fulfills the prophecy I Samuel 8:10-18, which said that Saul would take for himself. He took the whole kingdom for himself.

This is different from David's methods. He never took the kingdom. He was anointed as a teenager to be king over Israel, and he did not step up to the throne until he was 30, and he only did it then when the people begged him to be the king. This is why it is important to study Saul in light of David. He never took anything for himself, not even the kingdom that was rightfully his! In contrast, taking was one of the foundational principles of how Saul governed. Based on I Samuel 8:10-18, it is safe to say that when Saul took, he took for himself. When I Samuel 14:47 says that Saul took the kingdom, he took it for himself. He never relinquished the kingdom. David, the anointed king, hid in caves, lived in the

enemy's territory, and fled for his life when he was the one who should have been sitting on the throne at that time. But he never ascended the throne until Saul was dead. It is a totally different way of governing and relating to the Lord and a totally different set of motivations. It would not matter to us that Saul took the kingdom unless we understood that David did not take the kingdom. It only matters in light of seeing Christ as David.

The verse goes on to say that Saul was constantly fighting. I am not so sure that this is commendable. If Saul was governing based on self, then he must have been fighting the inhabitants from an earthly position and not taking the victory by faith. There is a huge difference between the two. The soul may be able to recognize some of the enemies of God; the soul may even be diligent in fighting them. This can be tricky because we think we are in the will of God when we go out and fight the enemies. Somehow, we might even manage to defeat a few of them. But if it is we who are doing the fighting, then the battle is in vain. We will fight for selfish reasons, and we will fight by selfish means. The selfish reason to fight the enemies is ultimately that self feels that they threaten his kingdom. Of course, there are other reasons, too: perhaps the desire to look good, or to try to please God through works. But if those are the motivations, then self stays on the throne.

As for the selfish means that Saul used to fight his battles, I Samuel 14:52b says that he took any valiant man that he saw. Furthermore, he did not inquire of the Lord as to whom he should fight. He did not allow the Lord to fight the battles, and he did not allow the Lord to deliver the enemies into his hand. These things taken together, we can conclude that the Lord was not Saul's source. Instead, the strength of the flesh was his source. According to his foundational principle, he took from other people in order to achieve his victories. This is exactly the opposite spirit of what the Lord desired to instill in His people. When He was instructing Israel before sending them in to take the Land, He made it clear that He wanted them to be dependent upon Him. Saul was not dependent upon the Lord in the least. Self is always dependent only on self and is independent of all else. Usually, there will not even be a conscious choice of who we will be dependent on if self is on the throne. We automatically revert back to self when it is on the throne because that is how it governs.

This leads to another characteristic of Saul's kingdom. I Samuel 14:52 says that there was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul. When self is the source, the work of God is such hard work! Self is always striving, always working, never resting, and certainly never achieving the goals of God. This is the case with Saul. He fought all the time, apparently, but he did not seem to be achieving anything that was on God's heart.

This was not the case with David. He fought one battle against one man, Goliath, yet accomplished more than Saul ever did in his entire history as king. When by the Spirit of Christ in us we look to the Lord, He accomplishes His purposes through us by His strength. But self can never tap into this relationship. It is a struggle to abide in Christ and maintain victory when you are not doing it by His strength. It comes very naturally if you are drawing from the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, though (cf. Rom. 8:2). This is the Lord's principle.

Self's Mindset at Odds with the Lord's

When Saul took the kingdom (I Sam. 14:47), he took it from the Lord, to whom the kingdom belonged (cf. I Sam. 8:7). This means that Saul did not identify with the Lord on any level. He viewed himself as an individual entity. To him, the inhabitants of the Land were his own personal enemies, and he fought them on this basis. Of course, when you perceive something to be your enemy, you will also use your own strength to fight, for the principle of being separate and not One carries all the way through. Self never draws from God for anything.

Self always takes everything personally and therefore never considers conflict from God's viewpoint. Something seems "bad" in self's estimation, and so it must be fought against. If self sees the Lord's enemies not as the Lord's enemies but as "bad", then self will fight them on that basis. He will not see them as the Lord's enemies, but as "bad". However, as soon as something is perceived to be "good" or "helpful" in self's estimation – not the Lord's estimation – then it will keep that thing for itself or use it for its own benefit, whether it be the Lord's enemy (Amalekites) or the Lord Himself (David).

What is important to understand is that God considered the inhabitants of the Land to be His enemies. When we want to fight and take the Land in victory, we must understand that these are not personal things against us that we are fighting. These are the enemies of the Lord. These are things that resist Him and His increase in us. But when we are trying to maintain a personal kingdom, it is no longer the Lord's enemies that we are concerned about. We have enemies. Sometimes they will be the inhabitants of the Land, and sometimes the enemy will be David. At this point in Saul's reign, the inhabitants were pressing in on his kingdom, so they become Saul's enemies.

The first example of this that comes to mind occurred immediately after Saul "took" the kingdom in I Samuel 14:47. It says in verse 47-48 that he was fighting all the time, yet when he was given specific instructions from the Lord in chapter 15, he did not completely destroy the Amalekites even though he had fought and defeated them earlier. He thought that some of the livestock might be of use. So the enemies of the Lord were not his enemies after all. If they had something to offer, he used them to his advantage, just as he had used God's people when they had something to offer.

Furthermore, if the Lord had something to offer, Saul used the Lord for his own advantage. Saul had a kingdom to run. He wanted to make sure his kingdom was stable and established. So when he saw any strong men that could insure the security of his kingdom, he took him for his own purposes (cf. I Sam. 8:10-12). He has a personal battle to fight, and he is taking the people of God to fight his battle. This is no longer about the Lord's battles or the Lord's enemies.

David Benefits Saul

After David slew Goliath, Saul realized what a benefit David would be to his kingdom. I Samuel 18:2 says, “And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house.” Why? Because Saul wanted his kingdom to be a victorious one, and David the warrior offered him that benefit. This is horribly out of order. David was not supposed to be a benefit to Saul’s kingdom; he was supposed to rule the kingdom. Saul would not permit David to do that, of course, but he took him to bolster his own strength. How often we sit on the throne in our own hearts and use Jesus for strengthening our own kingdom instead of letting him usher in His kingdom!

How quickly Saul would change his mind when he would discover that David was actually a rival king who was a threat to his kingdom. One minute, David was sitting at the king’s table in a position of honor; the next, he would be fleeing for his life. It all depends on what self can get out of Him.

David being of benefit to Saul does not sound so bad unless you realize how David did it. David was out hiding in caves, and he fought the enemies of Israel with whoever wanted to follow him. And the ones who wanted to follow him were either in distress, in debt, or discontent (cf. I Sam 22:2). The battles that David fought were to take the Land for Israel while he was in exile. He was blessing the tribes of Israel by expanding their borders while he was on the run from Saul. He was fighting a totally different war. Saul took the kingdom because he wanted his throne established, and certain inhabitants threatened that. So he took the best the Israel had to offer to make sure that he stayed secure.

The self-life wants to feel secure. We take to what we want ourselves to make sure that our little position is safe from identity crisis, not being important, not having control. The self-life will pad its nest to make sure that does not happen. The Spirit of Christ, on the other hand, can get pushed to the very borders of our existence and still be fighting to take the Land and bless the people of God while taking nothing for himself and not even sitting on the throne while he is doing it.

The second example that comes to mind occurred late in Saul’s reign. He consulted a witch in I Samuel 28. One of the things that the Lord hates most is the occult. According to the law, anyone who practiced in the occult should be put to death (cf. Ex. 22:18, Lev. 19:31, 20:27). According to Deuteronomy 18:9-12, witchcraft was a part of the lifestyle of the inhabitants of the Land. It was what the Lord commanded to be driven out of the Land. To possess the Land is to displace the occult and all that is associated with it, and yet Saul made a familiar spirit his source. Remember that this entire study is based on Saul being a picture of the self-life governing the soul. Leviticus 20:6 says of the soul that turns after those with familiar spirits that the Lord shall cut it off. And that is exactly what happened in I Samuel 31. Saul, who represents the self-life governing through the soul, turned to a medium. In so doing, he shows us how the carnal mind that is governed by the knowledge of good and evil will not accept what God accepts or reject what God rejects. It will instead deem acceptable that which is useful to itself. This is what we do when we choose another – rejected – source from which to draw stability.

What an ugly side of self it is, that does not rule based on what is important to the Lord and fight based on what is the Lord's enemies. Self does not view matters this way at all. It does not consider or even conceive of what is precious to God and what is abominable to Him. Its point of view is based on whatever will benefit its own kingdom. Self considers valuable and good whatever will be useful to it. This is the principle of Self.

Self Is Dominated by the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Saul's carnal way of thinking was dominated by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This fact becomes evident in I Samuel 15, when Samuel commands Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites. Samuel emphasized that Saul was to destroy everything (cf. I Sam. 15:3). This command was in line with God's intention from many years before (cf. Ex. 17:8-16, Deut. 25:17-19). But Saul had a carnal mind, and a carnal mind will interpret God's mind by the light of the knowledge of good and evil. This is exactly what happened here. Saul deceived himself into thinking that he was obeying the Lord when he kept the "useful" stuff belonging to the Amalekites to himself, and the king as well (cf. vs. 13, 20), and then he covered his sin and justified his actions (cf. v. 24). I believe it is significant that taking the "good" of the inhabitants of the Land instead of utterly destroying them is what kept Israel in bondage all those years in the book of Judges. In this respect, Saul was just like everybody else. God had to reject Saul from being king. He had to tear the kingdom of Israel from him because Saul was governed by the knowledge of good and evil, and he covered his sin. These are the signs of the governing of the self-life. God has rejected every government except the government of His Son. God will not and cannot govern apart from His Son.

Saul utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword, but He did not utterly destroy everything. He utterly destroyed all the people and kept the head of the kingdom. If there is one thing that the self-life does not understand, it is how a corporate body works. If you save the head, you have saved the whole body. He killed all the individuals, and saved the head alive. But if you keep the head, then the whole thing can spring back up again. The Lord wanted the whole thing utterly destroyed. Saul kept the head of the kingdom. A person who lives by an individual mentality does not understand that the head has to be destroyed, even when he is given explicit instructions.

Not only that, but Saul took for himself the goods of the enemies of God when it suited him. It was the people who persuaded Saul to keep the goods of the Amalekites, according to I Samuel 15:24. They were able to appeal to his system of government, which was to take for himself. This "taking mentality" did not have to do with Israel only, then. It was a governing principle in Saul that operated constantly. Self takes from anyone or anything to benefit itself. Since benefiting self is the reason for taking, the source of the goods is irrelevant to self. That is why Saul could take from Israel one minute and from the Amalekites the next without even realizing what he was doing. This governing principle blinded him to following the Lord fully. Self-interest never allows one to consider or even see the purposes of God. This is why Saul insisted that he had done the work of God that he had been commanded to do (cf. I Sam. 15:12-20).

In I Samuel 8:10-18 and in I Samuel 14:52, we saw how Saul used the Lord's people for his advantage. Now we are seeing him using the Lord's enemies to his advantage. So when God's people suited his purposes, he took them. When the Lord's enemies, whom He wanted completely destroyed, suited Saul's purposes, he took their spoil or whatever they had to offer him. Whoever God called an enemy, David called an enemy. Joshua proceeded in the same manner. But whoever God called an enemy, Saul did not call an enemy. If he is taking it for his own purposes, he does not consider it an enemy. He considers it useful and good.

Warring

In I Samuel 15:23, God told Saul that he was a rejected king. Why? Because God's people cease to be governed by the Lord when they believe that they can coexist with the enemies of God. If we do not dispossess them, they will dispossess us. The only way that they will peacefully coexist with us is if they dominate us.

The reason why Saul was rejected as king over Israel in I Samuel is because he thought that he could save the king of the Amalekites alone. If the Cross were Saul's truth, he could have never even considered this. But there was a mix inside of him, so that he could leave Agag alive to coexist peacefully with Israel. God's Word was a truth to Saul, and not the truth. God could not possibly have this kind of mindset ruling Israel. It was the same kind of mentality that caused the Israelites to fall back into bondage in Judges. But God was trying to change that. He did not want an "under" mentality where they could coexist with the inhabitants any longer. He wanted the standard of the Cross lifted up high in His people so that the Cross was such a reality to them that they would tolerate nothing in their lives that the Cross had destroyed.

I Samuel 15 and Acts 5

I believe that events occurring in I Samuel 15 shed a great deal of light on why the Lord struck Ananias and Sapphira dead in Acts chapter five. Genesis 6:3 says that God's Spirit will not always strive with man. When Saul took the Amalekites' possessions and saved the head of the enemy kingdom (Agag) and then lied to Samuel about it, it was like what Ananias and Sapphira did when they sold the land and then kept some of the money for themselves. The Scriptures say that in doing this, they lied to the Holy Spirit and were struck dead. This bears a striking resemblance to Saul, who was supposed to utterly destroy the Amalekites but kept back a portion of the spoil for himself.

For the young church in the Book of Acts, selling land was a loss of self and an identification with the whole. The keeping back of the money was holding onto the self-life and not wanting to lose but to allow self to gain. By laying the money at the apostles' feet, Ananias and Sapphira were saying by their actions what Saul said with his lips: "I did obey the Lord," (I Sam. 15:20). But their hearts, like Saul's, had no intention of obeying the Lord's voice. In their hearts, they still wanted to identify in themselves and not lose self for the Resurrected One. Saul gathered to himself because Self always does.

The Lord rejected Saul's kingdom that day because self will never, ever put to death the king of God's enemies as long as they can benefit him. When Ananias and Sapphira kept back the money, they were saying that they were identifying with the whole. God had just put to death on the Cross all of the kingdom of self, and now they were trying to live by it in their hearts while outwardly justifying themselves to God. Their death was a manifestation of the judgment pronounced upon self's government on the Cross. God rejected Ananias and Sapphira for the same reason that He rejected Saul as king.

Furthermore, if Samuel is viewed as a type of the Holy Spirit, then Saul lied to Samuel in much the same way as Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit. In each case, the former was justifying himself to the latter, and used a lie to do it.

God had a specific plan for Israel, and He could not tolerate self sitting on the throne in a place where the government was supposed to be His Son. It is the same with God's spiritual people today, who were born in the resurrection. There is no place for self or self-justifying in Christ.

God Deals with One

As a side note, it is interesting that even though the people were implicated in this sin against the Lord, Samuel did not once lay any consequences for their actions upon them. All of the blame was placed on Saul. Now why would this be? We know full well from so many preceding Scriptures – indeed, the entire book of Judges speaks of it – to know that Israel's heart was not pure towards the Lord. I am sure that they were not without guilt. And yet, all of the judgment of God fell upon Saul.

Here is the key to understanding why God would permit such a king to rule over Israel. Saul was the head of the kingdom. God dealt with the entire kingdom when He dealt with the head of it. Instead of trying to deal with the heart condition of each Israelite, He gathered them all into one, and rejected that one. In this we can see the mercy of God, as He paves the way for His king. This is an important truth to understand if we are to understand God's viewpoint on the matter. God was dealing with the head of a kingdom. And King Self, be it in me or in you or any other believer, is a rejected king. Self is the king, the head that the Lord is dealing with.

Israel is now headed in the direction of being governed. Upon entering the Land, they had Joshua as their leader, and he was the captain of their salvation, but he was not their governor, per se. Then they had judges. They maintained enough order to keep sanity, sometimes, but it was not what the Lord had in mind because even when the judges were ruling, the people were still able to do that which was right in their own eyes. So the Lord is moving toward a whole different way of relating to His people, and He wants them to be ruled. He wants them to be governed. For that to happen, there cannot be any of the self life in their hearts, because if it is in charge, it will take everything to itself.

But the Lord wants His people governed, not only by Jesus, but by Christ revealed. He wants us to be governed from within by His nature, by His mind, and this cannot happen until we have a governor sitting on the throne, and that is going to be David.