

INSTALLMENT 5, WHICH INCLUDES CHAPTER FIVE, PART ONE, OF THE SERIAL RELEASE.

THE DYNASTY OF DARKNESS

SATAN'S LONG SERPENTINE TRAIL THROUGH HUMAN HISTORY IN THE ROLE OF SUCCESSIVE ANTICHRISTS, AND THE IMMINENT RISE OF HIS LAST-DAYS KINGDOM

By Dr. Scott Lively

CHAPTER FIVE:

ANTICHRISTS AMONG THE HEBREW KINGS

As the faithfulness (and consequently the strength) of the Hebrews continued to decline during the period of the judges, the Philistines remained their principal and adversary and oppressor. God did not raise up a deliverer and in fact dealt with the Philistines Himself when they took the Ark of the Covenant as a trophy of war (1 Samuel 4:10-11). The story of that disastrous chapter of Philistine history is told in 1 Samuel 5. The consequences to them were so severe that they voluntarily returned the Ark to the Hebrews along with guilt offerings (1 Samuel 6:1-4).

The last of the deliverer-judges and first of the prophets was Samuel, whose primary role was to preside over the transition of the Hebrew nation from (it may be argued), a republic to an empire.

Samuel was a righteous judge and Israel was strengthened and prospered under his rule. *“Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, ‘If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtoreth from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.’ So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtoreth and served the LORD alone... So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel (1 Samuel 7:3-13).* Again we see the pattern: righteousness suppresses demons.

Yet when he grew old, Samuel’s fateful error was to appoint his own unrighteous sons as judges, establishing a de-facto dynasty (1 Samuel 8:1-3) which emboldened an existing movement among the Hebrews to have their own king like the gentile nations around them. Samuel warned them sternly but unsuccessfully of the consequences of setting a king over them and God subsequently granted them their choice (1 Samuel 8:10-22).

SEASONS VERSUS INSTITUTIONS

It may be observed in this study and in the affairs of men generally that God accomplishes His will by raising up specific persons for a specific task at a specific time. Each of these interventions is “seasonal” in that it has a beginning and ending perfectly matched to His objective. The judges of Israel epitomized this phenomenon, each one raised up by God for a season only.

In contrast, humans tend to create what they intend or presume to be “perpetual” institutions. Very often the institutions are created to artificially perpetuate the work or vision of a man or woman who

had been raised up by God for a season of ministry.

Nearly all Christian denominations share this origin. A John Calvin or a John Wesley will be raised up by God to do a work in their time, and then their followers will attempt to perpetuate that work in the same form forever, codifying doctrine and establishing traditions that become institutions unto themselves. Often these traditions (orders of service, dress codes, style of music, etc.) come to match or supersede the authority of the Gospel in the minds of the church members in a similar manner to what earned the Hebrew Scribes and Pharisees a rebuke from Jesus (Mark 7:7).

Eventually, the doctrinal emphasis that was specific to the seasonal work of the denominational “founder” is no longer as relevant and conflict arises between traditionalists and reformers -- leading to church splits in which new institutions are created to perpetuate the revised doctrines and statutes of the reformers while others follow the older traditions.

All too often, institutions are hijacked by corrupt men who simply want to control their money, property and influence for their own ends. Harvard University comes to mind: established to train pastors for the work of the Gospel, but now a temple of secular humanism preaching blasphemy against Christ. Many of the so-called “mainline denominations” in America are now controlled by pseudo-Christian “pastors” and other leaders who exploit the (often enormous) denominational resources and community goodwill to advance an Antichrist and anti-Biblical agenda.

There is nothing new under the sun. In like manner, by demanding their own king, the Hebrews were rejecting God’s blessing of seasonal intervention perfectly matched to their needs, and instead setting up their own institutional monarchy. As God said to Samuel “*Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them*” (1 Samuel 8:7).

By doing so, they created an institutional system that Satan could exploit.

DAVID, GOLIATH AND SAUL

The first King of Israel under the new system was Saul, a Benjamite. Although he was anointed by God as king by the hand of Samuel, he lost God’s favor by making an unlawful sacrifice at Gilgal and anointing was taken from him (1 Samuel 13:13-14). Instead, David was anointed king, “***And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward***” (1 Samuel 16:13).

King David is the foremost Christ figure of the Bible, identified closely with Yeshua Hamashiach (Jesus), of whom Mary was told “*He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David*” (Luke 1:32). Therefore, those who oppose David are prime candidates for being identified as the Antichrist of their time.

Saul was in some respects an Antichrist figure. He did not relinquish the throne to David but attempted many times to kill him. However, Saul doesn’t fit our profile of the Antichrist at first. He began to be tormented intermittently by an unclean spirit immediately after God’s spirit departed from him as

described in 1 Samuel 16:14, but this demon does not seem at all like Satan himself. The text states that it was “*a harmful spirit from God*” but we assume this means a harmful spirit acting with God’s permission, not that the demon was working in God’s service.

Saul’s spiritual torment by this lesser demon was relieved when David was present, and he made David one of his armor-bearers. “*So it came about whenever the evil spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play it with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him*” (1 Samuel 16:23).

Everything changed however after David killed Goliath.

Goliath of Gath was the Philistine champion and a clear Antichrist figure.

“*[T]he Philistine cursed David by his gods...[and] said to David, ‘Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field.’ Then David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel’*” (1 Samuel 17:43-46).

Their battle somewhat prefigures the end-time battle of Revelation 19:11-18 in which Christ “*judges and wages war*” after which His angel cries out “*with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, ‘Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.’*”

In any case, after David the Christ-figure kills Goliath the Antichrist figure there is a dramatic change in King Saul. “*Now it came about **on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual; and a spear was in Saul’s hand. Saul hurled the spear for he thought, ‘I will pin David to the wall.’ But David escaped from his presence twice’***” (1 Samuel 18:10-11).

This new demon is clearly far more powerful and malicious than the previous one because he causes Saul not only to try to kill David, but to do so *while he is playing the harp*, an action which had always driven the lesser demon away. It appears that the new demon is likely Satan, who has changed hosts from Goliath to Saul, like a man would change horses on the battlefield after the first one had been killed from under him.

Thereafter, Saul’s anger and hostility toward David intensified continually until Saul died by suicide after being mortally wounded in a battle with the Philistines (1 Samuel 31).

Significantly, Saul is the only Biblical figure whose consultation with a sorceress (the Witch of Endor) is recorded in scripture.

“Then Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, ‘Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you.’ . . . Then the woman said, ‘Whom shall I bring up for you?’ And he said, ‘Bring up Samuel for me.’ When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman spoke to Saul, saying, ‘Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul.’ The king said to her, ‘Do not be afraid; but what do you see?’ And the woman said to Saul, ‘I see a divine being coming up out of the earth’ ” (1 Samuel 28:8-13).

If it is true that Saul was possessed by Satan during this period it suggests that Satan’s ability to communicate with other demons is limited while he is in possession of a host, thus he needed to consult a sorceress. The above passage also indicates that disembodied demons can monitor God’s interactions with human beings in the world. The demon summoned by the Witch of Endor assumed the identity of Samuel and gave Saul accurate information:

“Then [the demon posing as Samuel] said to Saul, ‘Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?’ And Saul answered, ‘I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has departed from me and no longer answers me, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do.’ Samuel said, ‘Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has departed from you and has become your adversary? The LORD has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David. As you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the LORD has done this thing to you this day. Moreover the LORD will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the LORD will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!’ ” (1 Samuel 28:15-19).

We are not entirely convinced that Saul was possessed by Satan as opposed to some other, albeit very powerful demon. The facts are ambiguous enough that we cannot say with confidence that Saul was the Antichrist of this time period, even though he was clearly the chief antagonist of David. However, it might be only that the presence of the Holy Spirit in David weakened Satan and prevented the full expression of his evil nature as compared to other men whom he possessed in other contexts.

ABSALOM

While David was a Christ figure, he was only a man and not the sinless Messiah. Like any other man, he sinned and suffered the natural consequences of those sins. One consequence David faced was the lifelong estrangement of his son Absalom after David failed to punish Amnon for raping Absalom’s sister (David’s daughter) Tamar (2 Samuel 13-18). In time Absalom became David’s chief antagonist, but there is no indication that Absalom was an Antichrist figure. It is likely that Absalom’s hostility to David was a natural consequence of David’s polygamy. One of Absalom’s most egregious offenses against David’s authority was to set up a tent in the full view of the people of Jerusalem in order to have sexual relations with David’s concubines to humiliate his father (2 Samuel 16:21-22).

SOLOMON

David's son and successor Solomon (the most prolific polygamist of the Bible) was not an adversary to his father, but acted wickedly against God.

*“Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, ‘You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.’ Solomon held fast to these in love. **He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.** For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. For **Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.** Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done. **Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods**” (1 Kings 11:1-8).*

Despite his great sin, Solomon may not have been an Antichrist figure. God said to David about Solomon in 2 Samuel 7:14-15 *“I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.”*

However, it is possible, perhaps even likely, that Solomon was an Antichrist during the portion of his life described in 1 Kings 11, cited above. Further evidence is found in 1 Kings 10:14-20: *“The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty six [666] talents of gold,”* and with some of which he built himself *“a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with pure gold. The throne had six steps... [and] twelve lions, one on each side of the six steps”* (six lions on the right and six lions on the left) In other words, Solomon's self-aggrandizing throne, *“nothing like [which] had been made for any other kingdom”* was an architectural depiction of the number 666, the number of the Antichrist.

Solomon's sin during this period caused God to take the united kingdom away from him and divide it thenceforth (until the millennium) into two separate kingdoms, led by the House of Judah and the House of Israel (Ephraim) respectively.

“Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded. So the LORD said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.’ ” (1 Kings 11:9-13).

...To be continued in Installment 6, including Chapter 5, Part Two