

The First Two Kings of Israel

By John Thiel, [mp3](#)

Scripture reading: 1 Samuel 12:13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, [and] whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you. – 13:14 But now [Saul] thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him [to be] captain over his people, because thou hast not kept [that] which the LORD commanded thee.

It is important for us to gain a deep revelation of God's mind. We want to come to know God more closely, so we can worship Him in spirit and in truth. We are now going to receive a manifestation of God's mind in the first two kings of Israel.

Idols in the Heart

God here whispers to Ezekiel as the leaders of the Jews were coming to him. This happened while they were in Babylonian captivity.

Ezekiel 14:1 Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. 2 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 3 Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? 4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; 5 That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. 6 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn [yourselves] from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.

The reality of this experience, of the leaders coming there and God knowing exactly what is in their hearts, and Him telling Ezekiel to communicate with them, is for our consideration. Watch what you are doing, says God; if you are coming with your idols in your heart, I am going to answer you according to those idols. Let us see how serious this is.

Those who desire to follow a course which pleases their fancy are in danger of being left to follow their own inclinations, supposing them to be the leadings of God's Spirit. {3T 73.2}

How serious is that? We come to God and He answers us and we believe that it is the leadings of God's Spirit.

The duty of some is indicated sufficiently clear by circumstances and facts; but, through the solicitations of friends, in harmony with their own inclinations, they swerve from the path of duty and pass over the clear evidences in the case; then, with apparent conscientiousness, they pray long and earnestly for light. They have earnest feeling in the matter, and they interpret this to be the Spirit of God. But they are deceived. This course grieves the Spirit of God. They had light and in the very reason of things should have understood their duty; but a few pleasing inducements balance their minds in the wrong direction, and they urge these before the Lord and press their case, and the Lord allows them to have their own way. They have so strong an inclination to follow their own course that He permits them to do so and to suffer the results. These imagine that they have a wonderful experience. {Ibid.}

The seriousness and the subtlety of what is written here really penetrate my heart. How serious this is. We have a sentimental religion in which God gives to us according to our sentiments and the things that we press upon Him. We pray earnestly and we have sincere feelings; and all this can be a sincere deception. Yet we think we are having a beautiful experience with the Lord. This is how it was with Israel. They came to the Lord and wanted a king. We would have a king like the other nations to go to before us into battle, they said. So they pressed their case.

Wanting a King

1 Samuel 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, 5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

Of course, this displeased Samuel, and God had to tell him, It's alright, Samuel, they're not turning against you, they are turning against Me. But give them what they want. However, before you do, tell them all the consequences that will follow. So Samuel did.

1 Samuel 8:19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; 20 That we also may be

like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

The Lord knew that this was going to happen; He has a foreknowledge.

The Lord had, through His prophets, foretold that Israel would be governed by a king; but it does not follow that this form of government was best for them or according to His will. He permitted the people to follow their own choice, because they refused to be guided by His counsel. Hosea declares that God gave them a king in His anger. Hosea 13:11. When men choose to have their own way, without seeking counsel from God, or in opposition to His revealed will, He often grants their desires, in order that, through the bitter experience that follows, they may be led to realize their folly and to repent of their sin. Human pride and wisdom will prove a dangerous guide. That which the heart desires contrary to the will of God will in the end be found a curse rather than a blessing. {PP 605.3}

But it was all so wonderful as they were coming to God, and He was answering them; or so they thought. And to shorten a long story, God stepped in and satisfied their quest; but notice the language:

1 Samuel 12:13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, [and] whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.

The king whom *ye* have chosen – They came to God and said, Give us a king. When Saul was chosen, it was the king that *they* had chosen, and that *they* had desired.

A King After Their Own Heart

In Saul, God had given to Israel a king after their own heart. . . . Comely in person, of noble stature and princely bearing, his appearance accorded with their conceptions of royal dignity; and his personal valor and his ability in the conduct of armies were the qualities which they regarded as best calculated to secure respect and honor from other nations. They felt little solicitude that their king should possess those higher qualities which alone could fit him to rule with justice and equity. They did not ask for one who had true nobility of character, who possessed the love and fear of God. They had not sought counsel from God as to the qualities a ruler should possess, in order to preserve their distinctive, holy character as His chosen people. They were not seeking God's way, but their own way. Therefore God gave them such a king as they desired--one whose character was a reflection of their own. Their hearts were not in submission to God, and their king also was unsub-

dued by divine grace. Under the rule of this king they would obtain the experience necessary in order that they might see their error, and return to their allegiance to God. {CC 148.2}

In the very king that God chose, what a description we see of God meeting the mind of the people as to what they wanted. He knew what they wanted, and He gave them what *they* desired – not just a king, but also the very kind of person they looked for.

But now watch what follows. We are trying to examine God's mind, and we here see how God's mind works with the people who claim to be His people but have got their hearts set in a wrong direction. Watch God's mind. Here they made a choice, and God gave them a man that had a lack of submission to God, like they themselves had, and yet a noble, princely person. It wasn't God's choice; it was their choice. Yet watch God at work. We now observe God in the choice of this man who was not God's choice for them. Samuel was here speaking to Saul:

1 Samuel 10:5 After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where [is] the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy: 6 And the spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

He wasn't God's choice of a man for the kingship, but the people wanted that sort of man; therefore what did God say to Saul? You are going to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon you, and you will be turned into another man. He would be converted.

1 Samuel 10:9 And it was [so], that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. 10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

Just drink in what is involved here. Here was a man who was chosen according to the heart of the people, and who wasn't actually God's choice; but what would God do? God would convert the man; and this man would have a precious experience among the prophets and prophesy with them. How exhilarating, how joyful that is. God would do His utmost to make this king what He wanted him to be.

Yet the Lord, having placed on Saul the responsibility of the kingdom, did not leave him to himself. {CC 148.3}

What a God. He did not leave Saul to himself.

He caused the Holy Spirit to rest upon Saul to reveal to him his own weakness and his need of divine grace; {Ibid.}

And Saul became very humble. He became a very humble and submissive person as a result of this.

...and had Saul relied upon God, God would have been with him. So long as his will was controlled by the will of God, so long as he yielded to the discipline of His Spirit, God could crown his efforts with success. But when Saul chose to act independently of God, the Lord could no longer be his guide, and was forced to set him aside. {Ibid.}

Having read God's word and His thoughts to us so far, can we not identify that a person may be born again, may have a new heart, and still lose his way? God in His mercy is pouring out His Spirit upon people; but no matter whether we have a new heart or not, it is still our choice, as it was with Saul, whether we will remain under God's direction or not. And God gave King Saul the possibility of being in the place where He wanted him to be.

Now, having a new heart, and being anointed of God, did Saul remain reliant upon God? After only two years of his reigning, Saul showed that he had changed. He was told to wait for Samuel to come, so he could offer a sacrifice before they went to war in Gilgal. But he did not wait, and instead took the liberty to offer himself the sacrifice. So when Samuel finally arrived,

1 Samuel 13:11 ...Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and [that] thou camest not within the days appointed, and [that] the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; 12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

I forced myself therefore. Can you see what he is doing here?

1 Samuel 13:13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

It was his opportunity if he would submit and wait for Samuel. But under the pressure, the people becoming afraid, and with the enemy so close, he thought, Well, if Samuel is not going to come, I'm going to offer the offering myself. And because he did that, Samuel said,

1 Samuel 13:14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue:

You had the opportunity, Samuel said, but *now thy kingdom shall not continue*. Here is the anointed person, the person who has received a new heart. Under pressure, under the difficulties of circumstances, he relies on his own decision instead of a pure obedience and reliance on God. Then there was another occasion where he failed severely. This was another time when King Saul should have relied upon God.

1 Samuel 15:1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee [to be] king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. 2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember [that] which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid [wait] for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. 3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. 4 And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

He gathered the army together to do what God had said. And as the story went, he did do what God had said, but only to a certain point. As Samuel came there, he heard the bleating of sheep, and there was something not according to God's will there. What happened then?

1 Samuel 15:17 And Samuel said, When thou [wast] little in thine own sight, [wast] thou not [made] the head of the tribes of Israel,

And who put that sense of being little in his own sight?

1 Samuel 15:17 ...and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? 18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. 19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?

Now how did Saul respond? Mark this.

1 Samuel 15:20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalek-

ites. **21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.**

“I *have* done what the Lord said.” But did he? Was there repentance here?

1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey [is] better than sacrifice, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion [is as] the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness [is as] iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from [being] king.

Here we have the early years of King Saul, in which he showed his true insubordinate nature. Even though he was born again, he still had that possibility, which he acted upon. The story of King Saul continued to unfold until the very last days of his life, when he went to the witch of Endor and was finally slain in battle.

A King After God’s Own Heart

So after the people had chosen the king that they wanted and that they desired, now come some other words where God Himself chooses a king for them. As we saw just before, Samuel had said to Saul that the kingdom would be taken from him because he had not kept the word of the Lord; and he continued by saying:

1 Samuel 13:14 ...the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him [to be] captain over his people...

So Samuel was told by God to anoint one of the sons of Jesse. And when he had gone there under God’s direction, as he was looking at all the different sons of Jesse that came to him, he made an interesting observation about the oldest son. Saul was a stately person just like that, and now Samuel looks at Eliab and says,

1 Samuel 16:6 ...Surely the LORD's anointed [is] before him. 7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for [the LORD seeth] not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

God was going to choose a man after His own heart. He was going to look for the heart of the man. So Samuel went through all the sons, but there was no-

body there. And he had to ask Jesse, Have you got any other children? So Jesse said, Oh yes, there's the strapping young man out there looking after the sheep. So Samuel said, Get him for me. And when he came, the Lord said to Samuel, This is the one; anoint him.

Consider now this man, the one who would take the place of Saul, God's choice, a man after His own heart.

Then He called to the throne "a man after His own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14) {CC 148.3}

What did this mean?

--not one who was faultless in character, but who, instead of trusting to himself, would rely upon God, and be guided by His Spirit; who, when he sinned, would submit to reproof and correction. {Ibid.}

The Difference Between Saul and David

What is a man after God's own heart, in contrast to King Saul? In these few words above is couched the history of King David and the revelation of God's mind. David was not faultless in character. In fact, he sinned grievously. Did not Saul sin? To all appearances Saul did not sin as grievously as did David. He only just failed God in a little point here or there, according to human judgment. Contemplate the difference between Saul and David, and come to understand God's mind. What was the difference? What in God's mind set David above Saul? *Instead of trusting to himself, he would rely upon God. And when he sinned, he would submit to reproof and correction.*

God knew ahead of time, when He was choosing and anointing David, what David was going to do. He knows all things ahead of time. But He said, This is a man after my own heart; choose him and anoint him. God saw the state of David's mind, his heart. David, as a young man, relied heavily upon God, as he looked after the sheep.

Let us consider the followings words as we consider these two kings, one whom God rejected, and one whom God did not reject, even though he committed severe sins. Here is the actual revelation of God's mind, His character:

Exodus 34:6 And the LORD passed by before [Moses], and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear [the guilty]; vis-

iting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth [generation].

Can we see in these words what God's attitude was in contrast of one king to the other? To one king He would forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin; to the other He would by no means clear the guilty. What is the meaning of this? As we read, King Saul was *unsubdued by divine grace*. What is divine grace? The pardoning love and compassion of God in working in the hearts of people so that they would be subdued by His intervention in their life. But Saul was unsubdued by that divine grace; he was not contrite. He was a little disturbed by the fact that Samuel was talking to him the way he did; but he did not truly confess. He was not contrite so that the guilt could be removed.

It is true that God "will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:7), but He would take away the guilt. {MB 22.1}

Did God want to take away the guilt of King Saul. He wanted to. But what was the problem with King Saul? He was *unsubdued by divine grace*. So God could not *take away the guilt*. To all appearances David had far greater guilt than Saul; but David submitted to the removal of that guilt, while Saul failed to let God remove the guilt. That was the difference. What a revelation. God could remove David's guilt by Jesus Christ

David's Response

Nathan had just told David his terrible sin, and the way he did it made David to discover himself the heinousness of his sin.

The conviction of his guilt was the saving of his soul. He saw himself in another light, as the Lord saw him, and as long as he lived he repented of his sin (Letter 57, 1897). {2BC 1023.3}

As long as he lived he repented of his sin. He himself wrote, *My sin is ever before me.* And as Nathan shows him this picture of himself,

David awakens as from a dream. He feels the sense of his sin. He does not seek to excuse his course, or palliate his sin, as did Saul; {2BC 1023.5}

Can you see the contrast? Saul would *palliate* and *excuse* his course, whereas King David did not.

...but with remorse and sincere grief, he bows his head before the prophet of God, and acknowledges his guilt. {Ibid.}

David does not manifest the spirit of an unconverted man. {2BC 1023.6}

How can he be a converted man after having committed such a heinous sin? This is something that baffles many minds. The fact is that, if he had been an unconverted man,

If he had possessed the spirit of the rulers of the nations around him, he would not have borne, from Nathan, the picture of his crime before him in its truly abominable colors, but would have taken the life of the faithful reprover. But notwithstanding the loftiness of his throne, and his unlimited power, his humble acknowledgement of all with which he was charged, is evidence that he still feared and trembled at the word of the Lord (1SP 378, 381). {2BC 1023.6}

He still feared and trembled at the word of the Lord, something which Saul did not do. And as we are beholding this story, we see God's mind, and we examine ourselves. What did David cling to when he was so unveiled by Nathan the prophet? His whole confession was chronicled in Psalm 51. What was he clinging to? What was in the heart of David that was according to the heart of God?

Psalm 51:16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give [it]: thou delightest not in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

He came to God and let God know that he was all broken up. He did not try to justify himself; he was broken before God, and he clung to the wonderful promises of God's word that God would not despise a broken and a contrite heart. He knew that beforehand, and when it happened to him he knew how to deal with it:

Psalm 34:18 The LORD [is] nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

The very spirit of the person – contrite, instead of justifying himself and not accepting the correction.

Isaiah 66:2 For all those [things] hath mine hand made, and all those [things] have been, saith the LORD: but to this [man] will I look, [even] to [him that is] poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

“Notwithstanding the loftiness of his throne, and his unlimited power, his humble acknowledgement of all with which he was charged, is evidence that he still feared and *trembled at the word of the Lord*.” This is the promise. He who trembles at the word of God is the person whom God looks to. This is the man after God's own heart.

Do you wonder why King David's throne was equated with the throne that Jesus sits on? He sits *upon the throne of David*; why?

Isaiah 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name [is] Holy; I dwell in the high and holy [place], with him also [that is] of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

It is the mind of God that we are here studying in Saul and David's experience. And all this reveals the meaning of the words which Samuel spoke regarding God's choice of David, *The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart*. It is this which makes David the prime choice for the declaration of God's covenant. It is because David was like this that we have him as a prime choice in these followings words; God is here speaking:

Isaiah 55:3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, [even] the sure mercies of David.

To describe the everlasting covenant in contrast to the first covenant of man promising and failing, God uses King David as the prime example of what the everlasting covenant is, *even the sure mercies of David*.

Isaiah 55:4 Behold, I have given him [for] a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

Can you see God's mind? The mind of man has thoughts completely different when it comes to studying the Ten Commandments and seeing people breaking those commandments. The mind of man has a completely different thought to God's thought. They just see a man breaking the commandments, and therefore they must censure. And they never let it down. The people are always reminded of their sins, and they cannot come out from underneath the pall of condemnation by their fellow men.

An Example in Repentance

As we, like David, look back at our past sins, which man will point out to us again and again under their own judgment, our past may be muddied, like David's was, in one way or another; but how may we rejoice in King David's example?

How careful is the Lord Jesus to give no occasion for a soul to despair. How He fences about the soul from Satan's fierce attacks. If through manifold temptations we are surprised or deceived into sin, He does not turn from us

and leave us to perish. No, no, that is not our Saviour.... He was tempted in all points like as we are;

He knows the experience.

If you make failures and are betrayed into sin, do not feel then you cannot pray ... but seek the Lord more earnestly. {OHC 49.3}

The blood of Jesus is pleading with power and efficacy for those who are backslidden, for those who are rebellious, for those who sin against great light and love. {OHC 49.4}

If you can look back at your life and feel the bewilderment of the temptations that overwhelm you, and by the multiple temptations you were surprised, deceived into sin, don't despair; be like David. Confess to the Lord, and He will not despise you. Let David's example impart courage. But let it not be an excuse for slackness; because many people look to David's history and think, "Oh well, if he could get away with it, so can I." No; that attitude is not going to get you away from it. The attitude is to pick up on David's deep appreciation of his terrible sin; and as we do that, we hate the sin that we have committed and we will never do it again, and we will follow in that beautiful description of David being our example, *the sure mercies of David*. Follow the decision that David made. Trust as he did. Shun Saul's attitude, and embrace this:

Return to Your Father's House

Have you, reader, chosen your own way? Have you wandered far from God? Have you sought to feast upon the fruits of transgression, only to find them turn to ashes upon your lips? And now, your life plans thwarted and your hopes dead, do you sit alone and desolate? That voice which has long been speaking to your heart, but to which you would not listen, comes to you distinct and clear, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." Micah 2:10. Return to your Father's house. He invites you, saying, "Return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee." "Come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Isaiah 44:22; 55:3. {PK 319.3}

As you embrace this for your own soul, when the enemy of souls, the accuser of the brethren, comes to you, remember, the Lord does the same for others in the faith, who can also see mistakes and sins; and we will have that religion of Christ that has compassion one for another.

May God keep on speaking through His clear word His compassion, His dealing of love and kindness and grace to us, which is as much to be obeyed as the Ten Commandments. May we submit to that, as much as we submit to the law of God.

Amen.