

THE EXAMPLES OF SAUL AND JEHOSHAPHAT

Peter Hay, prepared for the presbytery word, 18 July 2021

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Introduction

In our last session, we made the point that failing to acknowledge the oath of the Son, because we do not fear the Lord, causes corruption in relation to kingship and priesthood.

As a consequence, we fail to enter the 'rest' of obtaining the inheritance of sonship that Christ has finished for us and perfected for us through His offering and sufferings.

To further explain and illustrate this critical understanding, in this session we will consider the example of Saul, and also of King Jehoshaphat.

Saul and the test of the Amalekites

Let us begin with Saul, and we are particularly looking at 'the test' of the Amalekites. You may remember that the Lord, through His prophet Samuel, instructed King Saul to attack the Amalekites and to utterly destroy all that they had. He was to kill both man, woman, infant, nursing child, ox, sheep, camel, donkey - everything.

The Lord called Saul to do this because of what the Amalekites had done to the children of Israel as they journeyed from Egypt to the promised land. The Amalekites were descendants of Esau's grandson, Amalek. In this regard, they symbolised fleshly religion related to God's covenant people. Esau, of course, was Jacob's brother and he is the symbol, if you like, of 'the flesh'.

The relations of the Israelites attacked God's covenant people to intervene on God's purpose for Israel, which was to enter the promised land; to enter rest.

The Amalekites attacked Israel while they were camped at Rephidim. This is the place where God commanded Moses to strike the rock with his rod to bring water from the rock to quench the thirst of the Israelites.

While they were camped at Rephidim, Amalek came and attacked them. This was the battle where, while ever Moses had his hands raised, the Israelites under the command and direction of Joshua prevailed against Amalek. But every time that Moses dropped his hands, Amalek would prevail over Israel.

Aaron and a man called Hur kept Moses' hands lifted, and they actually rested them on some rocks, so that they prevailed over Amalek.

At the conclusion of this battle, the Lord (Yahweh) said to Moses, 'Write this down.' Wherever we see 'Yahweh', particularly in the Old Testament, it refers to Jesus - Jesus Christ; or, really, the Son of God.

'Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.'

Now, blotting out a whole nation sounds like people being blotted out of the Lamb's book of life, which is an amazing point, because even Amalek was written in that book. But he was blotted out.

The Lord is my banner; the cross of Christ lifted up

'And Moses built an altar and named it the LORD is My Banner [*Yahweh* is my banner].'

This is an amazing statement and, obviously, we do not have time today to look through this particular theme. This banner is *the cross of Christ*, which is *lifted up* as a banner to the nations.

So, Moses named the altar '*the cross* upon which Yahweh (I AM) is revealed'. 'The Lord is my banner'.

'And he said, "Because the LORD has sworn, the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation".' Exo 17:14-16.

This is the oath of the Son, over and against Esau's descendants. This was a prophetic word written down by Moses as the Scriptures.

Works declared and finished by the Lord

The word of the Lord to Saul to go and kill the Amalekites was the *prophetic word* of the Scriptures, which declared *his work* as the king.

So, the works that were finished for King Saul as king, written in the Scriptures, that he was to fulfil and enter into the rest of that finished work of Christ for, were declared to him.

The word is a lamp shining in a dark place that draws us into a fellowship

What Saul should have, and would have done well to do, was to 'pay attention to this word as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the light dawned in his heart'. 2Pe 1:19.

But Saul did not press in, or was not diligent, because he had no fear of the Lord, to enter into that rest, the evidence of which is that the *light* of the word that commanded him to do a work was dawning in him.

He was now walking and living by the darkened perspective of his own sight.

Amazingly, that is exactly what Peter warned in his very next verse. Peter, on this very point about paying attention to the word as to a lamp shining in a dark place, said, 'But we know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.'

He was to not have interpreted this word himself; rather, he was to have given attention to and applied himself to it in connection with Samuel, until it had dawned in him.

When we *presume* to interpret the word, or the Scriptures, from the basis of *our own understanding*, we will inevitably find ourselves at odds with God's will for our life. Even if we are zealous, and we are hungry to do good works, we will find ourselves at odds with God's will, because we are living according to our own darkened perspective.

We must receive *the light* that comes from a lamp. That refers to the light that shines from a presbytery.

We can be selectively obedient to the word of the Lord

Saul and the people under his command were *selectively obedient* to the word that the Lord had spoken to Samuel. I am leaning on this term, 'selective obedience'.

They spared Agag the king of the Amalekites, and they were unwilling to destroy the best of the sheep and the oxen. But everything that was despised and worthless, *according to their perspective*, they utterly destroyed. 1Sa 15:7-9.

However, Samuel made it patently clear to Saul that *partial* obedience is not obedience at all. It is complete *disobedience*.

This is important for us to note because the presumption that we can *choose* what word applies to us, as the word of the messenger is coming and proclaiming the light of the knowledge of the glory of God to us, can lead only to *disobedience*.

If we walk in disobedience, we will not enter His rest

This is what this series has been about - to say, if we walk in that disobedience, *the Lord swears in His wrath that we will not enter His rest*.

This is where *the fear of God* is particularly important for us to understand and receive.

Because of Saul's disobedience, Yahweh - the Lord Jesus Christ - said to Samuel, 'I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not performed My commandments.'

We know that Saul had drawn back in unbelief. That is exactly what Paul said about the children of Israel. They had drawn back in unbelief; they failed to enter.

King Saul's failure in relation to the test of the Amalekites demonstrated that he did not fear God. In fact, he said to Samuel, 'I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people, and I obeyed their voice.' 1Sa 15:24.

I think that he did not just fear for his own safety in relation to the people. He feared that they would not treat him as king.

The thing that he was trying to lay hold of in his own strength was becoming a *projection*, which he should have actually entered into through obedience. But he feared the loss of the honour of the people.

So he went along with their particular initiatives and intentions. And he failed to be obedient to the Lord.

Because Saul had not learned the fear of the Lord, initially, when Samuel came to him, he did not even realise that he had been disobedient. This is amazing. He was not *deliberately* being disobedient. In fact, he thought he had been wholly obedient, and was giving himself 'a pat on the back'. He confidently, yet ignorantly, represented himself before the messenger of the

Lord, saying, 'Blessed are you of the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord.'

We see here Saul's strong allegiance, or connection, or asserted relationship with Samuel.

But the point is that that connection, or allegiance, is not obedience. The Scriptures call this 'feigned love'.

Now, Saul would have said, 'I wasn't trying to feign love.' But the fact is that his absence of obedience to the word demonstrated that he was not revealing anyone else. True love - the love of Yahweh - is the capacity to lay down our lives to reveal another.

Saul should have done that but, because he feared the people, he did this to reveal himself.

Where we do not fear the Lord, we default in relation to kingship and priesthood

This kind of flattery of the messenger - 'blessed are you of the Lord' - revealed that Saul was, in fact, *cleaving with deceit* to the Lord's messenger.

This is a serious matter. In the book of Daniel, the Lord said that the messengers suffer persecution, and fall, because of those who 'cleave to them with deceit'.

I do not think Saul was being maliciously deceptive in relation to Samuel. He did not cleave to Samuel with deceit, maliciously. He cleaved to Samuel with deceit because *he himself was deceived*. He asserted his own obedience; proclaimed his own righteousness.

Even when he was first confronted by Samuel, he endeavoured to excuse himself, saying, 'But I *have* obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord has sent me. I have all this great work that I have been doing, and this is the work you told me to do. I've been obedient.'

This man was completely in the dark, completely deluded, not able to see that his works were actually over and against the word of God for him. It was a deception, and he cleaved to Samuel with deceit.

It is interesting that, when Samuel sought to separate himself from Saul, Samuel's garment was torn. An *injury* was incurred by the messenger as a result of this deceptive cleaving.

Saul circumvented the first dimension of the Lord's oath. This is the point that we need to understand.

First, he did not *fear God*. He was not *obedient*. And, because of this, he defaulted in relation to *kingship and priesthood*. He circumvented the first dimension of the Lord's oath, because he did not fear God. Consequently, he defaulted in relation to kingship and priesthood.

He did not stand up in his authority as king, heeding instead the voice of the people.

And his offerings were complete corruption. This is what Samuel said to him about his offerings, given that he had been disobedient. He said, 'Has 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 heed than the fat of rams.' 1Sa 15:22-23.

This does not mean that he should not have made sacrifice or participated in offering. Rather, it means that obedience is fundamental to those activities being in the truth. Obedience has to be in Spirit and in truth. Obedience is foundational to this.

Obedience is foundational

Then he said, 'For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king.' This is the Lord speaking through Samuel.

As we already read, on account of Saul's disobedience, the Lord said to Samuel, 'I greatly regret.' 'Greatly regret' means 'I have repented'. Do you hear the gravity of that?

The Lord *repented* of what he had written and finished for Saul in relation to his kingship. Saul's works as king were already written from the foundation of the world, and Jesus, at this point, repented of these.

They were blotted out. He failed to enter Christ's rest.

He said, 'I greatly regret [or 'have repented'] that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments.' 1Sa 15:11.

If you are a follower of the Lord, it means, by definition, that you are being obedient to His word as it is proclaimed by His messengers.

There is no other way to follow the Lord.

Saul's disobedience revealed that he had 'an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God'. Heb 3:12.

He had an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, which is what the Lord said to him. 'You have turned back from following Me.' In this regard, he was no different from the children of Israel who turned back from entering the promised land because of fear. The Lord's soul had no pleasure in Saul because he drew back in this manner.

And the repentance of Yahweh, in relation to the name and works that had been written for Saul, was the action of the Lord swearing in His wrath that Saul would not enter His rest.

These are both sides of the oath. We will read the other side of the oath as it worked for David.

'Today' is when we must respond when the Lord meets us

Samuel, the messenger of the Lord, said to Saul, 'The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today'.

The word 'today', here, is particularly important to us as we understand that this is the work of the Spirit who says, 'Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart'.

'Today' is when we must *respond* when the Lord comes to meet us with His word, calling for obedience.

He said, 'The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbour of yours, who is better than you. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.' 1Sa 15:28-29.

From that point on, the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and that a distressing spirit from the Lord Himself troubled Saul until his death.

The key point to note is that, unless we learn the fear of the Lord, which is a capacity of Eternal Spirit - 'the fear of the Lord' is one of the seven Spirits of God - we will unavoidably and

ignorantly disobey the word of the Lord, and will fail to enter His rest.

Our works will not be according to our name; nor will our offering be acceptable to God.

Demonstrating the fear of the Lord

Now, in contrast to Saul, King David demonstrated the way that we all - because we *all* experience the test of Amalek - will interface with this, because we are *all* called to be obedient to enter His rest. Paul said, 'Since there remains a promise of entering His rest ... fear.'

The response of King David shows us how to enter that rest. In contrast to Saul, when David encountered the test of Amalek, his response demonstrated the fear of the Lord.

The Amalekites, symbolising fleshly religion associated with the church, had raided the cities in which the wives and children of David and his men resided.

This is an amazing thought. This illustrates the world, or fleshly religion, gaining access into the households of these ones and taking captive their wives and children. If ever there was a statement of oppression through religion, this is it.

The city had been burned with fire, and their wives and their children had been taken captive, which was a massive grief for David and for his men. The Scriptures record, 'David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep'. 1Sa 30:4. That is becoming 'poor in spirit' - absolutely bereft of even the capacity to weep.

Strengthening ourselves in the Lord

And David, having come to this point, was even *further* distressed, because the people spoke of stoning him. Saul said that he feared the people because they just wanted some 'good stuff'.

David, on the other hand, was in a situation where he had lost everything. Those who were following him had lost everything, and said, 'We are going to kill you, David, because this is all your fault.'

So, if ever there was a circumstance where someone could be legitimately afraid for their life, this was it. However, David did not seek to save his life.

What did he do? We read, 'David *strengthened himself* in the LORD'.

This is *the first response* of one who fears the Lord.

In our circumstances – in the trouble, the pain, the distress, and the threat against our life; remember, we talked about the fear of death last week, about losing our life or the life that we believe we should have – we can either be motivated by the fear of death to intervene on our circumstance or we can humble ourselves and strengthen ourselves in the Lord.

We can come 'boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need'. This *mercy* is how we present ourselves as a living sacrifice.

And *grace* is not just to give us a 'pep up'; grace is to bind, or hold us, to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, where His life becomes ours.

David 'strengthened himself in the LORD'. This is the first response of one who fears the Lord.

If, in our circumstances which are troubling, and the Lord is bringing something in our family or in our situation to nothing, we are to go to *prayer*.

Seeking fellowship to know the will of the Lord

However, this is not the *full* response.

This must not be the end of the matter for us, because it was not for David.

What did he do? He went and *sought the word of the Lord*.

If it had been the end of the matter for him, he would have pursued the Amalekites according to *his own interpretation* of the situation.

There had been a prophetic word about dealing with the Amalekites 'from generation to generation'. David could have read that and thought, 'Right, that's what I have to do. These wicked, ungodly people. Moses said from the Scriptures, "Go and do this".'

That would have been David's *private* interpretation, and that would have been no less darkened than what Saul did.

He did not do that. What did David do? David *inquired of the Lord through fellowship with the priests*.

Malachi described the priests as 'the messengers of Israel'. 'For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge. And people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is *the messenger of the LORD of hosts*.' Mal 2:7.

An administration of light and perfection

David, seeking that word and that fellowship demonstrated that *he feared the Lord*. This is what it says of that interaction.

'Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, "Please bring the ephod here to me." And Abiathar brought the ephod to David. So, David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?"' 1Sa 30:7-8.

Briefly, the ephod was the vestment worn by the high priest, and it had the stones in it. But, significantly, on the shoulders of the priest were these peculiar stones called the Urim and the Thummim, from where they received the prophetic direction of the Lord.

The words 'Urim and Thummim' mean 'lights and perfections'. It was *an administration* of light and perfection, through which the ministers of God provided insight and direction regarding the will of God for individuals and the nation.

A lamp shining in a dark place

David strengthened himself in the Lord. And the first exercise of one who has obtained grace is *fellowship*. He connected himself with the Lord's messengers, the priests, and they inquired of the Lord through this 'lights and perfections'.

That is what Peter was referring to when he said, 'You do well to pay attention to this word as to a lamp shining in a dark place' – lights and perfections.

David went to gain insight as to the will of God. And, as he was joined to that will, he was fulfilling, or being perfected, or sanctified, in relation to what the Son had already perfected for him in relation to his works. That is why we need this fellowship.

The Lord's strength is our provision as we fellowship with His messengers

'Now, the Lord answered David saying, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all".' That is amazing!

If you are worried about recovery in your family as captivity has taken hold, do not do it in *your own strength*. Strengthen yourself in the Lord and find fellowship with the Lord's messengers. That is where your provision will be.

So, David and four hundred of his men attacked and defeated Amalek, 'From twilight until the evening of the next day'. Incidentally, that was the same length of time as was Christ's offering journey.

David, having received the light of the will of God, was then joined to the perfecting process of fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

And the very next account is the death of Saul, and of King David entering into 'the rest of the inheritance', which was the kingship promised to him. So, this is how we enter that rest and obtain the blessing promised to us.

King Jehoshaphat

The second example that I want to talk about today is regarding King Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, and he learned to fear the Lord through the disaster of his association with King Ahab, who was the king of Israel.

King Ahab claimed to be one of God's people, but he was of a different culture and spirit altogether.

The fear of the Lord should cause this separation of those who are of God, from those who are counterfeit.

The body of Christ will only come together as each person is individually joined to Christ's offering and sufferings

Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance. And I propose that he had plenty of grace and capacity as the leader of God's covenant people.

However, he made an alliance with the king of Israel, Ahab, and we can liken such an alliance to 'a church merger'. So, there was 'the Judah church' and 'the Israel church'.

Judah was abundant in riches and capacity, and sought an alliance with Israel. It is not clear from the Scriptures why Jehoshaphat did this, but we can hypothesise about it.

Perhaps he believed for the coming together of the nation of Israel in the same way that many of us have believed for the coming together of the body of Christ.

Much of our understanding in the past about the coming together of the body of Christ has not been according to the Scriptures.

This is an interesting point too, because there were *prophetic Scriptures* proclaiming the coming together of Judah and Israel, but not through these *alliances*, in the same way that the body of Christ is not coming together through doctrinal alliances or through ecumenical initiatives.

It is *only* coming together as every person, individually, is joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings and joined to that body.

There is a doctrinal misunderstanding of this coming together of God's covenant people in the same way that many people are confused on the point of the coming together of the body of Christ.

Perhaps Jehoshaphat was invested in the size and number of the congregation over which he presided, which would have been considerable once you put Judah and Israel together. The size of congregation was being achieved through these alliances, or mergers.

Whatever the issue, the Lord dealt with this particular mindset.

A false alliance

After some time, Ahab and Jehoshaphat went up to Ramoth Gilead to fight against the Syrians. And Jehoshaphat insisted that he and Ahab inquire for the word of the Lord.

Ahab had four hundred prophets, all who said, 'Go up, for God will deliver it into the king's hand.' Four hundred prophets - that is a lot of voices all saying the same thing, and all of them wrong.

The amazing thing about Jehoshaphat, which indicates that he was a person with sight and grace, was that he recognised the counterfeit prophecies of Ahab's diviners.

Nevertheless, he went up with Ahab, over and against the direction given by the prophet Micaiah, who was being abused by Ahab. And the armies of Israel and Judah were soundly thrashed by the Syrians.

Ahab was killed even as he sought to conceal his identity. We can say a lot about that, but we are focusing on Jehoshaphat, who was fortunate to

avoid the same fate. He escaped from the judgement of God upon this alliance, 'by the skin of his teeth'. So, he returned to Jerusalem.

The word comes to bring separation to fellowship

Now, Jehu, the Lord's messenger - a prophetic messenger - went to meet Jehoshaphat with a rebuke. I suggest that the initiative of Jehu to Jehoshaphat was 'the eyes of the Lord as a flame of fire' to him.

Jehu, the Lord's messenger, went to Jehoshaphat with a rebuke, saying, 'Should you help the wicked [referring to his connection to Ahab] and love those who hate the Lord? Therefore, the wrath of the Lord is upon you.'

Remember, when we first look into the face of Christ and see His eyes like a flame of fire, He is coming in judgement and with wrath.

'Nevertheless, good things are found in you in that you have removed the wooden images from the land and have prepared your heart to seek God.'

This was Christ coming to him with eyes like a flame of fire. It was the word of the cross bringing a separation to Jehoshaphat's life.

So, in the first instance, he met the face of Christ through the Lord's messenger, and the wrath of the Lord was upon him.

But, as he did not draw back from this message, the Lord said, 'I do have something for you to enter - I'm drawing you to fellowship'.

Not drawing back from the Lord's eyes, but culture reformed

Now, in response to the word of Jehu, Jehoshaphat forsook his previous alliance, and gave himself to the work of reforming the culture of the nation of Judah.

'So Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem.' He went back to where the Lord had placed him - the city of Jerusalem, which is the heavenly city that we are to come to. He did not worship in Samaria, but worshipped in that city as part of that body of people.

'So Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem; and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD God of their fathers.'

As one who feared the Lord, he then began to call everyone out from this alliance. And this is the word, 'Come out from among them and be separate' - leave this association with a religious culture that is damnable. He drew the people back by the word of the Lord to him; to the culture of the church, if you like, of which he was a minister.

'Then he set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, *city by city* [That sounds like a presbytery with representatives of that presbytery in city by city.] and said to the judges, "Take heed to what you are doing".'

Every messenger had better take heed in relation to this command to reformation. 'Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD.'

This was over and against what Saul was doing; his actions were in relation to pleasing men.

These ones were commanded in the fear of the Lord, 'Don't judge in relation to man, but for the Lord who is with you in the judgement. Now therefore, let the fear of the Lord be upon you.'

They learned the fear of the Lord from the instruction of the overseer and shepherd of Israel.

Fearing the Lord; entering His rest

'Let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes.

'Moreover in Jerusalem, for the judgement of the LORD and for controversies, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests, and some of the chief fathers of Israel, when they returned to Jerusalem.' 2Ch 19:4-8.

Jehoshaphat set judges - symbolic of those who are part of an *aggelos* presbytery - throughout the fortified cities in Judah. This was what a lampstand church looks like. Those fortified cities were like flowers - flower congregations.

In them was a lamp light, because they were connected to one presbytery, one fellowship, or star, in relationship together in the fear of the Lord.

So, in type, a lamp light was being placed in each of these local congregation flowers.

This is what he said to all those who he had commanded as judges in these places. 'Thus you

shall act in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and with a loyal heart: whatever case comes to you from your brethren who dwell in their cities, whether of bloodshed or offences against law or commandment, against statutes or ordinances, you shall warn them, lest they trespass against the LORD and wrath come upon you and your brethren. Do this and you will not be guilty.' 2Ch 19:9-10.

In other words, 'You will enter'; you will not be under the judgement of God.

By this means, Jehoshaphat taught the whole nation to fear the Lord. They entered the rest of the Lord through their participation in the administration that Jehoshaphat had restored in response to the word of Jehu.

These are wonderful examples illustrating to us how this principle works, and how we can enter the Lord's rest.

This is 'obtaining mercy and grace as we come boldly to the throne of grace'.