

## Lesson 12: A Crown Lost, a Crown Gained, First Samuel 20

Last week we saw Saul descend into anger, fear, and jealousy over David's successes. Everything David did increased his honor and reputation, while everything Saul did was thwarted and defeated. The narrative has been building a severe contrast between these two kings. David has been presented in a somewhat passive role, and most of the focus has been on Saul's character and motivations which are presented very vividly.

Saul tried devious ways to snare and kill David, but finally resorted to an open pursuit of him. First Jonathan intervened, then Michal, and then the Holy Spirit Himself intervened at Ramah to restrain Saul while David fled. First Samuel 19 ended with Saul prostrate on his face before Samuel.

Chapter 20 begins with David fleeing back to Gibeah in search of his best friend, Jonathan. This chapter is a major turning point in the narrative for David, but also for Jonathan who must decide where his loyalty lies between Saul and David. Jonathan will only make one brief appearance in Chapter 23 before his death in Chapter 31. This is his signature moment in the narrative.

### Chiastic Structure of Chapter 20 (ABA)

**A First Samuel 20:1-23** David goes to Jonathan with a request

- a. David presents the truth
- b. David proposes Jonathan seek the truth for himself
- c. Jonathan makes a covenant with David
- d. Jonathan agrees to return with a verdict

**B First Samuel 20:24-34** Jonathan and Saul at the feast

**A First Samuel 20:35-42** Jonathan returns to David with a verdict

### Read First Samuel 20:1-23

1. When we last saw Jonathan in chapter 19, what was he doing and how did it end?
2. Do you think Jonathan knows about Saul's actions after that?
3. If it is true, then what does that mean for Jonathan in his relationship with his father?
4. What reason does David give for Saul hiding his intentions from Jonathan?
5. From what we have read so far, do you think Jonathan knows about David's rivalry for the throne?

6. Why doesn't David tell him that Samuel has already anointed him king?
7. What is Jonathan's response?
8. For what does David ask?
9. What does David propose Jonathan do when he discovers the truth?
10. What is David's concern in verse 10?
11. What are the conditions of this covenant?
12. Why cut a covenant with David before and not after the truth has been ascertained?
13. What is Jonathan's plan?

**Read First Samuel 20:24-34.**

14. What is the New Moon feast?

The Hebrew word for "moon" (chodesh) also means "month," and the New Moon marks the first day of the Hebrew month. It is treated like a minor festival in itself and includes offering a sacrifice (Numbers 28:11), blowing the trumpets over the sacrifice (Numbers 10:10), and suspending work and trade (Nehemiah 10:31). It is similar to the Sabbath in many ways.

The new moon symbolizes a new beginning or a renewal and carries that hope for renewal from month to month. It is a very dark day – the darkest day of the month – and yet it marks the moment when the darkness begins to retreat and the light appear.

Its celebration commenced when Israel came into the Land, and so the hope then translates to hope for national renewal in the Land. In the days of the kings, the king becomes the figurehead for the nation, and the New Moon celebration becomes the king's holiday.



Jonathan leaves David with the reminder of their covenant of peace.

**How important is it to leave each other with peace between us, knowing the struggle that we face in the days to come?**

## Application

- **What is David modeling for us in his conversation with Jonathan?**

David is a man who has been unjustly wronged and is seeking understanding and help in the midst of a struggle with another man. He turns to his best friend who is in a tenuous position because that friend is also related to the man who has wronged David and is trying to kill him.

Is it a good strategy to appeal to your friend for support when you are struggling with one of their own family members?

That creates a horrific test of loyalty on your friend's part. How many friends in this position would side with you over family to the point of breaking relations with family?

Jonathan is not going to want to believe David, but David needs Jonathan to believe him. How does he go about convincing his friend?

He asks these questions: What have I done? What is my sin, that your father seeks my life?

- **Why is this a wise way of approaching the issue?**

- **What is Jonathan modeling for us?**

Jonathan models a couple things. Let's look at the small picture first. This involves his reaction to the warning David gives him in regards to his intercessor role. David tells him, "Do not take me back to your father again. You tried intercession once, and it didn't work. Let it go."

**How is that a warning to intercessors?**

The second behavior Jonathan models is in regards to his decision over where his loyalties lay. He stands in this very precarious position of having to decide between two kings who pursue kingdoms of two natures. One is the earthly kingdom and all it has to offer, but it comes at a price. There is never peace and there will never be peace because of his father's grasping of something already lost to him. The other promises a future kingdom of peace that might not be realized in Jonathan's own lifetime.

He sees the natures of both men, and the way one seeks to keep the crown and for what reasons. He judges between the two and decides to pursue an eternal crown over the earthly one.

Let's sketch a big picture of these two kings.

### The Big Picture: Two Kings

Saul and David are types of Satan and Christ, respectively. Let's look at the contrast between Saul and David and then consider it from Jonathan's eyes.

Saul is the current king over a rich and glorious earthly kingdom with all the wealth and benefits for his taking. But he is a king who has lost the blessing of an eternal kingship and kingdom, and as a result, now has only this current physical kingdom to which he grasps with oppressive force. All of his identity and worth is wrapped up in the physical kingdom, and he pursues power and glory in the earthly realm. He is a man of violence, hate, treachery, lies, vengeance, and rebellion against the God of heaven, and is possessed of terrifying demonic spirit. He has all the characteristics of a son of Belial.

By contrast, David is a king who has not yet come into his kingdom. He has been anointed. A few select people know of it, but the world at large does not. He has not been proclaimed king, although many of the people unwittingly give him kingly praise, nor has he been crowned. He cannot be crowned and come into his kingdom until the current king is dethroned.

There is a duality in David's nature. On one hand, he is a nurturing shepherd and a man of peace. He is a man possessed of God's Spirit and brings peace and well-being where the spirit that possesses the current king brings fear and torment. David is a thinking man who behaves wisely and his words are true, although their truth is unproven at first.

He also has a reputation for being a man of war, but he fights for the vision of the kingdom as God envisioned it—a holy kingdom characterized by righteousness, a knowledge of God, and peace. He fights for God's glory, not his own, and God will put his enemies under his feet.

David and Saul are the antithesis of one another. Where one is successful, honorable and without sin (in this instance), the other is a failure and dishonorable, whose sin multiplies as he begins to act on his jealousy and hate. One is superior; the other, inferior.

Jonathan comes to this crossroads in life. He is a man in pursuit of a crown, although he does not realize it at the moment when he has to make this decision to align his loyalty with one or another. Jonathan is asked to choose between all that the king of an earthly kingdom has to offer—that which Jonathan sees and understands, even values—and something much greater, much less tangible, and may not even be realized in his own lifetime.

Jonathan understands the earthly kingdom, and the loyalty that is demanded of him. His father is family, and he has certain obligations in regards to family loyalty. His father is king and demands loyalty due that station as well. As his father's son, Jonathan himself is royalty, and so his identity, status, and future

inheritance is bound up in that familial relationship. His father is wealthy and powerful, but he is also fearful, angry, jealous, treacherous, suspicious of his own family, and possessed at times by a demonic spirit that makes him mentally unstable. There will never be peace in his father's kingdom, and Jonathan knows it.

But is peace more desirable than all the other benefits?

Jonathan can only imagine what a physical kingdom under David's authority will entail, but he knows David's character. He sees David as a man after his own heart. A covenant relationship with David offers the potential reward of a kingdom of peace and safety, and even if it isn't realized in his own lifetime, it may be realized in his descendant's lifetime. Jonathan wants an eternal reward. Even before the truth of David's word and his charge against Saul is proven, Jonathan makes that covenant with David. He turns his loyalty, even though it will cost him everything in terms of his relationship with his father, his king, and his earthly inheritance.

When Jonathan learns that the physical kingdom was lost to him—that there was never any hope of it to begin with—then the covenant with the new king becomes that much more significant. He made the right choice over the king with whom to align himself and which kingdom to pursue. Though Jonathan has lost an earthly kingdom, in doing so he has gained a heavenly one.

Jonathan is a man who seeks for the truth until he finds it, and when he finds it, he clings to it. And he does not grieve that loss of an earthly kingdom. And that is the way to pursue the crown.

But what neither he or David know yet is that there is a reward coming for David in the form of an eternal kingship and kingdom, and so there will be reward on top of reward for Jonathan in that future kingdom if David perseveres.

The contrast between Saul and David is the contrast between Satan and Christ, respectively. Jonathan represents us. He is the picture of every person who has ever been asked give up an earthly kingdom with its earthly rewards under an oppressive, demonic king, and place their hope in a king-to-be whose kingdom remains as yet a promise of peace and safety and well-being. Our understanding of that future kingdom can only be understood as the outworking of the character of that Messianic King who is a duality of love and power, a shepherd of peace but also a man of war.

Like Jonathan, the first obstacle we must get past is the perception that everything is fine in the earthly kingdom. But Christ confronts us with the truth of his Word and challenges us to pursue the truth of the true nature of the demonic king who reigns over the world.

What we know of Christ's character and person may be sufficient for us to enter into that covenant relationship with Him. That is our salvation. And yet there remains a time of testing to see if we will remain loyal to him when we have lost it all in terms of our family relationships or earthly possessions. There is an earthly cost for following Christ, but there is also an eternal gain.

**There are right and wrong kings with whom to align yourself.**

**There are right and wrong crowns to pursue.**

**There are right and wrong ways and reasons for pursuing them.**