

1st Samuel

Lesson 16

c) The Sermon for the Tribes (10:25a)

After the proclamation that Saul was the new king, Samuel had the sermon for the tribes. Verse 25a.

“Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the LORD.” (10:25a)

What were the ordinances that Samuel wrote in a book? To answer that question, let us consider that this is the first place in the Scripture where we learn that Samuel could write. Surely, he did because he was a priest tasked with reading and writing the law every seventh year before the people of Israel, so they could not claim that they had never heard the law. More than likely, Samuel wrote all of that we have heard from the book of Judges and 1st Samuel through chapter 6, and that record was added to the records of Moses and Joshua that were kept in or near the Ark of the Covenant currently still at Shiloh. Was the Ark in storage at this time? No. Not yet. It would not be captured until the twenty-seventh year of Saul’s rule. The Ark was still at Shiloh, and that was where the LORD rested His presence above the Mercy Seat on top of the Ark. Did Samuel include the book of Ruth with this writing. Probably not. David had not been born yet. He would not be born until Saul’s tenth year as king; therefore, the story of Ruth was not needed at this time because the LORD had not revealed the future of King David, who was not born as of yet.

d) The Sending of the Tribes (10:25b-26)

With Saul selected as king, we hear Samuel and the sending of the tribes to their homes. Verse 25b.

“And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house. ²⁶Saul also went to his house at Gibeah; and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him.” (10:25b-26)

Saul went home to Gibeah, but he did not go alone. God had touched the hearts of some of the men at that time, and they accompanied Saul to his home. At this point in the story, we do not know the names of these valiant men. Notwithstanding, we will surely hear their names soon as they become the band of loyal leaders to serve under the king's command.

e) The Subversive in the Tribes (10:27)

But with every good thing that comes, there seems to be the bad trailing along too. Samuel made sure to note the subversive in the tribes. Verse 27.

“But certain worthless men said, ‘How can this one deliver us?’ And they despised him and did not bring him any present. But he kept silent.” (10:27)

Here we learn that Saul must have been flooded with gifts from the men of Israel. This point is implied when we read that some men did not bring gifts to Saul. These men were called “*worthless men*” because they did not trust that Saul could lead them, and they did not bring him gifts as a sign to pledge their loyalty to the new king. Nevertheless, Saul did not say a word about the worthless men. Another wise move by Saul, possibly suggested by Samuel, but probably gifted to Saul through prophecy from the LORD.

Chapter 11

f) The Establishment of Saul

(1) A Covenant of Reproach (11:1-2)

As chapter 11 opens, the writer presents the events that facilitated the establishment of Saul as the king among all the people of Israel. The story occurred after the meeting at Mizpah and well after Saul's appointment with Samuel in Gilgal set forth on the day Samuel consecrated Saul in Ramah to be the next king. For now, in this section of the writer's record, the writer is concentrating on the establishment of Saul as king and the events that transpired for that purpose with the people of the nation of Israel. The meeting at Gilgal will be more for the training of Saul in the work he was to do than the events that establish him as king. Interestingly, the event that established Saul as king over all Israel involved a cousin nation of the Israelites – the nation of Ammon. To make peace with their cousins, the Israelite men sought a covenant with Ammon. The offer resulted in a covenant of reproach: chapter 11, verse 1.

“Now Nahash the Ammonite came up and besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, ‘Make a covenant with us and we will serve you.’”² But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, “I will make it with you on this condition, that I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you, thus I will make it a reproach on all Israel.” (11:1-2)

Who was “Nahash the Ammonite?” We will meet a “Nahash the Ammonite” again in 2nd Samuel chapter 17:25 when this new Nahash helps King David as he is fleeing from his rebellious son, Absalom. Simply looking at the timeline, it seems impossible for these two references of “Nahash the Ammonite” to be addressing the same person. Saul will serve for forty years as king, then David will serve for about twenty years as the king before Absalom begins his rebellion. That would mean that the Nahash of Saul’s troubles would be at least sixty years older during the days of David’s troubles. That would mean that the Nahash helping David would have been more than eighty years old at the time. Impossible? No. Probable? No. Perhaps the Nahash of David’s troubles was a son or grandson of the Nahash of Saul’s troubles. However, we do not know which is correct.

Be that as it may, being an Ammonite meant that he was a distant cousin of Saul and all the Israelites through Abraham’s nephew’s child, Ammon, conceived by Lot and his second daughter on the second night after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Ammon’s brother was Moab, conceived on the first night after the destruction with Lot’s first daughter. When Moses led the nation through the land of Moab and Ammon on the way to camp at the Plain of Moab, and when Moses led the Nation of Israel to war against the Amorite armies of Sihon and Og to take the land on the eastern side of the Jordan River for part of the Promised Land, Moses was careful not to take any of the lands that belonged to the cousin nations of Moab and Ammon. However, the land of kings Sihon and Og was taken and given to the tribes of Rueben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh as their portions in the Promised Land.

Part of the land on the east side of the Jordan River was called Gilead. Some of Gilead bordered with the land of Ammon to its east. According to Josephus, the town of Jabesh was the capital of Gilead. If you will remember, during the time of the Judges, men from Jabesh failed to help in a certain battle when the call went out. For their failure to help with the fight, which would have been as simple as sending one man from the town to help fight against the rebellious and repulsive men of the tribe of Benjamin, Jabesh, in the area called Gilead, was destroyed – every man, woman, boy and girl (Judges 21). Later, the town was rebuilt and inhabited by the people of Israel. One note at this time might help understand why towns were destroyed and then rebuilt by others. It all had to do with the natural resource at the location. People built their villages and cities based on the availability of water and natural food sources in the area. The more the resources, the larger the

population that could be sustained at that location. In the case of Jabesh-gilead, the resources were great.

As the capital of Gilead, as well as the possessors of great natural resources, the capture of the city by the Ammonites would virtually ensure the takeover of the entire land of Gilead. This would, in essence, rob this part of the Promised Land from the Nation of Israel. To make peace with their Ammonite cousins, the men of Jabesh offered to make a covenant with Nahash, which would place them in a position to serve the Ammonites. What did this mean? It meant that the men of Jabesh-Gilead were willing to be put into subjection to the Ammonites in the same way that the Nation of Israel was taken over and in subjection to six different nations during the time of the story found in the book of Judges. At this point, we might well realize that for all practical purposes, the story in 1st Samuel, until Samuel consecrated Saul as king, was simply a continuation of the storyline found in the book of Judges. After all, Samuel was the last judge to control Israel before Saul was consecrated as king. What the men of Jabesh-gilead had offered the Ammonites was simply what they and their ancestors had done for about the last four hundred years.

But the covenant which Nahash would agree to was repulsive. It was a covenant of reproach against the men of Jabesh-gilead and the Nation of Israel as a whole. It had been near ninety years since the Ammonites had tried to take this land and city but were repulsed by Jephthah in Judges 11. Such barbaric tactics, as stated in this covenant, were not new. They were used throughout the world between enemies. We must be thankful to the LORD for recording such atrocities in the Holy Scripture. All of us in our lives have thought of the Bible as being full of goodness – and it is. But, the more we study the Bible, we quickly realize that it is full of badness too. Why would the Bible record such badness within its pages? The LORD allowed it so we would know what was bad and what was good. The LORD allowed it so we would know what He approved of and what He disapproved of. In addition, the LORD wanted us to understand what a world without Him is like and what a world with Him can be like.

I was recently asked by a student for a book referral that could describe the nature and culture of the world's nations in ancient times and specifically the nations that surrounded the Promised Land and the Nation of Israel. I thought I had a book or two that I could refer him to, but when I pulled them out of my library storage and scanned through them, I realized they were extremely low-level and not informative at all. I searched in vain online to find books on the topic of ancient cultures but found nothing which really addressed the topic in earnest. Then, one day, while I was outlining all of 1st Samuel through 2nd Kings in preparation to write a commentary on them all, I realized I had the book in my hand that plainly revealed the culture and nature of the nations that surrounded Israel. What book? The Bible. Specifically, in the pages of the book of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the LORD told us about the nature and cultures of the surrounding nations when He told Israel how to live religiously and civilly. Specifically, the book of Leviticus is about how to live holy in an unholy world. The LORD wanted His chosen nation to be different from all the rest of the nations in the world. Therefore, He told them through Moses how to live a holy life, holy and acceptable to Him as their LORD God. The laws put in place tell us the nature and cultures of the surrounding nations because the LORD wanted His nation to be different from those surrounding nations. And in the Promised Land, which was the homeland of the Canaanites, the LORD wanted them totally eliminated from the land because of their religious and civil nature and cultures – a task the Israelites failed to complete. Here are some examples of the nature and cultures of the surrounding nations found in the text of the book of Leviticus. When the LORD forbids sexual relationships between man and beast, He did so because that was the nature and culture of the people in the rest of the world. It is a short trip to prove that fact. All you must do is delve into the worship practices of cults throughout time. When the LORD forbids sexual relationships between family members, He did so because that was the nature and culture of the people in the rest of the world. It is a short trip to

prove that fact. All you must do is pick up a history of the Pharaoh's of Egypt to see such inbreeding. When the LORD forbids sexual relationships between men with men and women with women, He did so because that was the nature and culture of the people in the rest of the world. Things have not changed a bit in the godless world. With the newscasts each day, atrocities such as mentioned in this passage grace the screens of our devices from around the globe – atrocities committed in the name of false religions and corrupt godless cultures. As Solomon will say in about ninety years after this point in the storyline, “there is nothing new under the sun.” As the Jamineson-Fausset-Brown Bible commentary states about this verse and these atrocities, “This barbarous mutilation is the usual punishment of usurpers in the East, inflicted on chiefs; sometimes, also, even in modern history, on the whole male population of a town.” It was the nature and cultures of the nation which surrounded Israel.

(2) A Call for Deliverance (11:3)

What could the men of Jabesh-gilead do now? They had shown their weakness and offered to enter into a covenant with Nahash the Ammonite. All they could do was call for deliverance. It would be a call to their own countrymen. Just as in the days of the book of Judges, the men of Jabesh-gilead would call for help from the people of the Nation of Israel before they called out to the LORD for help. Verse 3.

“The elders of Jabesh said to him, ‘Let us alone for seven days, that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to deliver us, we will come out to you.’” (11:3)

This verse is strange. In it, the elders revealed to Nahash their plan. Can you believe the elders asked for a seven-day reprieve to ask for help from their kin in pushing back Nahash? Can you believe that the elders admitted that if the men of Israel did not come to help repulse Nahash, then they would agree to the covenant of reproach? Can you believe that Nahash waited? Why? Tactically, the Nation of Israel was much larger than the Nation of Ammon. If Nahash attacked Jabesh, it might result in the full force of the Israelite nation coming upon him and his army. Instead, Nahash tactically would rather that the elders of Jabesh agree to the covenant and surrender. Then, when the Nation of Israel approached, Nahash would have a plausible argument that the surrender and atrocity were agreeable on both sides. As a result, the request of the elders of Jabesh probably stunned Nahash and caused him to pause in his attack.