

Here we are at another Feast of Tabernacles. This is a time which we observe year after year and that pictures a final 1,000 years when everyone will live under one Government. This is a time when man's government will no longer exist and God's Government, the Kingdom of God, will rule the entire earth. First, the 144,000 will be resurrected, and thereafter, those that live into the Millennium will be given the opportunity to learn about God's way of life and to start a process to join the Kingdom of God at a later time.

So today I would like to focus in on one of the first characteristics that must be developed in us so that we can begin the process of being born into the God Family. That characteristic is humility. This is such an important characteristic because without it we will not be pliable and we won't be able to be shaped by God because we think we already know. To be taught by God we need to be reminded that we don't know all the answers and we need to look to God and not to ourselves.

With a humble spirit we can be taught and we can take in the wisdom from God. If we are of the opposite spirit and full of pride, our eyes and ears are shut and it's impossible for us to make *any* kind of growth whatsoever.

We're going to take a look at what happens to us if we become prideful and the result of such an attitude. We're also going to take a look at the first physical king that God setup over the Israelites at their request and see how that, along with man's 6,000 years of rule, compares to the Kingdom of God that will be setup.

So the title of today's sermon is *Humility & the Kingdom of God*.

An alternative title could also be *Pride & the Kingdom of Man*. The reason for the alternative title is because as humans, one of our biggest faults is pride. And of course, any government or kingdom that is run by human beings is also going to be full of pride. That pride is pretty easy to see today. You know, are politicians really looking out for the good of the people? Or are they just concerned with their own jobs and getting re-elected?

Getting rid of our pride and being humble is what we are to strive for everyday. Without humility, we cannot grow. While this seems pretty obvious and simple, we need to be reminded of it constantly since humility is contrary to our human nature.

The world today does not know about God's way of life. They think they already know, and therefore, won't listen to the truth. If we were to ask so-called "Christians" in the world if they believe what God teaches, they would answer with a resounding, "Yes!"

The truth is that almost no one in the world truly believes what God says. While they may believe some things, other things, such as the Holy Days, or even the Sabbath, are completely ignored. The problem is that everyone thinks they already know, and they are so filled with pride and a haughty spirit that, you know, they will do things like disobey the 4th Commandment about keeping the Sabbath. Some go as far as to even re-write the 4th Commandment so that they can still proclaim that they obey the 10 Commandments. Rewriting God's laws so that you can *pretend* to obey them (and feel good about obeying them) is the pretty much the definition of pride. So we can see that the world clearly has to be humbled before it will be able to listen and can begin to change.

So let's turn to our first scripture here of **Isaiah 2:7-8**. It says—**Their land is also full of silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures. Their land is also full of horses, there is no end to their chariots. Their land is also full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made.**

So, these two verses really sum up the state of man's world, both for today and throughout the last 6,000 years. But today, it's perhaps even more true than before. We are really blessed, at least here in this Western world, and I mean, we have everything and then some, and even with all of these things, we still put idols up before God. It doesn't even have to be an idol in a traditional term, but really anything in your life that we give greater importance to above God. We are able to enjoy success, but we take all the credit to ourselves. You know, it's, "Look what I built." "Look what a successful businessman I am." We think, "Me-Me-Me," instead of really looking to God and giving the glory back to Him, the Creator and the sustainer of everything.

Alright, so let's drop on down to **verses 10-12—Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up—and it shall all be brought low.** So basically God is going to put an end to all the stupidity and all the haughtiness of man. People in the world are going to be brought low, and then they'll finally be able to listen to God. And it is going to be a really exciting time. There won't be the pressures on people in the Millennium to conform to other religious teachings. In fact, the norm is going to be living according to God's way.

If someone begins to come to the truth these days, you know, it's a very difficult process. And how many times has a new person come along and then they've gone to their family or friends and told them about their new beliefs? This is something especially true when someone realizes that they have been lied to for their entire lives and, you know, they get really excited to share the truth with others. You know, they'll say, like, "Hey, you know the Bible doesn't state anywhere that going to Church on Sunday is taught. And it clearly says the contrary, you know, that it's not supposed to be on Sunday, and that it's supposed to be the Sabbath and that should be observed on Saturday." And so, you know, when people say that a lot of times to friends or whatever, their ears will perk up for a minute and they'll kind of listen, you know, just because they've never heard anything like that before. But we all come to find out

with time that that person, maybe they're intrigued at first, but they don't really want to hear the truth. Because if they, if they *do* hear the truth and they accept it, then that means that they're going to have to change. That means that they would have to come to the realization that almost the entire world is doing something wrong. And when you realize that, and it's not nice to be the only one who believes something that's different from everyone else, it's more comfortable to conform with everyone else and not to change. Most don't want to "rock the boat" you know, with their family or friends, or do anything like that. And so the whole idea of accepting the truth and changing to living by what the Bible *actually* says, that just goes all out the window.

So, conformity has a very powerful effect on people. And in this world, conforming is bad. It says that, "We are not supposed to conform to the world." Why does it say that? Well, because this is the world of man and Satan. But in the Millennium, this world will be ruled over by Gods, by God's Kingdom. And that's something that we want to conform to. We want to conform to God's ways, and people are going to learn about the truth, and those that live into the Millennium, they're going to have it much easier than the 144,000 have had it. So that's definitely something to look forward to, you know, to see a future generation that doesn't have to grow up with such negative influences. It's hard to believe that keeping the Sabbath and going to the Feast of Tabernacles is going to be the new status quo, but that's what everybody is going to be doing.

So we can see that this is going to be an awesome time (in the Millennium). And we can also see that the only way for the world to listen to God is that God must first humble them. But those of us who are being called now, we need to work on our own selves and try to be as humble as possible in this current world. God won't be around that which is puffed up. So if we are prideful and we think that we are great, God will not work with us. The process of our growth will stop abruptly whenever pride creeps in.

Let's go ahead and turn to Ezekiel 28:13. And here we're going to have a look and see what happened to Satan, and so that we can be reminded about what happened to him. Okay, that's **Ezekiel 28:13—You were in Eden, the garden of God: every precious stone was your covering.**

Let's drop on down to **verse 14—You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you.** There we see that he was anointed by God and He was the one that set him into the position that he had. Everything Satan had was because God gave it to him. This is the same for us. All the truth that we have is because God has given it to us. Physical things, too. God has allowed us to have them and we aren't deserving of any of it.

Continuing on in **verse 14—You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of the fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; Therefore, I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God.** So here we see that once iniquity was found in him, he was cast out. It's because God can't dwell with such a spirit, and Satan had to be removed.

Let's look at **verse 17**, just a couple verses down—**Your heart was filled up because of your beauty**. So Satan forgot that all that he had was only because it came from God. His beauty, for example, that which God gave him, went to his head.

The next part of **verse 17** states—**You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor**. We see that Lucifer had wisdom—it was given to him by God—but it became corrupted. How? By taking the credit and glory to himself for his own personal gain, for the sake of his own splendor. Again, he didn't give the glory back to God, to whom he owed everything.

Let's turn over to **Isaiah 57:15**. It says—I dwell in the high and holy place, with him that is of a **contrite and humble spirit**. So, as we just saw in this last example, you know, Satan was not of this spirit so God could not dwell with him and he was kicked out. This is not going to be allowed to happen in the future, and that's the reason why we must be tried and tested. That is why God's plan *is* as it is. No one will ever be given access to eternal life in the God Family without first being put through the fire.

So, God dwells "in him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Let's go ahead and take a look at the definition of "contrite." "Contrite" means "filled with a sense of guilt and the desire for atonement." This is *exactly* how we should feel after we sin. God knows we are going to sin, but He wants us to do something about it. He wants us to change, to keep fighting against our human nature. So how do we feel after we sin? Are we saddened and upset that we treated someone badly? Or said something to them that wasn't nice? These kind of things happen to us all the time in our daily lives—whether it's to a loved one or to a stranger that we encounter at a restaurant, gas station, airport, or wherever. But again, how do we react when we *do* such things? We need to be filled with a contrite spirit right after we sin. We should feel *bad* when we mess up, and take on the responsibility for our poor actions, and then, make sure that we seek atonement for them. We need this contrite spirit so that we can see our true nature, so that we are upset when we sin, and so that we give 100% in the future and that we try not to do it again. And if we do have that sense of guilt, like the definition says, we can cry out as Paul did and say, "Oh wretched man that I am." Because if we really think as Paul did, we'll be humble automatically, and we won't expect to be given things, or positions, or whatever we may think we are deserving of. Because the reality is, we don't deserve anything, and all that we do receive is by the grace of God.

So let's now take a look at the story of King Saul. And both his story and the story of the Israelites really do a good job to illustrate how the government of man has been over the past 6,000 years. The story also does a good job in showing the difference between man's government and God's government. And the main difference can be traced all the way back to humility and trusting in God. And we'll see here in Saul's journey that he starts out as a humble man, who was given riches and blessings by God, but he eventually had to have them all taken away due to his pride and jealousy.

Saul became the first king of Israel. Before Saul, there were only leaders that were appointed as Judges, as we can see examples of these over in the book of Judges. So let's go back to the beginning and we'll

set the stage a little bit for Saul becoming king. And that starts in 1 Samuel 8:1—Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; *they were* judges in Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gains, took bribes, and perverted justice.

Verse 4—Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. So we see the people were complaining and they were fearful of what it would be like if Samuel's sons took over. And yeah, it can be understood, since they were corrupt. But they did not rely on God (the people, that is), and God was their King, and He was there to deliver them. And if you look back, they have been delivered by God many times. He took them out of their bondage in Egypt and performed miracles for them, one after another, but at this point, they still did not trust God.

Let's go to verse 6—But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. So Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. Now, therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them. So basically God is saying here, "If you want a king, and you want to be like all the other nations, then I will let you do so." But He is telling Samuel to warn the people, to say, "Look, do you really want to be like all the other nations? Here is what a physical, human king will do and what he's going to require from you."

And here we can see examples of pride as well, from the people themselves. They think that they know a better way to rule over themselves than God does, *and* they want a king. They would rather have a human king to fight their battles and support them than the Almighty God.

Verse 10—So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. And he said, This will be the behavior of a king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint *them* for his own chariots *to be* his horsemen, and *some* will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, *he will set some* to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and *some* to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters *to be* perfumers, cooks, and bakers. He will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give *them* to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. He will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put *them* to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, the LORD will not hear you in that day.

So this warning is letting them know that they are going to have to give all this stuff to their new king, and when they realize that having a king over them is not so great, it's going to be too late. But back then, just like now, God grants us free choice. And a lot of the times, we make the wrong choice. Why? Because our decisions are based on self. We think only on how can we please ourselves in this moment right now? We fail to see the *big picture* and to listen to the true wisdom from God. I mean, God is straight up telling them that this is not going to work for them, but they are too filled with pride and too defiant, and they still want a king.

Let's go to **verse 19**—**Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, No, but we will have a king over us, that we may also be like the other nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.** Here, again, we see conformity. The people want to be like the other nations. It doesn't really make any difference though, if all the other nations are doing it wrong. It's like when you're a kid and you want to do something and your parents say no, and your response is, "Well, all of the other parents let their kids do it! Why can't I?" This is pretty much never a valid argument; at least it never worked for me.

Let's go to **verse 21**—**And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD. So the LORD said to Samuel, Heed your voice, and make them a king.** So now the stage is set: Samuel is going to have to make somebody a king.

Let's turn over to **1 Samuel 9:1**, just a few pages over. **There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upwards he was taller than any of the other people.**

So the next few verses go on to tell about how some donkeys had strayed away and they were lost, and so Kish (Saul's father) sent him out with a servant to retrieve the donkeys. They searched and searched and they couldn't find them. And they had been out for quite some time and they were about to return home so that Kish wasn't worried about them, when the servant suggested they go see a seer in a nearby town, and that perhaps he can tell them in which direction they should go.

So, once they are entering into the city, they approach a woman who tells them the following (this is down in **verse 13** now)—**As soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat.** So they're looking for the seer right now. **For the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterwards, those who are invited will eat. Now, therefore, go up, for about this time you will find him. So they went up to the city. As they were coming into the city, there was Samuel, coming out towards them on his way up to the high place.**

Verse 15—**Now, the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow, about this time, I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I**

have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me. So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, There he is, the man whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people. Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Please tell me, where *is* the seer's house? Samuel answered Saul and said, I *am* the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and tomorrow I will let you go, and will tell you that all this *is* in your heart. But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found. And on whom *is* the desire of Israel? *Is it* not on you and on all your father's house? And Saul answered him and said, *Am* I not a Benjamite, of the smallest tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?

This here shows, you know, how Saul thought of himself at the beginning. He was humble and he had respect for Samuel. And he recognized that he wasn't from an elite tribe, from the best family. He basically had what we call "humble beginnings."

Samuel goes on to anoint Saul, and through time teaches him the way of God. And he tries to prepare Saul for the job that he's been chosen for, and since Saul is humble, he has a teachable spirit. Eventually Saul is prepared and he is presented to the people as their king.

The next chapter tells of how Saul came to the aid of a city called Jabash Gilead and fights against the Ammonites and destroys them.

I want to interject here, that after Saul was presented to the people, that not everybody was happy. There are many who complained that he was made king, and I am sure, as they saw it, he was a lowly person being given such an important role, a role that they felt either themselves or others were more deserving of.

Let's look at the end of **chapter 11** and go to verse 12. This is right after they just defeated the Ammonites and the people were very pleased with the accomplishments of their new king. In **verse 12** it states—**Then the people said to Samuel, Who *is* he who said, Shall Saul reign over us? Bring us the men so that we may put them to death. But Saul said, Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has accomplished salvation in Israel. Then Samuel said to the people, Let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there. So all the people went to Gilgal, and they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.**

Here we see Saul, he's behaving in a wise manner. He is not seeking revenge against those who were against him in the beginning, and he is giving glory and honor to God. Saul is being "humble." He has the power to do whatever he wants as king; he could very easily have said, "Yeah, off with their heads!" to these guys, but he is able to exercise restraint and to not let his ego get the better of him, you know, to show these people "how powerful" he is and "who" he is, you know. That's what a lot of people with power like to do, they like to show off their power. So we see a humble Saul at this point.

Let's go over to chapter 12 (where we're at this is just, yeah, the next verse, basically, there). And we're at Saul's coronation and Samuel is addressing the crowd. So I'll start off in verse 1—**Now Samuel said to all Israel: Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you. And now here is the king, walking before you; and I am old and gray-headed, and look, my sons are with you. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. Here I am. Witness against me before the LORD and before His anointed: Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or for whose hand have I received any bribe from which to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you.** Basically, Samuel is asking the people if he has ever dealt with them wrongly. He was the leader and looked to God as their King. At this point, he is letting them know, basically, that they haven't been oppressed and that they've had it really good because God has been their King. So this is a little bit similar to the verses we read just a little bit ago, where Samuel was warning the people that if you have a king, that you're going to have all these negative things that'll be required of you, and he's going to take your cattle, he's going to take the men and women and make them do various jobs for him. To sum it up, with a king, that you're going to be "working for the man," having to give more to him than God had ever required of them. And the king would eventually become corrupt in some manner. So this is the comparison he is making to the people.

Let's go to verse 4 here—**And they said, You have not cheated or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man's hand. Then he said to them, The LORD is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.**

Now starting in verse 6 Samuel goes on to tell their history and how God always provided for them in their time of need, and how the people's response has always been the same. **Verse 6—Then Samuel said to the people, It is the LORD who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. Now, therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did to you and your fathers. When Jacob had gone into Egypt, and your fathers cried out to the LORD, and the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. And when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them. Then they cried out to the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and served the Ba'als and Ashtoreth's; and now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You. And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you dwelt in safety. And then when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, No, but a king shall reign over us, when the LORD your God was your King.**

So it would seem as though the children of Israel seem to have some kind of amnesia, because their history is always repeating. God does something great for them, after some time they forget and life is

back to normal, doing whatever they pleased, like serving other gods. And they say, "Oh, we're sorry," and, you know, they look to God again, but only when things get bad for them.

This is really the history of man in a nutshell. Unfortunately, it's only in these times of trouble when we're often able to listen to God. These are the times when we are brought low and we will listen to someone besides ourselves. And we can see that this is what has to happen to the world now in the times that are ahead of us.

So as it is with us, it was also a similar process with the Israelites. They had to be reminded by Samuel of their past, and we have to also be reminded of our past every day. We see the truths that God has given and it's good to be reminded of them, because as soon as we start to forget them, we will be just like the Israelites. We won't look to God anymore. We will focus on ourselves, and we will do stupid things. We have to fight against our human nature that is *so* contrary to God.

Let's go to **verse 16**—**Now, therefore, stand and see the great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes: *Is* today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the LORD, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for a king for yourself. So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.** Yeah, you bet they feared. After hearing about their history and all the mistakes that their forefathers had made, and then rain and thunder pouring out on their crops they were just now supposed to be harvesting, some of them were probably thinking "Hmm, guys, is this really a good idea?" But even if they were, it was already done. They had this king.

Let's drop on down to **verse 20**—**Then Samuel said to the people, Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. And do not turn aside; for *then you would go* after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, and they *are* nothing. For the LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all of your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.**

Notice what Samuel told them—that by them even taking this decision to have a physical king, that they should not be afraid. That they just needed to remember to serve God, to fear Him, and to remember the great things that He had done for them. So, if they were to do that then everything would be okay. But if they didn't, and that they did wicked, then they would be swept away along with their king.

So, so far we see that Saul follows God and gives glory to him and doesn't take it to himself. So far, this human, physical king is kind of working out. But God already knew that having a human king would eventually become a problem, because humans, it is impossible to always keep God in the first position and to look to Him for everything. The fact that the people were already crying out to Samuel to appoint

the physical king over them and that they were even brought to this point where they were in now, is just proof of their inability to follow God. If they were really following Him, they wouldn't have been asking for a physical king, period. At some point, even if we have good intentions, we will slip up and we're going to rely on ourselves, and we're going to rely on our own wisdom. And if we were a king, we would make a choice that is not the best for the people. Because only God knows 100% of the time what is best for us. And that is exactly what God tried to warn the people about, but they just couldn't receive it.

So this story is a little bit like the Titanic—we know how it's going to end. Saul is going to make a mistake. Why do we know this? Because he is human and he has to deal with pride. And, you know, God doesn't have to deal with pride, and that is why He was a better fit for the King.

Let's turn over to **1 Samuel 15:1**—**Samuel also said to Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint you over His people, over Israel. Now, therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD.** So it's pretty simple here. The instructions are that Saul is to do exactly as God is going to instruct him, period.

Verse 2—**Thus says the LORD of hosts: I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. Kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey. So Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to the city of Amalek, and lay in wait in the valley.**

Skip to verse 7—**And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt. He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and his people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and they were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless they utterly destroyed.** Why didn't they listen to God? Well, probably because of greed. They wanted all the good stuff for themselves. They only destroyed the junk and the stuff that they didn't want anyway. And Saul, their king, was complicit in what they did. He totally allowed it even though he knew what God had said and that God had instructed him to destroy *everything*.

Is it possible that Saul was also trying to conform? Maybe he was trying to be accepted with the people and to please them? I am sure he was wanting to be a good king to the people, and that seems like that was his intention. But, in that sense, he was more interested in pleasing the Israelites than in pleasing God and doing as he was told.

In many ways, Saul's actions are similar to people in the world who don't want to listen to the truth. Just like Saul, those in the world are more interested in fitting in. They too want to please their peers. So they will go to a church because that's where all their friends go or they will go to the organization that has the most people, as if that somehow is a sign of where God is. But in trying to conform to society,

they are turning their heads away from God. They don't realize that they're filled with a haughty spirit that is actually against God. Because to follow God, you need to have fear. And that fear of God needs to be greater than the fear of not fitting in and the fear of being seen as "different." But like I said, they can't see that now and it's only in time, through God's plan, that they'll be given the opportunity to work on their own human nature, just as we have been given that opportunity now.

Let's go back to the story here and drop down to **verse 10—Now, the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, 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. And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night.**

Verse 12—So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone around, passed by, and gone down to Gilgal. So, Saul seems to be quite pleased with himself after conquering the Amalekites. So much so, that he's even set up a monument for himself. Not something in God's honor, but rather *his* own. He wants the people to know that it was *his* success in the battle, not God's.

Verse 13—Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD. Saul is *really* beating his own drums now! Not only has he disobeyed God, but he set up a monument in his honor, and now he even has the nerve to brag to Samuel about performing "the commandment of the LORD." It's like, "Really?! You're going to disobey *and* brag *and* lie about it, and say that you really obeyed?!"

Let's go on to **verse 14—But Samuel said, What then, is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we utterly destroyed.**

This here is the same spirit that we find in the world. People don't want to follow God's commandments, and instead, they change things since they think they know better. And in Saul's case, the excuse is, "Well, we took the best to sacrifices for God." It's like, "How can you argue against making sacrifices to the LORD?" So we can see he's taking something like "making sacrifices to the LORD," which is a good thing, but he's twisting the fact that he disobeyed God. And so he's saying that, "These sacrifices are a good thing, and how can God be upset, even though I disobeyed Him?"

This is similar type logic that the world uses in trying to defend Christmas. You say, "Well, Christmas is really a pagan holiday." And they say, "Yeah, but it's about Jesus, and how can you be against a time celebrating Jesus? It's a good thing, right?" And they will even say things like, "You're Christian right? Well, what kind of Christian are you then that you are against Jesus?" And the world is just completely blinded, and this tactic is used by Satan over and over again. He twists and distorts God's word and then presents it to us. And as human beings, we have pride, so it's easier for the world to think that something that has Christ's name in it (such as Christmas, a holiday started by man), that this holiday

somehow is more important to God than obeying God and keeping His Holy Days, which are the important times that God has set up and whose purpose is to reveal His plan for salvation for mankind. It's exactly *this* kind of pride that stops the world from ever even being able to start their own process of spiritual growth.

Anyway, getting back to the story of Saul. We see how he disobeyed God and he tells Samuel that the reason they didn't destroy all the livestock (like God had commanded them to), was because they wanted to make sacrifices to God with them. In other words, Saul knew better than to listen to the Almighty God, and thought that the sacrifices would please God more, all the while failing to understand that above all obedience to God is what He seeks the most.

Continuing on in verse 16—Then Samuel said to Saul, **Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD has said to me last night. And he said to him, Speak on. So Samuel said, When you *were* little in your own eyes, *were* you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel?** So, you used to be nothing, and you were humble, and then God granted you such a blessing as to be king.

Verse 18—Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, **Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed. Why, then, did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?** Samuel is asking, "How is it that you changed from being this humble guy into thinking that you know better than God?"

Verse 20—And Saul said to Samuel, **But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and I have gone on a mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag, king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal. So Samuel 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.** Again, this is what was just stated a bit ago. That it's far more important in God's eyes to be obedient to Him than to do things in His honor. Because for God, obeying Him *is* showing honor!

Verse 23—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. Then Saul said to Samuel, **I have sinned, and I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.** Here Saul is admitting to obeying the people. He feared upsetting them, and he wanted to conform and please them. Why? Because he wanted to look like the good king, to be a popular king. Which if we think about it, it's not totally a bad thing. If you are a king, you should want your people to be happy. It not bad per se to please them, however, this position of power that Saul has requires more of him. It means that he needs to know when to say, "No," just like a parent does to a child when it's in their best interest. And in this case, Saul has God on his

side. So really it's a no-brainer. He should have listened to God. And while the people might have been unhappy with him, his following God would have meant that the people would have received the maximum blessings from God as well. Because God knows what is in all of our best interest.

The next verse... **verse 25—Now, therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD. But Samuel said to Saul, I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.** Saul is going to be replaced because he didn't obey God. That should be a warning to each of us, too, that if we don't follow God, that we will be replaced. Because God's plan will continue on, with or without us.

Verse 29—And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent. Then he said, I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD your God. So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD. Then Samuel said, Bring Agag, the king of the Amalekites here to me. So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. But Samuel said, As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women. And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. Samuel, in the end, is the one who had to finish off Agag like God had commanded. Saul didn't even do that part or try to fix what he had done wrong.

Saul does, however, act as though he's sorry, at least in his words when he admits that he had sinned. It seems as though it is more of a selfish type of repentance that he is showing—because he was caught sinning and he didn't want to lose his position as king. We will see in the coming scriptures that Saul was still too proud to come to a full repentance.

God also knew that the people couldn't have a king rule over them. That's why God functioned as their King and He didn't setup a human king over them in the first place. This is because as physical beings we lack the humility that is necessary to rule over others. That's why Jesus Christ is coming back—to set up God's Kingdom and rule over everything. He has the humility that is required for being King. He is able to rely on God, to look to God, and in the end, to give all the credit back to God in ways that are just not humanly possible for us to do. For the world right now, there isn't even enough humility to listen to God, let alone to grow in God's ways, so how on earth could there ever be someone who could possess enough humility that they would be suitable for ruling over others as a king?

The last 6,000 years are witness to that. It hasn't worked out so well for man's rule up until now. Even the so-called "best" empires and nations, and the ones that have lasted the longest, have all come to an end. That's a big different between man's government and God's. God's Government is going to last forever. And the fact is, that we all have to go through a process to be truly humble so that we can

actually listen to God and so that we can grow. Then, and only then, after we have been tried by the fire, will God be able to say that He truly knows us and be able to entrust us with any kind of position remotely similar to the one that was given to Saul.

Let's go back to the story now. And the process to replace Saul is now underway. And we'll see that Saul has difficulties with being replaced. In the first part of 1 Samuel 16, God sends Samuel out to Jesse in Bethlehem. Samuel then looks over all of Jesse's son's until God says that David is the one, and then Samuel anoints David. So let's jump to verse 13. This is **1 Samuel 16:13—Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.**

Verse 14—But the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him.

We see here in verses 13 and 14, how God's spirit was working with David now and how it had stopped in Saul. And Saul was now distressed. Why? Because he was upset about what Samuel had told him, that he was not going to be king anymore. This shows Saul's spirit at the time as well. He didn't have a real repentance before God; he just went through the motions a little bit out of fear of losing his position

Verse 15—And Saul's servants said to him, Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you. Let our master now command your servants, *who are* before you, to seek out a man *who is* a skillful player of the harp. And it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well. So Saul said to the servants, Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring *him* to me. Then one of the servants answered and said, Look, I have seen a son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, *who is* skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the LORD *is* with him.

Then Saul sends for David in verse 21. **Verse 21—So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer. Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Please, let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight. And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play *it* with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.**

Chapter 17 then goes on to tell about the Israelites coming up to battle against the Philistines; and this is where David slays Goliath. We all know the story, but it might be nice to go back and read it sometime on your own. Basically, though, it shows how David relied heavily on God to deliver them, so much so that he went up with just his five stones and without any armor to fight against Goliath. But for the sake of time right now, let's skip over to 1 Samuel 18:6 and we will pick up in the story after Goliath has been killed.

So 1 Samuel 18:6—Now, it had happened as they were coming *home*, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and

dancing, to meet king Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments. So the women sang as they danced, and said: Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. *Ouch!* That's probably not going to set so well with someone with such a position of power, like Saul has. It takes someone with real humility to be able to handle such praise being given to someone with a perceived "lower stature."

And sure enough, we see what Saul's reaction was in verse 8—Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *only* thousands. Now *what* more can he have but the kingdom? So Saul eyed David from that day forward. Saul now sees David as a threat. Instead of being happy for David, he becomes filled with jealousy. And we should take note of that as well—that not everything is a competition. Because we have seen that happen recently with people who have left because they were upset that they weren't made an elder or they think they deserve something more than what is being offered to them at this current time. And we have seen what's happened to them. They are filled with the same spirit that Satan was filled with and they leave the Body.

So, if those kinds of thoughts ever creep into our mind, we need to make sure that we repent of them and change our thinking. And even more so, we need to rejoice in what God is doing. If someone is made an elder, then we should be happy about it. If we aren't, or we have trouble congratulating them, then we need to take a step back and figure out what the problem is. It just takes a few bad thoughts, and if we aren't on guard and seeking to get rid of them on a daily basis, then we are going to fail and these thoughts can fester into something very serious. That's exactly what happened to Saul here. He let his jealousy fester and it took him down a path of no return.

Picking back up in verse 10—And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played *music* with his hand, as at other times; but *there was* a spear in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the spear, for he said, I will pin David to the wall! But David escaped his presence twice. So now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul. We'll stop the story there. But as it continues, Saul seeks relentlessly to kill David, and he just goes deeper and deeper down this path of destruction until eventually he's killed and David takes over as king.

So in closing here, we've seen examples of both Satan and Saul, and of what happens to us if aren't humble, and how without humility that God cannot work with us. We cannot be taught if we think we already know it all. Like Mr. Matthews says, "I know that I don't know." And this is really a nice sentence that we should try to always remember, and to make sure that that's our attitude as well, that we don't know and that we need to look to God for the answers and to put Him above all else.

We've also seen how the Israelites rejected God as their King in favor of a physical king. We need to make sure that we don't do the same and reject God from ruling over our lives. We need to stay close to Him, especially in the times that are ahead of us when God is going to humble the entire world. Things are going to get bad and we are going to go through trials.

But what's right around the corner is pretty awesome! It's going to be a time where there won't be all these different religions of the world, and a time when we can finally start to have some real peace. We need to keep that in the forefront of our mind so that we don't have our crown taken from us as it literally happened to Saul.

So, we look forward to the time when the Kingdom of God will be here to rule over us, and *then* we'll finally have a King again that will rule over us in a just manner—the one who was born for that job and the one who has the humility and capability to do it properly. But until that day comes, and even thereafter, we need to continue to fight against our own pride that's so strong, so that we can have a teachable spirit and be able to be molded as God sees is best for us.

God has a plan for each of us if we yield to Him. We just have to have faith in Him and make sure that we do our part so that we continue to grow. And then? He'll take care of the rest. □