

NOTES AND QUESTIONS ON THE BOOK OF I SAMUEL FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY

- PART FOUR - CHAPTERS 19-24

There are now two kings in Israel, Saul, the people's choice based on outward appearance, and David, God's choice based on His knowledge of the heart. Two kings inevitably meant conflict between them which is the story of the rest of this book. In the same way there are two would-be kings in us as Christians, self, otherwise known as the flesh, and Jesus Christ. David's victory in chapter 17 brings admiration from Saul at first and a desire to have him in the family, but very quickly this turns to jealousy in chapter 18 when he sees that David's successes far exceed his own. Conflict between the 2 'kings' in us is for the same reason. When Saul attacks him with a spear, David's reaction is to forgive and move on rather than to hit back. Jesus responded in the same way in the New Testament, and still does the same in us when we are attacked by those who are jealous.

Saul's two children are an interesting contrast. Jonathan loves David as a friend and never feels threatened by him. Michal loves David as a wife but sadly it seems she never loved the Lord. Marrying a woman with whom he could not have a spiritual oneness was David's biggest mistake from which flowed consequences for the rest of his days.

CHAPTER NINETEEN shows how the conflict develops. Jonathan tries to act as peace-maker between his father and his friend which brings them together for the moment. Quickly Saul's evil spirit, his bad mood, takes over again and he throws his spear at David once more. Again David resists the temptation to throw it back and leaves. When Saul sends men to arrest David, Michal shows her love for her husband by a clever deception. The household idol, she should never have had which she hides in David's bed, reveals not only her spiritual condition but the problem with their marriage. He is her idol rather than her God-given husband. She chooses the comforts of the royal palace with her father rather than a cave with her outlaw husband. David runs first to Samuel, God's prophet to seek his fellowship. When Saul comes in pursuit he finds himself, to his surprise, being again a mouthpiece of God. It is one last opportunity for Saul to acknowledge God's absolute sovereignty rather than his own.

CHAPTER TWENTY shows Jonathan making one last attempt to reconcile his father and his friend. He is disappointed, as we will so often be, when we try to reconcile a carnal Christian like Saul to accepting the kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ. They establish a system of signals to pass the message about Saul's response in case of spies, but all to no avail. This time it is at his own son that Saul hurls his spear in his displeasure. Being a peace-maker is a dangerous business in which the attacks often come from those closest to us.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE has David making two serious mistakes. First he persuades the priest who looks after the tabernacle to give his men the special bread placed before God each day, a story Jesus refers to when his disciples are criticised, (Matt. 12:3,4) and then he asks for the sword of Goliath for himself. His mistake is that he does so in the name of Saul, rather than the name of God. A spy is watching, who reports to Saul, costing the life of the priest. Secondly, again out of fear, he takes refuge among the Philistines, the enemies of Israel, as we in fear of persecution may pretend to be at one with the world we live in. To gain acceptance he feigns madness, dribbling and scribbling! Achish is not impressed and tells him they have enough crazy people already. The world without Christ will never really accept us when we try to go back among them.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO describes David establishing his headquarters in the southwest of the country, not in a palace, but in a cave. He is like a magnet, attracting men of every kind around him who will later become his close friends and leaders. For the moment there are three things about them which they have in common. They are discontented, distressed and in debt. As such they would not have seemed very promising as leadership material, but it is such people who seek Jesus Christ. The rest of the chapter tells of Doeg's treachery and the murder of the priest who had been 'set up' by David's own lack of honesty.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE records another victory of David, Saul's determination to hunt him down, and various people prepared to betray David for the sake of the king's favour. Jonathan takes opportunity to come and find David on the run and encourage him. He looks forward to David, not him, being the king and is prepared to be David's right hand man. It is great when we too forget our own status and want only to serve under Christ's kingship.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR is a remarkable story of forgiveness, told with humour. Saul leaves his army searching for David to go into the very cave in which David and his men are hiding, to relieve himself. David's friends see it as a God arranged opportunity for revenge on Saul but David refuses to kill Saul, regarding judgement as God's business not his. He plays a joke on Saul by cutting the end of his robe and then waving it at Saul as he walks away from the cave. This act of mercy brings Saul to repentance, at least for the moment, and to reconciliation with David. It is a great demonstration to us of what can happen when we 'love our enemies'.(Matt.5:44; Rom.12:19-21)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR FURTHER STUDY

1. How do Jonathan as David's friend and Michal as his wife handle the conflict of loyalties which their father's jealousy of David produce? How would Matt.10:34-39 help us faced with similar situations?(chap.19)
2. How does the story of David and Jonathan illustrate the qualities of true Christian friendship?(Jn.15:12-21) What more could Jonathan have done?(chap.20)
3. Is David right or wrong in the actions he takes in this chapter? Give reasons for your conclusions? How might he have handled the situation better?(Matt.10:16-23) How do we make the same kind of mistakes?(chap.21)
4. What can we learn from the story of David at the cave of Adullam about Christian leadership training? Why were people drawn to David?(Matt.3:1-5) Give examples of people like Doeg in the modern world?(chap.22)
5. Contrast David's leadership with Saul's in this chapter. What were the differences between David's friends and Saul's?(chap.23)
6. How does David's attitude towards Saul in this story illustrate Rom.12:17-21? How can we have the same attitude? Why is it so hard?(chap.24)