

Background Characters in the Old Testament Lesson 8 4Q 2010

Joab: David's Weak Strongman

SABBATH

Read memory verse – thoughts? What is this talking about? Any examples?

What about dating someone who is clearly not well matched, mature, ready, appropriate or healthy for you? If our feelings are aroused are we as honest with ourselves – or do we continue down a path that isn't right, convincing ourselves it is okay? What mental gymnastics do we have to play on ourselves to do this?

- Denial –
 - he really didn't mean to hit me,
 - he doesn't smoke around me, only when I'm not around
 - she only drinks to deal with her parents
 - he may lie to his brother, but he doesn't lie to me.
 - She only shoplifts from stores, she doesn't steal from people
- Rationalization-
 - I have been alone for so long, if I lose this person I may never find another
 - He has so much potential if only he would get in rehab, if only he would give up smoking, if only he would accept Jesus...

What happens if people do this? Who are they deceiving?

Pearl: You can never avoid the truth you can only delay the day you deal with it. The longer you delay the more damage and pain when one finally has to deal with the truth.

Read first paragraph, "Joab's story..." thoughts? What did you think about the idea that it was the kings that united Israel? Did you ask why? Why didn't they become a nation under the judges? What was God's plan or design for their nation? Did God want them

to have a king? Did God want them to become a unified nation? Did God's plan for a unified nation require a king? Then why didn't they unify without a king?

Could it be they were so darkened in mind, that their thinking was so shaped by worldly traditions and values, that they couldn't conceive of a nation without a king?

What about today- does God have a plan, a gospel message that is to go to the world? Could it be that our thinking about God's government has been so impacted by worldly governments that we have accepted a distorted gospel?

Do we project onto the heavenly government a earthly system of governing – such things as God legislating/imposing/enacting laws upon His children, God conducting tribunals, God determining guilt and innocence, God (or heavenly juries) determining penalties and then God inflicting punishment upon His children?

To Daniel was given a vision of fierce beasts, representing the powers of the earth. But the ensign of the Messiah's kingdom is a lamb. While earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power, **Christ is to banish every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion. His kingdom was to be established to uplift and ennoble fallen humanity.** {AG 15.2}

What does this mean? Why do earthly governments say we need stiff penalties for lawbreaking? To deter crime – and what does it mean to deter crime? Doesn't it mean to put in place a threat, a penalty to coerce people away from crime?

How many describe God's government as doing the exact same thing? Are we any better today than ancient Israel?

But God did give the 10 Commandments at Sinai, so how do we understand God's use of law?

Parents do you ever add rules to your child's life? You must bath every day, brush your teeth after meals, you must eat your veggies before dessert, you must go to bed by..., etc. why do you add all these rules? Do you like making rules? Why then?

Is it like this with God? Did God add rules because He originally wanted it that way or because, after sin, our condition needed it?

What do you think about this quote?

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, **the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.** In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. {MB 109.2}

What do we think about this quote? Do we agree? Do we find scripture to support these ideas?

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. ⁹ We also know that law **is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels**, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine ¹¹ that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. 1Tim 1:8-11

If the law wasn't given for the righteous, then was it given before sin? Did it exist in heaven? Did it exist in Eden? Or was the law added because our condition required it?

What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. Gal 3:19

What law was added? One of the founders of our church had an opinion, with which I happen to agree:

I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments. {1SM 233.1}

Does God run His universe like earthly governments? Then why do we insist on describing God's kingdom in a model that parallels earthly governments? We need to free our minds from the warp of the world and see God's kingdom as revealed in Jesus!

SUNDAY

Read last two paragraphs, "During the..." thoughts?

Where is grace? Where is forgiveness? Where is love? Do you see selfishness in the story? What about today? Do we struggle with the same temptations?

Read pink section at the bottom. Thoughts? Do you ever step back in your own mind and ask, "What is the truth?" and how do you determine what the truth in a situation is?

I know many people who refuse to think and instead rationalize their behavior. One of the ways they rationalize selfishness in the church is by following the "law", despite who it hurts.

Why were the Pharisees angry that Christ was healing, including on the Sabbath? Because it threatened their power. But how did they justify their anger at Christ healing on the Sabbath? They claimed to be following the law, they claimed to be loyal to a "thus saith the Lord."

What about today do people do this? How have you seen this done?

How did Christ respond to those who treated Him unjustly? How should we respond?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, “It seems...” Do you find this to be true? It is true – we are designed to change, yes in character, but physically, neurocircuits, gene expression, based on the decisions we make.

Our dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) is where we reason and plan, our ventralmedial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC) is where we experience guilt or conviction of wrong doing. When the VMPFC is active the DLPFC is less active, meaning we cannot think as clearly when our guilty, or when our consciences are not clear.

Read second paragraph, “Sin also breaks...” thoughts? When we sin do we change ourselves? Do we change ourselves to be more healthy, reliable, trustworthy, or do we become less trustworthy? Thus, sin decreases reliability because it changes us – does this mean, once we have sinned we cannot recover and be healed?

Credibility is only lost if the sin is known and recognized as sin by others. Consider how does a gang member gain credibility within the gang? Guess who has earned a reputation as one of the great heroes of al qaida? US Army psychiatrist Major Nadal Hasan – who one year ago went on a shooting rampage at Fort Hood Tx.

Sin undermines credibility when two elements are in place, the sin is known and the sin violates the values of the social group from which one derives support.

More important than credibility, is character and trustworthiness. Regardless of whether the sin is known, or whether a particular group values your sin, all sin damages the sinner, sears the conscience, warps reason, destroys the image of God within the sinner.

What do you think about the reasons given that David stands by while his sons act as they did? Do you find the idea persuasive? Then how do we explain Eli's sons and Samuel's sons? Did Eli and Samuel discipline their sons? Was it because they had publicly sinned and lost moral authority?

I know many parents who haven't committed public sin and lost credibility and are very loving, kind and good people, yet struggle to discipline their children. Do we have any evidence of David being a good disciplinarian father before his sin with Bathsheba?

Is being a good disciplinarian a guarantee that one's children will turn out healthy?

And is it true that once we have sinned, and repented, and experienced God's grace in our lives that we have no credibility to discipline? As we read last week, forgiveness means recovery from sin, which is a changed heart and right spirit. Is it possible that having suffered through the pain of sin, and having been restored to spiritual health by God that one might be more sensitive to the dangers to their children and therefore offer better discipline?

Now read the next paragraph, "Joab had the same..." thoughts, is David's and Joab's situation the same? No! David is a sinner who has experienced God's forgiveness, repentance and grace – Joab has not. Would you expect the sinner, restored to favor with God and the sinner who remains hostile to God to experience the same development of character? To practice the same methods?

Was Joab's problem that he had the blood of Abner on his hands, or that he remained selfish in heart, motives and attitude?

What do you think about the idea that after sin, after repentance, after experiencing God's grace and renewal of heart and mind that one continues to live with loss of integrity?

Definition of integrity: firm adherence to a code of especially moral values (incorruptibility).

Isn't it true that after we come to Christ, with all our history of sinfulness, that we experience a new heart and right spirit? Do we believe we get transformed in character so that we go from low integrity to great integrity or not?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Second Samuel..." thoughts? What do you think of this idea of "honor"? What makes such an act as murdering your brother honorable? Do you notice how in this value system one does something dishonorable and calls it honorable in order to restore honor?

Where do such ideas come from? Is this idea any different that God killing His innocent Son in order that justice might be served and the guilty pardoned? In other words how is calling the legal execution of the innocent in place of the guilty justice any different from murdering your brother and calling it honorable?

Today honor killings still happen – in certain parts of the world a woman who is raped may be killed by her family to restore honor – is there something wrong with this picture? How could things become so perverted that the victim is killed to restore honor to the family?

Those behind the terrorist attacks on 9/11 believe they are doing the honorable thing as they believe the US has exploited and abused Islam and thus in fighting back as they do they are restoring honor. Is there something wrong with this type of thinking?

When the Bible speaks of honoring father and mother, does it mean we should kill our parents if they embarrass us?

This so called honor is another way of promoting self under a cloak of self-justification. There is nothing honorable in murder, terrorism, family killings, or executing the innocent in place of the

guilty and calling it justice. It is all selfishness hidden under a human contrivance.

Regarding Absalom, could it be that he really only wanted power and used the opportunity to avenge his sister as a way of seeking to ascend the throne?

Was all of this mess going on in the kingdom really because of David's sin? Did no other sentient being have freedom to choose? Were people prohibited from being gracious and forgiving? Are we responsible for the decisions of others? If we do good, and give a car to charity and someone uses that gift by planting a car bomb and committing an act of terrorism, are we responsible for their act?

WENESDAY

Read first three paragraphs – thoughts? What mechanism was used to justify Joab's actions? Linking Joab to David so the people thought that loyalty to David meant loyalty to Joab. Do we ever struggle with similar issues of confused loyalties?

What about the idea that loyalty to the church means loyalty to a particular pastor? What about loyalty to God means loyalty to a particular church? What about loyalty to God means loyalty to modern Israel?

How can we tell what we should be loyal to and what we should not be loyal to?

THURSDAY

David is now old and cold – and they bring a young woman as his nightly hot water bottle to keep him warm. But he was so old he never “knew” her.

Joab thinks this is time to make another move and so he supports Adonijah in a coup – but David with Nathan's help makes Solomon co-regent.

Read third paragraph, “Joab seems...” thoughts? What do you think of this idea of retribution? Is God a revengeful God? Does God have a government that seeks to take retribution on His children or that will take retribution on His children?

Christ came to save fallen man, and Satan with fiercest wrath met him on the field of conflict; for the enemy knew that when divine strength was added to human weakness, man was armed with power and intelligence, and could break away from the captivity in which he had bound him. **Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God.** He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that **men might lose the true views of God's character, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth.** He had caused truth of vital importance to be so mingled with error that it had lost its significance. The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, **and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God.** Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes.** That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 6}

Thoughts? Satan lies about God, claiming that God is revengeful and severe. We have far too often believed those lies and this ugly distorted God concept gets promoted throughout the world. This is part of the wine of Babylon which all the nations drink.

Some may argue, but wait Scripture says:

“vengeance is mine says the Lord” Romans 12:19

Many use this text as “proof” that God is vengeful and Satan’s allegations against God are correct. But that is because we don’t let the Bible define its own self. When we allow the Bible to define itself we discover something altogether different:

Therefore the Lord, the Lord Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: “Ah, I will get relief from my foes and **avenge myself on my enemies.** ²⁵ I will turn my hand against you; **I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities.** Isaiah 1:24,25

What is the vengeance of God? Turning enemies into friends – His vengeance is not on sinners but on sinfulness. He attacks and destroys sin! This is His vengeance which purges and cleanses the sinner! The greatest vengeance God can have on Satan is healing and restoring all those who trust Him!

Thoughts?

Let’s take another look at Joab – what actually happened? Did God strike Joab down? Did God inflict punishment upon Joab? Is reaping what we sew the same as God taking retribution?

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, “We should...” thoughts? What do you think about the idea of truth sanctifying? How and why? Does it have any relation to Isaiah 1:18 “come let us reason together”? How?

Read question 3 – thoughts? What about in the church? How many find themselves following “orders” in the church that are wrong? Has this ever happened? Does it happen today? How?

Discuss questions 1 and 4.