

The Establishment of the Kingdom

Stage Two of Five Stages

Senior Notes 15 Years and over

Christadelphian Sunday School Association
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15. SAMUEL: HIS BIRTH AND MISSION

“All Israel....knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet”

The work of Samuel the Prophet involved the transition of a nation from anarchy in the times of the Judges to the establishment of the “Kingdom of God” under David, their King. Samuel was the last of the Judges but the first of the order of the prophets that followed him (see Acts 3:24). Samuel is associated with Moses in the estimation of God as having a longlasting influence for good upon his people (Jer. 15:1) He can also be compared with John the Baptist as a fore-runner to prepare the way before the anointed of Yahweh.

This lesson reveals God’s preparation for the establishment of His Kingdom by raising up a faithful prophet and leader.

The aim of this lesson will be to show how important early training is for God’s children.

1 Samuel 1 & 2:1-11

THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL

1 Samuel 1

A Levite named Elkanah lived in Ramah near Mt. Ephraim with two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Hannah was favoured by her husband, but she failed to have children and was thus mocked by Peninnah who had children.

Every year all the family made a pilgrimage to Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was set up, to worship and sacrifice unto God. But the feast was an occasion of sorrow for Hannah for she fretted for a son.

On one such occasion in the door of the Tabernacle, Hannah poured out her heart in prayer. She vowed that if Yahweh hearkened unto her prayer and granted her a son, she would present him unto Him “all the days of his life”. He would be like Samson, a Nazarite, separated and holy unto God (see Num. 6). His life would therefore be consecrated in the priestly role of service to God, though he would not be an actual priest of Aaronic descent (Num. 18:7 – refer Lesson 13)

Eli the high priest was at first mistaken as to Hannah’s conduct and rebuked her for drunkenness (which could well have been the case in the degenerate society of his time). She protested her soberness and wholehearted dependence upon Yahweh. Realising her God-fearing character, Eli added his prayer to that of Hannah: “the God of Israel grant thee thy petition” (v.17).

God answered Hannah's prayer and in due time a son was born to her, named Samuel, which means "heard of God".

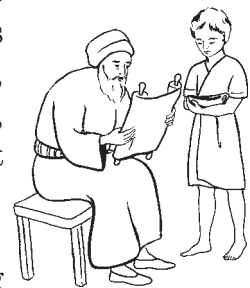


After a period of weaning the child, Hannah joyfully set forth to go to Shiloh to present Samuel unto the service of Yahweh who had so wonderfully answered her prayer (vv. 26-28; see also the power of prayer in Jas 5:16; Luke 11:1-13; Jas 1:5, 5:11, Matt. 17:20,21).

THE TRAINING OF SAMUEL

1 Samuel 2

Little detail is given regarding the education and training of Samuel. However, two things combined to impress upon Samuel's receptive mind the principles of worship. Firstly he was brought up under the watchful eye of Eli, the high priest, while in constant contact with the things of God: secondly, he was regularly visited by his parents who no doubt imparted loving and sound advice to him (v.19).



Such instruction is vital for young people developing God-like characteristics when confronted by gross immorality and ungodliness about them. We can imagine Samuel's shock at witnessing the wickedness of Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, and also his determination at a tender age to avoid contact with them. The lesson of Samuel is one of separation and a child-like teachableness. Later Jesus said, "of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:3; 19:14). The instruction of children in God's law was more than a duty, it was a divine command, (Deut 6:7-9). Proverbs shows the wisdom of "training up a child in the way he should go; for when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6)

A note of tragedy is struck when we read of the laxity of Eli's control over his sons (1Sam. 2:12-17, 22-25, 29; 3:11-14). This is also condemned by Proverbs (29:15-17; 13:24). Three times in the record Samuel is greatly contrasted with Eli's sons – it is recorded in verses 11-12 that the child Samuel did "minister unto Yahweh before Eli the priest. Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial: they knew not Yahweh"; and again in verses 17-18. "the sin of the young men was very great. . . but Samuel ministered before Yahweh, being a child, girded with a linen ephod"; and again in verses 25-26, "they hearkened not unto the voice of their father. . . and the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with Yahweh and also with men." Here Samuel foreshadows the character of Jesus who, as a youth, "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

It is somewhat ironical to see that the same Eli who guided the godly and obedient child Samuel had sons who rebelled against the instruction of their father. “Children obey your parents in the Lord”, is Paul’s instruction (Eph. 6:1), and he adds, “for this is right.” The world encourages children to disrespect their parents by challenging what they say and stand for. Children brought up in the Truth must not do so. A respect such as the child Samuel showed is the example for us to follow. “Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph. 6:2-3).

SAMUEL AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

It is significant that many points of similarity can be traced between the births of Samuel and of John the Baptist, both of whom were appointed as “forerunners” to prepare the way before the anointed of Yahweh.

- a) Hannah was barren (1 Sam. 1:5); so also was Elizabeth (Luke 1:7).
- b) Both these faithful women took their sorrows to Yahweh in prayer and He heard their petitions (1 Sam: 1:10-11, 19-20; Luke 1:13).
- c) Both children were to be consecrated as Nazarites, separated to the service of God (1Sam 1:11; Luke 1:15; Num. 6:1-5).
- d) In commemoration of the mercy extended to them, both women uttered similar songs of praise and thanksgiving (1Sam 2:1-10; Luke 1:42-45).
- e) Notice also the names of the two children:-
 - ❑ Samuel – “heard of God (1 Sam. 1:20)
 - ❑ John – “whom Yah has graciously given” (Heb, “Johanán”)

Thus both Samuel and John were messengers sent to prepare the way of the Lord, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Mark 1:2-3). Samuel transformed the nation in large measure in readiness for the time of the monarchy (he even wrote the constitution, 1 Sam 10:25), while John prepared the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the near future Elijah must first come and perform a work which is similar to that of both Samuel and John. He will restore all things, turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and of the children to the fathers before “the great and terrible day of Yahweh” (Matt. 17:11; Mal. 4:5-6).

THE WORK OF SAMUEL

Samuel was a Levite of the sons of Korah of the family of Kohath, a family whom David later appointed in charge of the service of song in the Tabernacle (1 Chron. 6:31-38) – “Shemuel” in verse 33 is “Samuel”, cp. Verse 28).

Although not a descendant of Aaron and therefore not a priest, Samuel offered burnt sacrifices and offerings (1 Sam. 10:8), and was appointed to anoint Saul and David as successive kings of Israel (1 Sam. 9:16, 10:1; 16:13).

As the one whose work was to turn the nation from the anarchy and ungodliness of the days of the Judges to the acceptance of a righteous ruler in King David, Samuel's major work was to be in instruction of the people. He had an annual circuit of cities which he judged (1 Sam. 7:15-17). The apostle Peter classes him as the first of the prophets (Acts 3:24, cp 13:20; Heb. 11:32; 1 Sam. 3:20). Previously there had been seers (1 Sam. 9:9), so Samuel's work seems to have been one of establishing an official role of prophets, who in the days of the monarchy would, with the priests, be an influence for good upon the king.

The life and ministry of Samuel bring to us a glorious hope but also at the same time, a sombre warning: "He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in the darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of Yahweh shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: Yahweh shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king and exalt the horn of this anointed (Messiah)" (1 Sam. 2:9-10)

LESSONS FOR US

- Samuel is a prime example of the principle to remember our Creator in the days of our youth.
- Samuel's mother dedicated him to God's service in thankfulness for giving her a son so that from a young child he was associated with the worship at the Tabernacle.
- The training Samuel received from his mother under the hand of Eli developed in him a devotion of Yahweh's service.
- The Bible calls upon children to honour and respect their parents.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

"Elpis Israel" (J Thomas) pages 451,452.

"The ways of Providence" (R Roberts) – Chapter 14

"The Visible Hand of God" (R Roberts) – Chapter 22

"The Story of the Bible" (HP Mansfield) – Vol. 3, No. 6

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. *How was Eli at fault in the upbringing of his sons?*
2. *What was the mission of Samuel?*

3. *Why is early training important for a child of God? Illustrate your answer by referring to Samuel.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. *What lessons do we learn from the training of Samuel?*
2. *What was the mission of Samuel?*
3. *Make a comparison between Samuel, Elijah and John the Baptist.*
4. *Write an essay on the circumstances surrounding the birth of Samuel.*



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16. SAMUEL: PREFERRED BEFORE THE HOUSE OF ELI

“The word of Samuel came to all Israel”

The apostasy which developed through the shocking example of Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, and Eli’s own inability to rectify the situation, brought on a dramatic change in the priesthood in the reign of David, but was to have a far reaching implication in the future priestly order.

The aim of this lesson is to teach us that righteousness is an essential quality of those who seek to perform God’s service to the glory of His Name.

1 Samuel 2, 3 & 4

THE FAILURE OF THE OLD PRIESTHOOD 1 Samuel 2:12-26

Although Eli was diligent in his administration of the Tabernacle duties, he failed to discipline his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, until it was too late to do so. They not only conducted themselves in an immoral and debased fashion, but they arrogantly commandeered the sacrificial offerings for themselves (vv. 13-14). The Law allowed only a certain part of the peace offering to be taken by the officiating priest (Lev. 7:30-34). But the sons of Eli were taking their choice, and in effect taking fellowship (the significance of the peace-offering) from the people. They roughly seized part of the offering even “before they burnt the fat” (v.15). The fat, which was the best part and represented the inward goodness, was Yahweh’s portion and was not to be eaten (Lev. 3:16). It is clear that they demanded the offering before the fat was burnt so that they might roast the meat and eat it with the fat. In this way Eli’s sons disdained the divine etiquette of acceptable worship, scoffing at the protests of the worshippers, so causing an even greater tragedy – many Israelites abhorred making offerings to God (v.17).

Such a situation was intolerable to God. His appointments were being defiled and despised. Eli tried to correct his apostate sons but they brushed him aside (vv. 22-25). The time had come for divine intervention.

THE WARNING OF JUDGMENT 1 Samuel 2:27-36; 3:1-18

“A man of God” pronounced judgement upon the old priesthood on the principle that “them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed”(v.30). There would be an enemy invasion, Eli’s sons would be slain in one day and his family’s priesthood would be superceded by another – “and I will raise Me up a faithful priest”(v.35). This was to have a preliminary application to the work of Samuel who performed the office of a priest in offering burnt offerings and sacrifices

and who anointed Saul and David as kings of Israel (1 Sam. 7:9-10; 10:1, 8; 16:13). The same impending judgment was revealed to the child Samuel one night at Shiloh. God called, “Samuel”, three times and each time Samuel rose from his bed and ran to Eli, thinking that Eli had called. Then Eli perceived that it was God who was calling and instructed Samuel to say when next called, “Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth”.



The instruction which Samuel received that night was that Eli’s house was to come to an end because of the vileness of the sons of Eli and because he did not restrain them. In the morning Eli heard the content of this message and in due deference to the justice of God said, “it is Yahweh; let him do what seemeth him good”.

JUDGMENT COMES

1 Samuel 4

In the course of time, Israel rebelled against the Philistine suppression, but were repulsed. They desperately sought the assistance of the Ark of God in the battle, but to no avail. They were overrun and 30,000 Israelites were slain, including Eli’s sons Hophni and Phinehas. But it was the seizure of the Ark that formed the greatest shock to Eli. On hearing of its loss, he fell to his death (v.18). The wife of Phinehas on hearing of the tragedies also died when giving birth to a son, but not before she named the baby Ichabod – “the glory is departed” (vv. 17-22; Psa. 78:64).

The Ark was taken to the land of the Philistines. But its presence discomfited the Philistines and brought shame upon their idol worship. Finally the Philistines gave up the Ark and it was restored later by a remnant in Israel who were blessed thereby. Later still David brought the Ark and placed it in Zion with great rejoicing (1 Chron. 15; 16:1-3). In the days of Solomon it was conveyed into the Most Holy Place of the magnificent temple he built (2 Chron. 5:4-10).

THE PRIESTHOOD CHANGED

Eli had been told that the line of priests of which he was part would cease. This came to pass in the time of David and the early part of Solomon’s reign.

During the reign of David there were two priests officiating – Abiathar and Zadok. Abiathar was in the line of Eli. He was the only one in his family to survive Saul’s slaughter of the priests for support given to the fugitive David (1 Sam. 22:17-21; 23:6). Note that the names of Abiathar

and his father Ahimelech are occasionally inverted – see 2 Sam. 8:17; 1 Chron. 18:16; 24:6.

Abiathar continued to serve during David's reign. But he later conspired with Adonijah against Solomon and was removed from the priestly office. Zadok was appointed as high priest in his stead. Thus was fulfilled the predicted change in Eli's priesthood (note 1 Kings 2:26-27).

There was at this stage another fulfilment of prophecy. Two of Aaron's sons, Ithamar and Eleazar, were heads of the two families of priests. Eli and Abiathar were descendants of Ithamar, whereas Zadok was of the family of Eleazar (1 Chron. 24:1-3). Eleazar's son, Phinehas, had been given a promise of perpetual priesthood "because he was zealous for his God and made an atonement for the children of Israel" (Num. 25:11-13). This too was fulfilled in the reign of Solomon, when Abiathar was deposed and the sons of Zadok ministered at the Temple.

THE MELCHIZEDEC PRIESTHOOD

Hebrews 7

The priesthood changed from one line of priests to another during the reign of Solomon, but they were still sons of Aaron, Levites. A more significant change was yet to occur.

Under the law of Moses, the Levitical Priests were appointed "after a carnal commandment"(v.16). By this, the writer of Hebrews means that the priests appointed had to have certain qualifications which had no relationship to their character or way of life. Those qualifications related to:-

1. Tribe (Levi) and family (Aaron).
2. Age (30-50 years).
3. Physical fitness.
4. Marriage (within the house of Israel).

This meant that a wicked man, if he possessed these credentials, could qualify for the priesthood! In this the weakness of the Levitical Priesthood can be seen.

Jesus Christ does not belong to the Levitical Priesthood but to the Melchizedek Priesthood. Melchizedek was a man who lived in the days of Abraham and was King of Salem. Because there is no mention of his death in the portrait of him which is divinely given in Genesis 14, he appears, as far as the record is concerned, as one who lived forever. This feature of the record was taken up by David in Psalm 110 where it is said

of Messiah that he would be, by God's oath, "a priest FOREVER, after the order of Melchizedek" (v.3).

In Hebrews 7 Paul expounds the Melchizedek Priesthood. We are told that the meaning of the names and even the order of their occurrence is significant (v.2). Melchizedek (meaning "King of righteousness") is first mentioned and he is then declared to be "King of Salem"(meaning "Peace"). Jesus was first king of righteousness (that is, he did no sin) and then because of that he was made "king of peace" and a priest for evermore (see vv. 1-3, 28).

Paul also uses the fact, that the Genesis record mentions neither Melchizedek's death or his parentage, to say that he was made in the record like Jesus who lives continually as a priest without being born of parents in the line of Levi (Heb. 7:3, 12-15).

PRIESTHOOD IN THE COMING AGE

It is significant that in the age to come there will be two orders of priests officiating in the great Temple which Ezekiel describes in the concluding chapters of his prophecy (chapters 40-48). There will be mortal priests, the sons of Levi, who will be purified to offer to God sacrifices in righteousness (Ezek. 44:10-11; Mal 3:3). There will also be officiating the immortal sons of Zadok (meaning "righteousness"), who have "kept God's charge", and they will have greater privileges and stand before Yahweh (Ezek. 44:15-16).

It appears that they will form part of the Melchizedek priesthood for their qualification is "righteousness" – they "kept God's charge".

Today God is taking from among men a people for His Name, a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 5:9-10). Their faith in God is imputed to them for righteousness and the works of faith that follow will, by God's grace, enable them to be clothed in fine linen and immortality and to become the priests of the future age (Rev. 19:8, 20:6).

LESSONS FOR US

- At times it seems that righteousness goes unrewarded and unrighteousness goes unpunished, but let us ever remember that God is in control.
- The evil works of the sons of Eli eventually brought them to their destruction in battle and led to a change in the priesthood in the time of Solomon, some one hundred years after Eli's time.

- The zeal of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar eventually bore fruit – there was a change in the priesthood several hundred years later.
- God has called us to be “kings and priests”, not because our parents may be in the Truth, but on the basis that we individually respond and show faithfulness and zeal towards God.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

“The Visible Hand of God” (R. Roberts) – Chapter 22

“The Ways of Providence” (R. Roberts) – Chapter 14

“The Story of the Bible” (H.P. Mansfield) – Vol. 3, No.6

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. *What happened to the Ark after it was captured by the Philistines in the days of Eli?*
2. *What change of priesthood occurred in the time of Solomon and what prophecies did this change fulfil?*
3. (a) *Who was Melchizedek and what is the meaning of his name?*
 (b) *To whom was David referring when he spoke of “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek”?*
 (c) *What are some of the things Paul says about Melchizedek and the types he draws from them?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. *Why was judgment brought on the house of Eli? In what way was he told of this?*
2. *What was Eli’s failing and what was the fate of his sons? Comment on the lessons which you consider come from considering the household of Eli.*
3. *What is the difference between the Levitical and Melchizedek Priesthoods? On what basis can we be part of a “royal priesthood”?*



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SECTION 4

THE BEGINNING OF THE KINGDOM

In this section we see the Kingdom of God on earth established. The two kings who are considered, Saul and David, were as divergent as it is possible to be. Saul was self-centred and faithless, while David, his successor, sought Yahweh at every opportunity and was truly “a man after God’s own heart”. It was because of his great faith that he succeeded, for God was with him granting him victory over Goliath and guiding his steps to the throne of Israel. But David’s life was not without privation and trial. Much time would elapse in the wisdom of God before the promised throne would be his. In this there are lessons for ourselves. Probation before elevation is the decreed rule of God – it is “through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of God”(Acts 14:22).

David’s experiences in his exile and sufferings provide us with lessons in courage, faith, justice. His inmost thoughts are recorded in Psalms he wrote, which have been a source of comfort to saints in all ages since.

17. SAUL: THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

“Shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them”

For 450 years Israel was ruled by the judges who were raised up by God from time to time to deliver the nation from oppression. This era drew to its conclusion in the days of Samuel who faithfully administered the law and endeavoured to direct the people in Yahweh's ways. When he was old he made his sons judges in Israel, but they “walked not in his ways”. Instead of following in their father's footsteps, their judgment was perverted and their love of money led to the taking of bribes (1 Samuel 8:1-3).

The conduct of Samuel's sons prompted the elders of Israel to approach him with the request that a king be appointed who might rule them as the surrounding nations were ruled (8:4-5). They had forgotten that Yahweh was their king.

Our aim in this lesson will be to see how important it is for us to follow God's appointed will rather than the dictates of our own wills.

1 Samuel 8, 9 & 10

THE NATION DESIRES A KING

1 Samuel 8:1-5

Although it was the elders who approached Samuel to appoint a king, it is quite obvious that the nation generally wanted one (vv. 19, 20). They made their request because the judges had become corrupt and therefore they wanted a single ruler who would have complete control of both administration and also matters of war, like the kings of the surrounding nations.

But there was no guarantee of course that a king would fare any better than the judges. Although the conduct of Samuel's sons prompted the people's request, their real motive was that they were envious of the way in which the Gentiles conducted their affairs and wanted to copy them. The glory of an earthly monarchy that they could see with their eyes seemed infinitely preferable to “the King eternal, immortal, INVISIBLE” (1 Tim. 1:17) and afar off, whose elected representatives had no constituted authority beyond that of judges.

THE FOLLY OF ISRAEL'S REQUEST

1 Samuel 8:6-9

In asking for an earthly king, Israel was grossly wrong on two accounts.

Firstly, though Samuel thought that they were rejecting him, God told him plainly that it was not Samuel they were rejecting, but the God of heaven who had guided and protected them from the day they came out

of Egypt, despite their ungratefulness and infidelity (vv. 7-8).

The care Yahweh had given them was quickly forgotten. They thought that by having an earthly king they would overcome all their problems and triumph over their enemies, little realising that it was only through God's grace they were able to achieve anything. As the Psalmist said later, but which Israel was yet to appreciate, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. . . Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in Yahweh his God"(Psalm 146:3, 5).

How wise it is for us to put our trust in the counsels of God rather than the counsel of those who do not appreciate His ways. Ungratefulness and ungodliness are characteristics of these last perilous days (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Let us constantly think of all the blessings and benefits of the Truth and so resound with thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father at all times.

Secondly, by wishing to be like all the surrounding nations, Israel was rejecting its divine calling and destiny – the people were manifesting an attitude of mind that knew little of God's ways. Had not Moses reminded the nation at the end of their 40 years' wandering that God had delivered them to be separate from the Gentiles about them? "Ye are the children of Yahweh your God . . . For thou art an holy (separate) people unto Yahweh thy God, and Yahweh hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. 14:1-2).

But now they no longer wished to be separate and they desired to copy the nations in their administration and customs. Israel had been called to be "above the nations", but before long they would find themselves below.

The mood of the nation is well summarised by the following words from the book, 'The Man David': "From this restoration of the nation to God (by Samuel) there developed a sense of unity such as had not been experienced for generations. The twelve tribes from Dan to Beersheba were given an awareness of their wholeness and strength. It is ironical that this sense of integration and nationhood gave birth to the desire for a visible king. Samuel, his life's energy spent in selfless service, was deeply grieved. The cold blast of unthankfulness and disrespect was bitter to his sensitive and ageing soul. The new aspirations of the nation sprang from a deeper cause than disloyalty to a great man; the nation's

faith had failed to see God in the watchtower. They wished to change the glory of the incorruptible God for the weakness of corruptible man. This is the way to disaster for Israel as a nation and, should we fall into the same error, for us as individuals.”

Let us remember that God desires us to draw aside from the customs and attitudes of the world in which we live in order that we may be a peculiar people to “shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). The desire of Israel to be like the nations led them always to ruin – let us heed the lesson.

THE BURDEN OF AN EARTHLY KING

1 Samuel 8:10-22

Acting on God’s instructions Samuel outlined to the people the problems and cost of maintaining an earthly king. He explained that many of them would be employed purely as servants and also that much tax and produce would be needed to keep the royal retinue (vv. 12-18). But Samuel’s words fell on deaf ears as the people had already made up their minds: “Nay, but we will have a king over us”, they answered (v. 19).

The people of Israel were always stubborn and in the days of Samuel they were no different. Their hearts were hardened to these sound words of advice and they refused to listen. There is a danger that we, too, can become hardened to sound advice and determine to follow out our plans regardless of the consequences. Let us in the “meekness of wisdom” recognise that we do not always know what is best and be prepared to accept sound scriptural instruction for our own good.

THE KING CHOSEN

1 Samuel 9

The man Yahweh chose to be Israel’s king accorded with their wishes. They desired a figure-head who would lead them out in their battles and thus we read in 1 Samuel 9:2 that Saul was “a choice young man and a goodly: . . . from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.” In this man Israel placed their trust but were soon to realise that stature and physique are not the most important factors when it comes to ruling a nation (cp. 2 Sam. 23:3). In fact the Psalmist was later to relate, “There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength” (Psa. 33:16).

It is notable that in 1 Sam. 2:10 reference is made by Samuel’s own mother

to a king who would be God’s “anointed”. The Law God gave them so long ago intimated that the time would come when they would have a king and had laid down certain rules as to his conduct on appointment (Deut. 17:14-20, cp. Also Gen. 49:10 and Deut. 28:36 – “which THOU shalt set over thee” – which was a prophecy that the monarchy established by the people would lead the nation to sin and captivity. The sin of the people lay in their attitude – they precipitated the issue by the desire to conform, instead of waiting upon God. It was clear, however, that Samuel was to be the last judge and first prophet who would effect the transition to a monarchy (1 Sam. 2:35). Therefore, despite his reluctance, he was called upon to “hearken to the voice of the people” (1 Sam. 8:9, 22; cp. 9:16).

While Yahweh appointed Saul as the people’s wish, He was nevertheless prepared to guide and help the king deliver the nation from oppression. In fact this was related to Samuel. The mercy and longsuffering of God is seen in this incident in Israel’s history. The people had rejected God, but God was still prepared to help them. Saul then could have prospered as ruler, had he kept his mind turned to the word of God and remembered the encouraging words of Samuel, “God is with thee” (10:7).

THE OFFICIAL CHOOSING OF SAUL

1 Samuel 10

Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin, renowned for their left-handed slingers. We read in verse 1 that he was anointed by Samuel before being presented to the people. Then came the official choosing. Samuel called the people together to Mizpeh. He firstly reminded them again of all that Yahweh had done for them since the day the nation left Egypt. Samuel’s object was to impress upon the people that it was not a light matter to ask for a king for it involved the rejection of their God (vv. 17-19). No doubt there are times in our lives when we also reject God by pursuing a course of action that is against His will. We may treat such matters lightly, but the words of Samuel to Israel are there for our admonition, that we may see how seriously God looks upon departure from His ways.



By the method of a lot, divinely controlled, Saul was then presented before the people with the words, “See ye him whom Yahweh hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people” (v. 24).

There is no mention of Saul’s spiritual qualities but merely his stature –

something that was very appealing to a nation that had forsaken God's ways (v. 23). "God save the king" or "Let the king live", cried all the people in anticipation of a change in their fortunes in the days ahead. But the king who was head and shoulders above the rest was soon to forsake the guidance of his God and bring the nation low.

LESSONS FOR US

- Decisions become distorted when there is a lack of faith and a failure to appreciate divine principles.
- We should never be like Israel and look to an earthly king to give us protection.
- We must come to realise that no matter what circumstances we are placed in, we must not seek the ways of man to solve our problems – for this will always lead to ruin.
- Though God is invisible to our eyes, it is He in whom we must trust for He is our help and our shield.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

"The Man David" (H. Tennant) – Pages 15-16

"The Ways of Providence" (R. Roberts) – Chapter 14

"The Visible Hand of God" (R. Roberts) – Chapter 22

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. *Why was Israel wrong in asking for a king? What personal lessons can we learn from Israel's desire for a king?*
2. *What warnings did Samuel give Israel concerning their choosing of a king?*
3. *What characteristics did Israel look for when they desired a king to reign over them? What was wrong with these?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. *Why did Israel desire a king and what was wrong with their attitude?*
2. *Write an essay on Israel's desire for an earthly king. In your answer include the following:*
 - (a) *Why such a desire was wrong.*
 - (b) *Samuel's reaction and God's reaction.*
 - (c) *The personal lessons we can learn from these happenings.*



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18. SAUL'S FAILURE

“To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”

The early part of Saul's reign was full of promise. So long as he was humble and placed his confidence in the strength of Yahweh, success followed.

One of Saul's first tasks was to subdue the Ammonites who were threatening the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead (1 Sam. 11:1). His leadership in overcoming the Ammonites was encouraging, but the most impressive aspect of his victory was that he gave God the praise as the one who had really obtained victory for Israel “. . . today Yahweh hath wrought salvation for Israel” (v. 13).

It seemed as though the people's desire for better leadership was to be realised in Saul. But the story of his decline and ultimate rejection as King is one of the most tragic recorded in Scripture.

Our aim in this lesson is to outline the reasons for Saul's rejection and to understand the principles of Divine acceptance.

1 Samuel 13 & 15

THE PHILISTINES THREATEN ISRAEL **1 Samuel 13: 1-7**

We read in 1 Sam. 7:13 that “the hand of Yahweh was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel”. It was in the early part of Saul's reign that they began to make inroads into the territory of Israel again. It appears as though God allowed this to happen in order that the faith of Saul might be tested. In the third year of Saul's reign, his son Jonathan determined to do something about the Philistine problem. He courageously smote their garrison at Geba which was about 15 kilometres north of Jerusalem. Saul, naturally elated over this success, published the news of this victory far and wide amongst the people (vv. 1-4).

The subduing of the garrison was the signal for more concerted attacks on the Philistines, and so all the people were called together at Gilgal to plan the future moves.

But the Israelites were not the only ones preparing for battle, for the Philistines, smarting under the defeat at Geba, were also busy organising themselves for war (v. 5). They amassed a mighty force including many chariots and stationed themselves at Michmash which was about 25 kilometres west of Gilgal.

This in itself challenged the faith of Saul, and when it was accompanied by

the fear of his own people, he failed. Instead of putting trust in Yahweh the people were thrown into complete disarray. Some hid themselves in caves and thickets, others in the rocks and inaccessible places, whilst still others fled over the river Jordan to the land of Gilead. We can imagine what sort of an effect this would have had on Saul, and the record very poignantly states, "As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling" (v. 7).

SAUL'S TEST OF FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

1 Samuel 13:8

Here was a great test of faith for Saul. He had been commanded to wait in Gilgal for seven days until Samuel arrived to offer the burnt and peace offerings to God, before launching an attack on the Philistines. But the situation surrounding Saul was far from encouraging. A fierce army was just 25 kilometres away to the west and he had a fearful and trembling people on every side.

What would you have done under these circumstances? We know what Saul did, but let us remember that these incidents were recorded for our learning and admonition. There will be times in our lives when we, too, will be placed in circumstances demanding the utmost faith. Remember God never tests us above that which we are able to bear.

Placed in this unenviable position, Saul should have called to mind the encouraging words of Samuel spoken to him when he was anointed as King: "Do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee" (1 Sam. 10:7). And had not God been with him? Saul had acknowledged this when he mightily destroyed the Ammonites not so long before (1 Sam. 11:13). Had not God promised so many years before through the mouth of Moses, "Ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: And your enemies shall fall before you by the sword" (Lev. 26:7-8)?

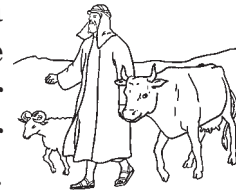
Had Saul meditated upon these matters, the problems could have been overcome. But instead he failed through lack of faith.

SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE AND REJECTION AS KING

1 Samuel 13:9-22

As each of the seven days went by, Saul became more and more afraid of his position. Finally when the seventh day had almost ended and Samuel had not appeared, he decided in desperation to offer the burnt and peace offerings himself. He assumed that God would overlook this

departure from the appointed way of worship. This was a very foolish action. He should have known that only those appointed by God could offer sacrifices and that any other method was useless. Later in Israel's history, another king, Uzziah, disregarded God's law and offered incense. For this he was smitten in the forehead with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16-21). This is Yahweh's estimation of such presumption.



Saul had no sooner finished offering than, alas, Samuel arrived on the scene and enquired what had been done. In his reply Saul freely admitted that he had offered sacrifices because he was afraid. He was little prepared for the harsh words of rebuke that followed. In his mind he thought that although he had broken a command, Samuel needed only to forgive the wrong and all would be well.

But the reply from Samuel is a revelation of how Yahweh looks upon disobedience to His commands: "Thou has done foolishly", and as a consequence, his kingdom would not "be established" (Roth). Though not specifically rejected himself as yet (cp. 1 Sam. 15:26), succession of his seed upon the throne was. God was seeking for a "man after his own heart", for upon the heart He looks and not the stature (1 Sam. 13:13-14; 16:7; Psa. 89:20).

We can visualise the tragic scene as Samuel turned his back on Saul and returned to Gibeah, leaving the dejected king with a small number of disillusioned followers.

Saul could have achieved a great victory over the Philistines had he obeyed, but instead Israel was humbled before the Philistines who encroached upon their territory (vv. 17-22).

SAUL AND THE AMALEKITES – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REPENTANCE

1 Samuel 15:1-3

A further test of Saul's faith was soon to arise. The opportunity came for him to show that he had learnt a lesson at Gilgal. From the position of weakness, Saul had risen again and had carried out some crushing defeats on the surrounding nations (1 Sam. 14). Then Samuel came to him with instructions concerning the Amalekites (vv. 1-3). It is important to note Samuel's opening words to Saul. "Now therefore hearken. . .".

The instructions were very clear. He was to utterly destroy the Amalekites and all that they had – "man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

No doubt could arise as to the extent of destruction to be carried out. Moreover, implicit in Samuel's words was the fact that continuation of his kingship depended on his obedience (v.1).

There was a reason for this destruction which at first glance appears very severe. The Amalekites were the first nation to attack the children of Israel after they left Egypt, and thus frustrated their walk towards the promised land (Num. 24:20). With Yahweh's strength, Joshua overcame them and, after the victory, God commanded Moses to write as a memorial in a book that He "will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (Ex. 17:14).

Later, at the end of forty years wandering, Moses recounted this incident and reminded the people how this cowardly nation smote the weak and feeble of the children of Israel who had fallen behind the rest (Deut. 25:17-18). He then repeated God's intention to utterly destroy this nation. The Amalekites became a fitting symbol of Sin, against which we "war" continually as we walk to the promised land.

SAUL TREATS LIGHTLY THE DIVINE COMMAND

1 Samuel 15:4-9

Had Saul appreciated God's estimation of the Amalekites, he would have carried out the command to the letter. But from this incident, as at Gilgal, we come to understand how Saul thought and acted. He was not a spiritually-minded man and he lacked appreciation of divine principles. He thought that God would be satisfied with something less than He had specified and would overlook "minor" details. So alas, what do we find? Instead of utterly destroying everything as commanded, he spared Agag and the best of the animals, stating that he intended to sacrifice them to God at a later stage. Here was an excellent motive, so he reasoned, even if he had not done exactly what God had told him. How could God be displeased with him?

But Saul had utterly missed the point of the whole instruction. No matter how good his intentions may have been, they were worthless and useless if that which had been commanded was not carried out.



TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

1 Samuel 15:10-26

God who searches the thoughts and intents of the heart saw all that had been done. . . and not done. On being informed, Samuel, who no doubt hoped that Saul would have shown a different attitude, was extremely

grieved and cried unto Yahweh all night (v. 11).

The next day he went down to Saul at Gilgal, weary of heart. Saul approached him in all confidence, elated by his triumph, and said to Samuel, “Blessed be thou of Yahweh; I have performed the commandment of Yahweh” (V. 13).

But Samuel was not impressed by such a display of “righteousness”. With a touch of irony he replied, “What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” (v. 14). The voices of the animals testified against Saul, declaring he had not kept God’s commandment.

Saul protested that he had reason for keeping the animals, but it was to no avail. The command was simple, he had broken it and thus nothing but denunciation could follow (vv. 17-19). Samuel reminded him that when he was little in his own eyes, God made him king. Surely then the least he could do was to obey God’s commands. Saul made one further attempt to justify his action. He claimed that he had in fact “obeyed the voice of Yahweh”, but the people had spared some of the animals “to sacrifice unto Yahweh thy God”. Such self-justification may have been effective before fellow man but it was inadequate before God’s appointed representative, Samuel.

In Samuel’s words of rebuke that follow, the relative value of sacrifice and obedience is crystallised for the first time. The very essence of sacrifice is obedience. Samuel said, “Hath Yahweh as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Many sacrifice, but few hear the Word and obey – which is more important than any “good” motive. The religious world, in its efforts to please the people, has discarded the Word of God, like Saul. No longer, in many sects, is belief of the gospel and baptism taught as essential for salvation. Instead they believe that good works will merit salvation and find acceptance in God’s sight.

The basis of Saul’s sin was faithlessness – he was more conscious of the people than God and acted accordingly (cp. 1 Chron. 10:13-14). Notice how the following passages of scripture, all written at a later time, show obedience to be more important than sacrifice (Ps. 40:6-8; 50:8-9; 51:15-17; Prov. 15:8; Ecc. 5:1 and Jer. 7:22-23). In order to emphasise the magnitude of Saul’s sin before his spiritually-dull perception, Samuel went on to

equate rebellion with witchcraft, and stubbornness with iniquity and idolatry. Just how true is that equation was seen in the last events of Saul's life when his faithlessness actually led him to witchcraft (1 Sam. 28). Previously his seed had been rejected from succeeding upon his throne, now he himself was "rejected from being king."

LESSONS FOR US

- Saul did not think that his sin was as great as it was. It does us well to seriously contemplate our own actions before the eyes of Him who sees all.
- None would consider themselves guilty of idolatry and witchcraft, yet in our everyday life our thoughts and actions can amount to these.
- Saul was disobedient because he would not humbly accept the instruction of God's Word, but followed his own feelings and reasoning – never a wise course.
- Today we live in a society where obedience and respect for authority is scoffed at by many and there is a danger that such a careless attitude might "rub off" onto us.
- Our Heavenly Father is merciful and forgiving, but on the other hand "will by no means clear the guilty", as Saul found out to his sorrow.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

"The Man David" (H. Tennant) – Pages 15-18

"The Visible Hand of God" (R. Roberts) – Chapter 23

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. *How was Saul put to the test at Gilgal and how did he fail?*
2. *Why did God appoint the Amalekites to utter destruction?*
3. *Outline Samuel's conversation with Saul when he returned from the destruction of the Amalekites.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. *"Obedience is better than sacrifice". Explain this statement and give examples from the life of Saul.*
2. *Why was Saul rejected from being king?*
3. *What lessons can we gain from the failures in Saul's life?*



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19. DAVID – CHOSEN BY GOD

“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looketh on the heart”

God’s command to utterly destroy the Amalekites was not heeded by Saul. Instead he asserted his own will. He had not perceived that God desires a willing heart to serve Him. The character that had developed in Saul throughout his rule erupted into presumption (1 Sam. 13:8, 9, 14), and disobedience (15:16-23). For this reason he was rejected as King of Israel.

Yet God was determined to rule His people through a man of His own choice (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). This king would be “a man after God’s own heart” His choice was David the shepherd whose early life fitted him for the time when he became King of Israel and conqueror of God’s enemies.

Our aim in this lesson is to see that God desires obedience to His precepts from a willing heart and that His choice is made on the basis of knowledge of internal motives rather than external appearance.

1 Samuel 16

SAMUEL SENT TO BETHLEHEM

1 Samuel 16:1-5

Samuel’s prolonged mourning for the lost king was interrupted by a word from God: “How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thy horn with oil and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.” Later it was recorded in the Psalms: “I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him” (Psa. 89:20).

Samuel was afraid to go openly to anoint the new king while the old king was still on the throne, particularly since Saul had become violent and possessed of a jealous, angry, fitful fear. Samuel therefore went up to Bethlehem at the command of God seemingly to offer sacrifice, but secretly to select the man born to be king. At first sight the subterfuge seems almost unworthy of the great mission. We must view it according to the circumstances of the time. An open proclamation of David as Saul’s successor would have brought the sword of Saul to Bethlehem, upon the family of Jesse, as in later years Herod massacred the young children in the same place in the hope of killing the newly born Jesus.

Samuel’s arrival in Bethlehem caused consternation, for Bethlehem was not normally one of the towns of his circuit (1 Sam. 7:16). The elders of Bethlehem imagined that Samuel’s stern figure would probe out some

hidden evil: “Comest thou peaceably?” They breathed a sigh of relief when the prophet declared: “Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto Yahweh”.

THE DIVINE SELECTION

1 Samuel 16:6-11

Jesse and his sons were specially invited to the sacrificial meal. Samuel took stock of the man and his sons. The firstborn, Eliab, seemed to have the makings of a king. The prophet looked favourably upon the man who by face and stature might have borne himself royally.

Samuel took counsel of God. The nature of the conversation is most revealing. God’s clear, unmistakable voice was like a second conscience in Samuel. This was no mere refined spiritual thinking on Samuel’s part, no “self inspiration”, as it were. God spoke to Samuel and Samuel knew it. Moreover what Samuel heard was unexpected: “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature: because I have refused him; for Yahweh seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looketh on the heart” (v.7). This was the enunciation of a divine principle, applicable not only to the selection of David as king but also to every man who will be in the Kingdom of God (Rev. 2:23). “I have refused him”, meant that his heart was not right in the sight of God.

In turn all seven sons at home with Jesse were rejected. “Yahweh hath not chosen these”, said Samuel to Jesse. Samuel refused to sit down to eat until the eighth son, whom the family had not considered necessary to invite to the sacrifice, was brought in from the field.

THE ANOINTING

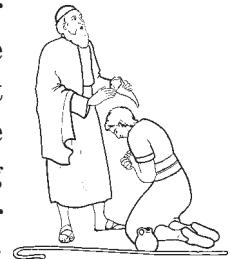
1 Samuel 16:12-13

Although David was “youngest” and quite out of mind so far as suitability for the throne was concerned, he was a “man after God’s own heart” (13:14). David cared for his father’s “few sheep” and this was to be his life’s commission in a fuller sense (Psa. 78:70-72). Great men before him had been prepared by this occupation for greater changes – Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. David knew his sheep by name, led them in and out, found pasture and water for them, anointed them, bound up their wounds, protected them with his own life against the onslaught of wild beasts and shared their life night and day. This age-old occupation worked upon his character and developed in his mind a sense of responsibility and compassion for others, a love and devotion which remained with him to the end of his days (cp. 2 Sam. 24:17). He keenly felt what it meant for God to be the great Shepherd of Israel.



His life as a shepherd also gave him a great appreciation of the majesty of God as Creator. As he lay out on the wild hillside of Judea at night, he would ponder the wonder of God’s handiwork and be drawn to study His Law (Psa. 19: 119:9).

Keen of eye, lithe of body, auburn-haired and of fair countenance (so the record suggests), David stood before Samuel. The command of God in Samuel’s ear was urgent and incisive: “Arise, anoint him; for this is he (16:12). The horn of oil was poured upon his head while he stood among his brethren. What they thought is not recorded. Their later words and deeds speak of envy, like Joseph’s brethren (17:28; cp. Psa. 23:5).



What David specifically thought of this mark of favour does not appear in the Scripture, although the 23rd Psalm may well have been written against this background. No doubt he turned over in his lively mind the meaning of this meeting with Samuel as he sat at the table with him. This was the first of four anointings for David: three by men, in Bethlehem, Hebron and Jerusalem, and one by God’s Spirit at the hand of Samuel here at home at the threshold of an almost unbelievably full life.

DAVID AND HIS GREATER SON

The following chart sets out a brief parallel between David and Jesus Christ, up to this early stage of David’s life.

DAVID	JESUS CHRIST
Revealed in the house of Jesse in Bethlehem by Samuel whose work parallels John the Baptist’s (Lesson 15)	David’s greater son born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4) and revealed as Messiah by John the Baptist (John 1:29, 31, 36)
Literally a shepherd, and thereby prepared to lead Israel (Psa. 78:70-72)	A shepherd of men (Mark 6:34; Isa. 40:11), the Good Shepherd who would lay down his life for his sheep (John 10:11)
Least esteemed among his brethren	His brethren did not believe on him (Psa. 69:7-9; Isa. 53:2-4; John 7:5)
Anointed with the Spirit – symbolised by anointing oil	Anointed with the Spirit at his baptism (Matt. 3:16-17) and, when resurrected, made “Christ” – “the anointed”(Acts 2:36)

THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DAVID'S ANOINTING

Anointing with oil was God's way of formally inducting kings and priests to their office (cp. Lev. 8:12). The oil speaks of the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 1:21-22), and so its descent upon the head symbolises God's approval and sanctification (i.e. that God had set the person apart for His special purpose). Notice how the giving of the Spirit to David followed his anointing (1 Sam. 16:13). This anointing of David points forward to the Messiah (English "Anointed One"; Greek "Christ"). Jesus was anointed with the Spirit at his baptism when God showed His approval of Him in the words, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17; see also Isa. 61:1; Heb. 1:9; Jn. 3:34). He was finally approved of God after his obedience to death when God raised Him from the dead. He was then glorified and given divine immortal nature. Peter said that by the resurrection God had made him "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36; 3:13).

LESSONS FOR US

- The true son or daughter of God, like Samuel, will mourn when others such as Saul stray from the narrow way. They lament a society with no interest in Zion.
- Outward show does not impress God. He looks on the heart and desires those who willingly conform to His ways and not act in an independent manner.
- We can fit ourselves to partake in full measure of the sacrifice of Christ in company with all his brethren if we allow the power of the Word of God to influence our lives.
- Men in this world may consider us the least in their sight, just as David's brethren did, but it is God's opinion of us, not man's opinion, which will determine our destiny.
- Those who realise that Yahweh 'looketh on the heart' will endeavour to pattern their lives on the examples of both David. "the man after God's own heart" and his greater Son, Jesus the Anointed.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

- "The Ways of Providence" (R. Roberts) – Chapter 15
- "The Visible Hand of God" (R. Roberts) – Chapter 23
- "The Story of the Bible" (H.P. Mansfield) – Vol. 3, No. 8
- "The Man David" (H. Tennant) – Pages 19-23

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

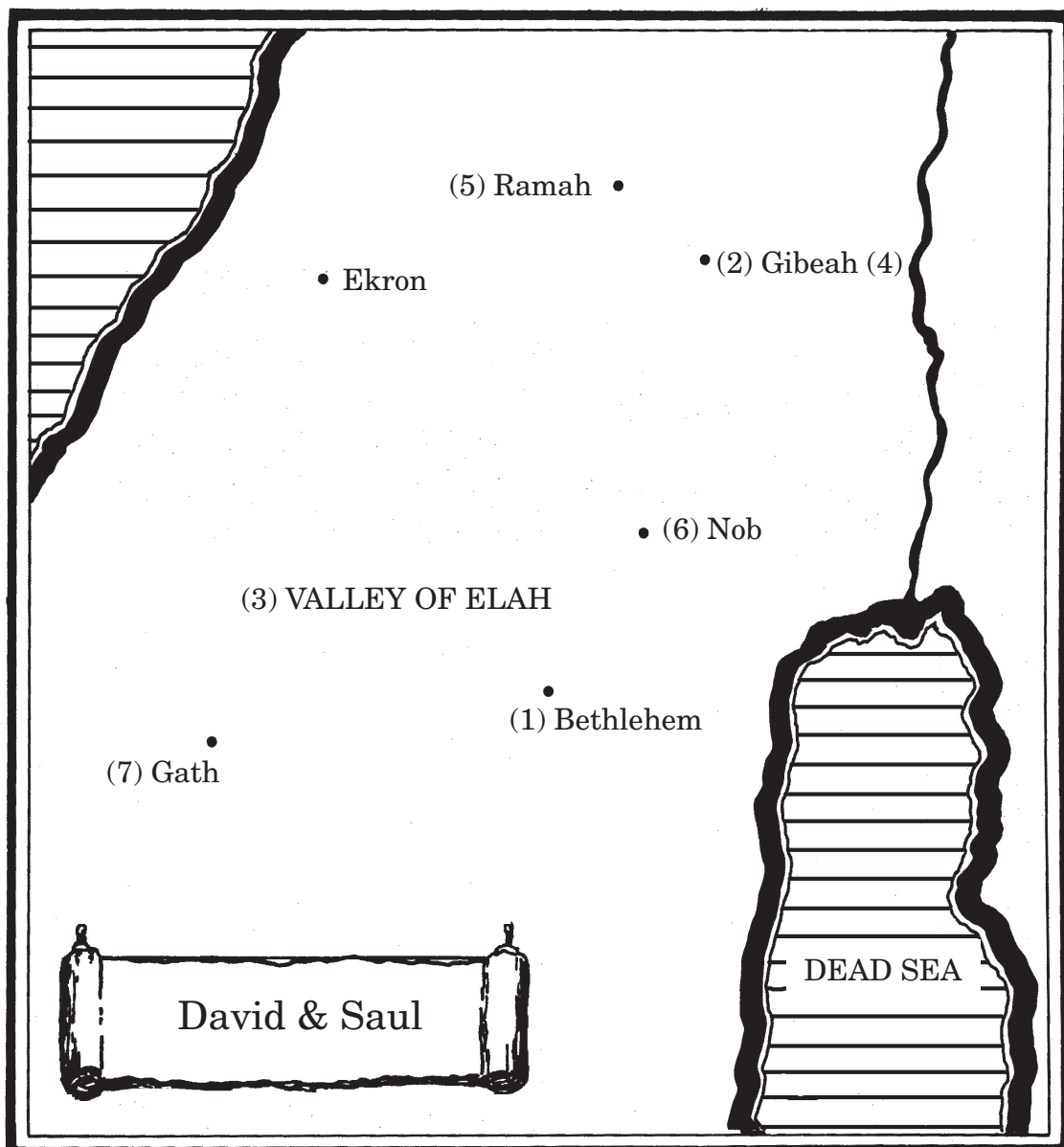
1. *Why was Samuel reluctant to go to Bethlehem, to anoint David? What became his official reason for going?*
2. *What lesson is there for us in the choice of David to be king instead of his brothers?*
3. *How did David's early life as a shepherd help prepare him to be king?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. *Compare the characters of Saul and David.*
2. *What qualities of character fitted David to be King?*
3. *Compare the selection and anointing of David with that of Jesus.*
4. *“Man looketh on the outward appearance but Yahweh looketh on the heart”(1 Sam. 16:7); “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”(Matt. 12:34). What is the principle underlying these two quotations? How does this apply in the selection of David and rejection of Saul?*
5. *Describe the anointing of David by Samuel.*



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- (1) Samuel anoints David before his family at Bethlehem, then returns to his home at Ramah (1 Sam. 16:1, 13).
- (2) David plays his harp before King Saul at Gibeah (16:21; 15:34).
- (3) David fights Goliath in the Valley of Elah (17:1-2, 20). The Philistines are pursued to Ekron (17:52).
- (4) David returns to the palace of Saul (18:2) where he receives Jonathan's friendship but is the product of Saul's envy, especially in view of his successful forays against the Philistines (18:3-8).
- (5) With the help of Michal, David flees to Samuel at Naioth in Ramah (19:18).
- (6) On receiving a signal from Jonathan that he is in great danger from Saul (20:1, 33-37), David flees to Nob, the place of the priests (21:1).
- (7) Taking the shewbread and the sword of Goliath, he flees to King Achish of Gath from whom he escapes by feigning himself mad (21:10-13).

20. DAVID AND GOLIATH

“Yahweh saveth not with sword and spear”

Israel had been delivered into the hands of the Philistines because of their iniquities (Judges 13:1). This oppression by the Philistines continued through to the time of Saul. From this background emerges David – a faithful youth.

The story of David’s victory over Goliath would be one of the best known stories in all the world. Many would of course see David’s victory as a lucky coincidence, but David said that it was in order “that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (1 Sam. 17:46).

Our aim in examining David’s victory will be to see how faith overcomes all obstacles: “this is the victory that overcometh. . . even our faith” (1 Jn 5:4).

1 Samuel 17

THE PHILISTINE CHALLENGE

1 Samuel. 17:1-3

There is a most interesting account of one of the Philistine invasions in 1 Samuel 17. Here we read of the two armies being gathered together on opposite sides of the Valley of Elah.

The Philistines attacked along the valley taking possession of several kilometres of territory. Saul replied by gathering his army on the opposite side of the valley to prevent any further advance by the enemy. Both sides were in a very strong defensive position, secure against attack but at the same time unable to advance. To do so would mean forsaking their strong position on the side of the valley, descending to the valley floor and then advancing upwards, completely exposed to the weapons of the enemy.

A mental picture of the territory involved can help our understanding of these events. Consult a Bible Atlas (see Reference Library) and note the valley of Elah which runs from the hill country of Judah south-west of Jerusalem, westward through the low lands past Ashdod to the Mediterranean. It provided a direct route for a Philistine invasion, right into the heart of Israel. Shochoh and Azekah were all in the territory of Judah (v. 1; Josh. 15:35), but at this time had been taken by the Philistines (cp. Josh. 15:47).

GOLIATH, THE MAN OF FLESH

1 Samuel 17:4-11

Because the armies were in this deadlock, Goliath the Philistine champion came forward issuing his challenge to the warriors of Israel to engage him in single combat. He was an extraordinary sight: around 3 metres

tall, almost completely covered in armour of one kind or another; he also had a shield-bearer to add the final touch to his defences. His mighty cry struck terror in the hearts of the men of Saul's army. Day after day he strode forth bellowing his challenge and scorn across the valley.

Note how frequently "six" and "brass" are used in the description of Goliath. Both are symbols used of the "flesh", and so it appears that God is setting him before us as a type of Gentile might.

Saul's stature had shrivelled, at least in his view. Now there was a hollow ring to the words of the people spoken to Samuel before Saul was appointed: "Nay; but we will have a king over us . . . that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Sam. 8:19-20). Where now was the king who stood head and shoulders above his people (10:23)? Even the mighty among the troops of God, Abner and the rest, felt no urge to take up the challenge.

DAVID ACCEPTS THE CHALLENGE **1 Samuel 17:12-37**

Meanwhile David passed back and forth between his father's flocks at Bethlehem and the camp of Israel, 23 kilometres away (v. 15 R.S.V.). When he arrived with provisions for his brethren, as instructed by his father (vv. 17-18), he heard the boastful challenge of Goliath (vv. 23-25).

David was surprised and dismayed that for forty days no-one in Israel had dared to take away this reproach – that the name of Yahweh, the living God, should be defiled in this fashion (v. 26). His fervour was aroused. Without thought for his own person he sought to do exploits for God. The nature of his words and his marvellous confidence begotten of faith soon brought him within the king's knowledge.

Meanwhile his brethren, feeling that David's words were an implied rebuke to themselves, angrily accused him of neglecting his sheep for the glamour of the battle (v. 28). But on hearing of David's words, Saul sent for him (v. 31). David fearlessly volunteered to fight the Philistine champion.

Saul looked at what some might have called a precocious youth. But this was no time for empty boasting. The odds were too great. Even so, Saul thought that David had misjudged the situation. What chance had a mere stripling against so formidable a foe? How experienced was he? But it was Saul who had misjudged David's God. Nothing was impossible with Him. Twice before, through the power of Yahweh, David had delivered his

flock from the ravages of a lion and a bear – and this heathen Philistine was no better than them (vv. 32-37). David's one concern was that this man had dared to breathe defiance against the living God of Israel and this reproach must be wiped out.

FAITH TRIUMPHANT OVER FLESH **1 Samuel 17:38-53**

Saul put his armour on David. This was a pathetic gesture, obviously meant in good faith, but of what use was the armour? Saul was not willing to wear it and go out to meet the giant. Nor was it any good to David, who excused himself and set out in shepherd's clothes to find Goliath. He hastened down the slope of the valley, chose 5 smooth stones out of the stream and drew near to the Philistine. The champion could hardly believe his eyes and poured scorn on the foolish youth who, said he, would make but a poor meal for the beasts of prey.

Humanly speaking, David's chances were slender in the extreme. But the weapons of his warfare were not carnal. His trust lay not in the simple sling he had brought, nor on the keenness of his eye – though these would be laid in service before the God of the armies of heaven. He came in the name of the living God. His purpose was "that all the earth might know that there is a God in Israel" (v. 46).

When Goliath of Gath cursed David by his gods he sealed his doom. Yahweh would surely move to vindicate His honour and David knew that he was the vessel chosen to bring this about. With supreme confidence he said to the Philistine, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of Yahweh of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou has defied" (v. 45).



Goliath of Gath was constrained to bestir himself to meet his challenger. David moved like lightning. He chose a stone from his bag and, taking aim, struck the colossus in his partly exposed and vulnerable forehead. He sank like lead. David continued his run, drew out the giant's own sword and severed his head from his body. The shout from the camp of Israel was one of joy and near incredulity. The Philistines fled in dismay and were sorely routed. Meanwhile David took the armour from Goliath and brought it to his tent; the monstrous head was eventually buried near Jerusalem (the very site where sin itself would in time be destroyed).



By this means God brought David into prominence before the people and Saul (vv. 55-58). He had commenced his public life and was soon to stand in the court of Saul.

THE MIND OF DAVID

An understanding of the mind of David at this time can help to gain an insight into a man of faith. The following two sections contain some notes on Psalms 8 and 144. The former is a Psalm of victory to commemorate his great deliverance and the latter is the prayer for deliverance he uttered as he went to meet Goliath.

The Psalms help us to grasp the mind of David as he prepared to meet the mighty colossus of Flesh. There is no doubt that Yahweh's judgment was right when He selected David as Saul's successor to the throne of Israel.

(a) David's Prayer for Deliverance – Psalm 144

In the Septuagint version, this Psalm carries the heading "A Psalm of David concerning Goliath." It reveals David's attitude to the incident when later he penned the words of the Psalm.

Vv. 1-4: David's trust in Yahweh, for despite man's insignificance He will deliver him.

Vv. 5-8: David appeals for God's help in view of the blasphemy of the uncircumcised.

Vv. 9-11: David promises to give Yahweh praise and glory following deliverance.

Vv. 12-15: The blessings which will flow on to Israel as a result of deliverance from God.

(b) David's Song of Victory – Psalm 8

Words printed in our Bibles as the heading of Psalm 9 form really the footnote or subscription of Psalm 8. This reads, "To the Chief Musician upon Muthlabben", and the word "Muthlabben" means "the death of the champion". Thus Psalm 8 celebrates the death of Goliath and gives praise to the true victor.

V. 1: Extols the majesty of the Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth.

V. 2: Describes how Yahweh has gained victory over the enemy through a mere stripling (1 Sam. 17:42, 56).

Vv. 3-4: Extol the majesty of God, and His condescension in His regard for His people.

Vv. 5-8: Recall God's purpose in the creation of man, to give him dominion over "all things" despite his low estate (Gen. 1:26).

V. 9: Repeats verse 1 and declares the universality of God's name

and dominion. This was David's purpose in destroying Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

There is also a prophetic element in this Psalm which justifies our viewing this incident as typical of the coming conflict when Christ will destroy the power of the Flesh in preparation for the establishment of His Kingdom. In Hebrews 2:6-8 Paul quotes Psa. 8:4-6 and applies the words of David to the worldwide dominion which Christ will exercise when He returns and fulfils the Divine purpose of man having dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26).

DAVID – A TYPE OF CHRIST

Such passages show us that David's experiences are a type of those of His greater son. His conflict with Goliath typifies Christ's conflict with the power of flesh symbolised in Nebuchadnezzar's Image of man (Dan. 2:31-33). Like Goliath the image was toppled by a little stone – the Son of God. When this really happens at Christ's return, the result will be the destruction of the power of man (vv. 35, 44). God alone shall be exalted in that day (Ezek. 39:17-22; 1 Sam. 17:45-47).

If we are wise NOW we will have our place with Christ in THAT DAY (Psa. 149:6-9). The faith of David must be followed by us today. No battle is too difficult for God. Our faith must be placed in the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), in whom we can be assured of success. Christ, as the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4; John 10:11), can protect and deliver us from every foe.

LESSONS FOR US

- The contest between David and Goliath was not just a fight between two men or two armies, but it was a challenge of the living God of Israel by the idols of the Philistines.
- The failure of Saul to respond to Goliath's challenge was a failure of faith and of his responsibility to lead his people.
- David's clarity of faith is an inspiration to disciples of all ages – "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).
- Goliath epitomises the world with all its lusts, ungodliness and blasphemy. We look to the time when the kingdoms of men will be toppled by the son of God and blown away like chaff on the threshing floor.

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PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. *How was David’s faith demonstrated in his victory over Goliath?*
2. *How did David’s conflict and victory over Goliath point forward to future events?*
3. *The meeting between David and Goliath was more than a fight between two men. What were the real issues involved?*
4. *David’s victory over Goliath can help us in our daily lives. How?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. (a) *Explain how David trusted in God when he went against Goliath.*
(b) *How do Psalms 8 and 144 reflect upon David’s victory over Goliath?*
2. *Write an essay on David’s victory over Goliath. What do you think are the most important lessons?*
3. *Contrast David’s attitude with the attitude of Saul when confronted with Goliath.*



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21. SAUL'S JEALOUSY AND JONATHAN'S LOVE

“And Jonathan spake good of David unto his father”

The friendship between David and Jonathan is one of the closest revealed in Scripture. Jonathan was attracted to David when he displayed such absolute trust in God in his victory over Goliath. This was the same spirit as he himself had shown on an earlier occasion (1 Sam 14:6). The basis of their friendship was a common love of Yahweh. Each was zealous for the hope of Israel and so were naturally drawn together. No pride or pettiness marred this friendship; each was willing to sacrifice for the other. In this they were like the Lord Jesus who laid down his life for his friends, whose friends we are if we do as he commanded (John 15:13-15; 1 John 3:16).

On the other hand the very success and popularity of David became a stumbling block to Saul. Success bred envy and the record portrays the pathetic sight of the King of Israel clothing himself with shame as he bends all his energies to shed innocent blood. “A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones” (Prov. 14:30). How difficult man finds the commandment, “Be kindly affectioned one toward another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10).

Our aim in this lesson will be to see a grand practical example of the basis of true friendship.

1 Samuel 18 to 20

DAVID AND JONATHAN DRAWN TOGETHER 1 Samuel 18:1-4

Despite his princely status and seniority, Jonathan was attracted by David's outstanding faith and love of Yahweh: “The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” The Hebrew word “was knit” is also used to describe the deep affection Jacob had for Joseph (Gen. 44:30). Even Saul could not help being impressed by the comeliness of David and desired that he should remain permanently in his court (v. 2).



Following the defeat of Goliath, Jonathan and David entered into a solemn covenant of friendship. Jonathan stripped himself of the symbols of his high office, his robe, “and his armour, and even his bow and his girdle” (R.S.V.). So it was then that in the midst of the nobility of Saul's court, David was encouraged by the self-effacing love of one who “esteemed other better than himself” (Phil.2:3). The heir to the throne of Saul acknowledged that God had prepared a man greater than himself to rule His people.

SUCCESS BREEDS ENVY

1 Samuel 18:5-11

Under God's guiding hand, David went from strength to strength. Appointed general over Saul's men of war, he was accepted by the army, the people and Saul's servants. No-one seemed resentful or jealous of him (v.5). As recorded in 1 Samuel 16:21, "Saul loved him greatly".

David's growing popularity cast its shadow over Saul's life. As the victorious Israelites led by David returned home triumphant, the women of Israel came out to meet them, dancing and singing, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands". Saul's jealousy was aroused. Samuel had made it plain to him that Yahweh would rend the kingdom from him and give it to a neighbour better than him (cp. 13: 13-14; 15:28). This dark foreboding which he had nurtured silently for years suddenly became a reality and his jealousy centred itself upon David. "What can he have more **BUT THE KINGDOM?**" said Saul (v.8). For years no doubt he would have watched for the successor God said would come. Now he had a growing suspicion that it was David, the people's favourite.

Saul eyed David from that day forward (v. 9). The love he had for David turned into sour hatred. As the fear that David would succeed him grew in his mind, Saul became more erratic. The following day he was very disturbed. As David played the harp to relieve his depression, Saul suddenly lifted up his javelin and twice hurled it at David, intending to pin him with it to the wall. But David weaved aside (vv. 10-11).

SAUL PLOTS FOR DAVID'S DEATH

1 Samuel 18:12-30

Notwithstanding these threats to his life, David remained at court.

Then Saul conceived a plot whereby the Philistines would be his executioners. He offered David, Merab, his eldest daughter, to be his wife on the condition that he be valiant and "fight Yahweh's battles." He sent him from the court to the battlefield, where, instead of being killed, he acquitted himself well – but Saul's marriage arrangement for David was dishonoured (v.19).

Almost immediately however, another opportunity presented itself. Told that his younger daughter, Michal, was in love with David, Saul once more plotted David's death. Saul would this time give David his daughter, conditional only upon him providing Saul a dowry of 100 foreskins of the Philistines (vv. 20-25). "Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines" (v. 25), but David went forth, slew 200 Philistines, brought back double dowry to the king and claimed Michal as his wife (vv. 26-27).

David was now son-in-law to the king, but more than that, everything he did prospered. Saul's enmity knew no bounds and all the while, even in the most difficult circumstances, "David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was precious" (v. 30 mg).

Saul presents a pathetic figure as the victim of his own pride and refusal to accept the appointment of God. He knew that God was with David (vv. 12, 28), but would not grant him the respect and honour this called for. Why? The demon of disguised pride had blinded his eyes, and as such he was the hopeless victim of envy, fear (v.29), wrath (v.8) and folly.

PROTECTION FROM JONATHAN

1 Samuel 19:1-7

The more popular David became, the more intense was Saul's hatred and determination to slay him. He even confided his intention to Jonathan, who immediately revealed this confidence to David and set about protecting him (vv. 2-3). He interceded for him with the king, chiding his father for his injustice. He demanded an end to the persecution of David, and extracted from his father an oath before God that David would not be slain (vv. 4-6). It was a most generous action by Jonathan for it could have cost him his own standing before his father. His action revealed the mark of true understanding and love. So David returned and was reinstated in the position he formerly held (v. 7).

DAVID FLEES TO SAMUEL

1 Samuel 19:8-24

All this time Saul's insanity was becoming progressively worse. When war once more erupted and David returned victorious, it was too much for the king. This time he sought to transfix David to the wall with his javelin, but David fled from his court (vv. 8-10). David went to his home but Michal advised him to leave immediately. She let him down through a window. She was a cunning woman and devised a stratagem, viz., of hiding an image in David's bed, whereby she could excuse herself when the messenger first came. She pretended that David was sick in bed. When they returned from Saul to take David in bed, she alleged that David had in the meantime threatened her life and so she had no alternative but to let him go (vv.11-17).

Meanwhile David fled to Samuel in desperation. When Saul learnt of his whereabouts he sent messengers to take David, but the Spirit of God forbade them and turned them from captors into prophets. Three times the hand of God intervened to forestall the intentions of Saul. Then he himself went and the same thing happened. Prophesying he came before Samuel to Naioth in Ramah, where he laid down naked "all that day and

night”, an evident token of the folly of his purposes (vv. 18-24).

COMFORT FROM JONATHAN

1 Samuel 20

David gained a brief respite while Saul prophesied. To whom now could he turn? Only Jonathan. So he returned to Gibeah where he sought Jonathan. Why, he pleaded, did Saul seek his life? It is here that the generous and guileless character of Jonathan shines through, for even now he was unprepared to believe that his father would break his oath and be guilty of a settled plan of destruction against David (vv. 1-3).

The friends agreed upon a plan to test Saul’s intentions. The feast of the new moon, at which all close relatives were to be in attendance, was nigh at hand. David was obliged to attend the feast held in Saul’s court, but he would absent himself with Jonathan’s permission on the basis of keeping a family feast at Bethlehem. He would remain in the field until receiving Jonathan’s message, either to flee or to stay, which would be indicated by shooting arrows on the near side or far side respectively of the rock Ezel (meaning “departure”). It is notable that David’s ultimate triumph was accepted by Jonathan without question. All he asked for was David’s continued kindness to himself and his children when he became king, and this was made the subject of a covenant between them (vv. 14-17).

The plan was put into operation. From the outset Scripture records Saul’s murderous intentions (vv. 25-26). On the second day, Jonathan’s defence of David put his father in a rage. “Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman”, said Saul, “Do not I know that thou has chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion and unto the confusion of thy mother’s nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die” (vv. 30-31).

Jonathan tried to reason with his father but to no avail. Saul was so angry that he cast a javelin at him and Jonathan left, burning with fierce anger, refusing to eat, terribly grieved in heart because his father had disgraced David (cp. v. 34 R.S.V.).

The following morning Jonathan’s arrow sped past the stone of “departure” and thereby David was given the pre-arranged signal to flee. So, full of grief, the two friends parted, never to see each other again except for a brief encounter when later Saul pursued David, and Jonathan secretly visited him to strengthen him in the Lord and to renew the covenant between them (23:16-18).

Jonathan's outstanding loyalty kept him at his father's side. David was now an outcast and sought refuge from his pursuer. During his exile David determined that he would wait patiently upon God, and not under any circumstances lift up his hand against Yahweh's anointed.

THE BASIS OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP

When later Jonathan was slain by the Philistines, David lamented and said, "Thy love for me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Sam. 1:26). This was so because the basis of true friendship is a common love for the things of God. The two friends had one thing in common – an intense unwavering belief in the God of Israel, to keep and to save all that trust in Him. It was this that surmounted the barriers of age, wealth and rank between them and that made them "one".

The substance of true friendship is the same today. Friends play a big part in our lives and they influence us for good or evil. We should choose friends in the Truth as our companions. Those who love and obey the Lord Jesus are his "friends" and, like Jonathan and David, they will not fail us in times of trouble. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14).

LESSONS FOR US

- Jonathan as heir apparent had most to lose by David's succession to the throne of Israel. Yet he willingly stepped aside, pleading the preservation of his posterity and the right to serve David personally in the Kingdom.
- He was a shining example of the love in Christ Jesus commended to the Philippians: "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3).
- Jonathan's love displayed the kindred virtues of faithfulness and loyalty, hopefulness, generosity, self-forgetfulness, humility and courage (cp. 1 Cor. 13:1-13).
- In spite of Saul's unreasonable and erratic behaviour, both Jonathan and David respected God's anointed.
- Jealousy unrestrained will eat out the heart of a man so that he becomes consumed by it, just as Saul became consumed by his envy of David (Prov. 6:34).
- Our friendship should be with those who honour the God of Israel.

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PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. *Why did Saul envy David? What causes envy and how can it be overcome?*
2. *Describe briefly two events in which Saul plotted to have David killed.*
3. *How did Jonathan try to help David when his father sought to kill him?*
4. *What is the basis of true friendship? How is this illustrated in the case of David and Jonathan?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. *Why did Saul seek the death of David? How did he try and bring it about?*
2. *How can the example of David and Jonathan help us to choose our friends?*
3. *Write a character study of Jonathan.*
4. *Contrast the characters of Jonathan and Saul as revealed in their attitude to David.*



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22. DAVID IN EXILE

“I cried unto thee O Yahweh; I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion”

Saul’s envy would only be satisfied by David’s death. As king he soon marshalled all his resources against David who was caused to flee for his life, an exile from family and friends. In the uncertainty of the years that were to follow, David’s faith grew even stronger as he learned to depend on God alone (Psa. 142:4-5).

God’s loving care was upon David because of his uprightness and integrity. Though destined to become King of Israel, he did not presume upon the mercies of God but sought Him in prayer, and, when answered, he obeyed (1 Sam. 22:3, 4, 10-12). Moreover, David respected the life of Saul as Yahweh’s anointed. He did not grasp the opportunities which seemed to offer immediately the prize of the Kingdom, but which would have entailed a breach of the commandments. “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19). David was content to await God’s time and God’s way. Righteousness would yield its proper reward in God’s good pleasure.

Our aim in this lesson is to see that God preserves those who trust in Him.

1 Samuel 22, 23 & 24

DAVID AT THE CAVE ADULLAM

1 Samuel 22

Without any time to lose David fled to Nob, the city of the priests. In the desperation of his plight, David pretended that he was on a secret mission of Saul and so obtained from Ahimelech food (the shewbread) and the sword of Goliath. He was even driven to Achish, the King of Gath, before whom, for fear of his life, he made himself out to be mad.

He departed from Gath and came to the cave Adullam, where a company numbering 400 men gathered about him. For various reasons these men were unhappy with the reign of Saul. “Everyone that was in distress and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them” (v.2). Many had come not for reasons of fellowship or sympathy, but mutual hostility towards Saul. They were generally a rough company and oblivious of the principles which governed their sensitive and godly captain (cp. Psa. 57:4). Nevertheless, among them numbered the priest Abiathar (1 Sam. 23:6), through whom David enquired of God, as well as the prophet Gad (v. 5), who was to be a close associate for many years (2 Sam. 24:11).

Meanwhile Saul mentioned his malicious intentions concerning David to the Benjamites. He appealed for their loyalty on the grounds that he,

being of their tribe, would be more favourable to them than a king from the tribe of Judah. With this pathetic appeal, Doeg the Edomite, who witnessed Ahimelech give David the shewbread and sword, came forth and informed Saul how the priest had assisted David and inquired of Yahweh for him (vv. 6-10).

Saul's hatred knew no bounds: he feared neither God nor men. Ahimelech and the priests were summoned to his presence and when Ahimelech defended his action, Saul, in an atrocious act at which even his men rebelled, committed all the priests of God to the sword. Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, alone escaped and fled to David. The news of Saul's massacre confirmed David's worst fears and he said to Abiathar, "Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard" (v. 23). It was now clear to all Israel that the price of collusion with David was death.

THE UNGRATEFULNESS OF THE MEN OF KEILAH

1 Samuel 23:1-12

News reached David that the Philistines, the implacable enemies of Israel, were fighting against Keilah and robbing their threshing floors. Such privations aroused David's wrath and, forgetting his own problems and confident of God's help, he enquired of Yahweh, "Shall I go and smite these Philistines?" God's strength is ever made perfect in weakness and he was told to go. But others in David's company did not share his trust in God or jealousy for the people of God. As they were already in fear of Saul, why should they multiply enemies by engaging the Philistines as well – so they reasoned. Enquiry was again made of Yahweh and a positive answer was again received with the assurance, "I will deliver the Philistines into your hand." So David and his men went to Keilah and with characteristic valour they smote the Philistines and took their cattle. Thus the inhabitants of Keilah were saved (vv. 1-6).

Reports soon reached Saul that David was in Keilah, a walled city with bars and gates. Saul interpreted this as a God-given opportunity to rid himself of the threat of David. Saul's hopes were as vain as his reasoning. Was it not glaringly obvious that God was with David? Did not God deliver the Philistines into his hand? Leaving nothing to chance, Saul rallied all the people to besiege Keilah.

But such large-scale preparations could not go on unbeknown to David. So David again made enquiry, "O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city

for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? Will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant” (vv. 9-11).

Such faithful prayer received immediate response. “The eyes of Yahweh are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry” (Psa. 34:15). David was told Saul would come and that the men of Keilah would deliver him into his hand. Perhaps the men of Keilah remembered what happened to the priests at Nob; allegiance to David could cost them their lives. Their trust lay in man and not God, for they would have betrayed the one who had saved them. What base ingratitude there is in the heart of men. So David was saved by God.

The words of gratitude and praise recorded in Psalm 31 were probably written at this time: “Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou has laid up for them that fear thee; which thou has wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men” (v. 19).

SAUL SEARCHES THE WILDERNESS OF ZIPH 1 Samuel 23:13-18

David and his men, now numbering 600, escaped and abode in the stronghold and wilderness of the rugged Judean hills. All the while Saul and his men searched for him. But though he eluded the trap of Saul, he was easy prey to the loving companionship of Jonathan. Jonathan found him and desired to “strengthen his hand in God”. There in the solitude of the wood the two friends united their hearts and hopes in the fear of Yahweh: “Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth” (v. 17).

But these hopes were not to be realised. This was to be their last communion together. Death would intervene and Jonathan would not see David king. But in the mercy and truth of the God in whom they trusted, they both will arise in the future to unite in the praises and service of a King who is even greater than David (Psa. 110:1).

THE TREACHERY OF THE ZIPHITES 1 Samuel 23:19-28

It was one thing to yield to Saul’s pressure and hand over David, but worse to curry favour with Saul by feeding him with information on David’s whereabouts, as the Ziphites did. Saul told the Ziphites to make sure of their facts – he had not found David very easy to track down in the past – and he would come and search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah (vv. 22-23). The Ziphites returned, but David was now in the wilderness of Maon. Saul and his men came down and hearing that he

was in the wilderness of Maon pursued him there. A crisis had come and David was in imminent danger – “Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain; and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them” (v. 26). All appeared to be lost: David was about to be captured at last.

But David had hidden strength his enemies knew not of. He had already committed himself to Yahweh’s trust, “Save me, O God, by thy name and judge me by thy strength. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after soul: they have not set God before them. Behold, God is my helper: Yahweh is with them that uphold my soul” (Psa. 54:1-4 – written at this time, according to the superscription).

A most unexpected event happened. A messenger arrived at the camp of Saul with pressing news. The Philistines had invaded the land. Saul was obliged to retire immediately if reluctantly. “O love Yahweh, all ye his saints: for Yahweh preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer” (Psa. 31:23).

DAVID SPARES YAHWEH’S ANOINTED

1 Samuel 24

No sooner had Saul dealt with the Philistines than he returned to pursue his enemy. David had by this time removed to the wilderness of Engedi where the large caves afford protection. It so happened that Saul sought rest in the very cave where David and his men were hiding. Before their eyes in the eerie darkness, Saul closed his eyes in sleep. This provided an occasion where the greatness of David shone. David’s men were not governed by a sensitive perception of the will of God. To them the occasion provided an opportunity to do away with a hated enemy. Surely this was the will of God. But David respected Yahweh’s anointing oil. He restrained his men and crept forth and secretly cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe. His conscience even smote him for presuming to do this, while he restrained his men with the words, “Yahweh forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, Yahweh’s anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of Yahweh” (v. 6).

In due course Saul arose and went on his way, but his steps were arrested by the cry of David, “My Lord the King.” Saul looked behind him and saw the figure of David stooped with face towards the ground. Here the power of righteousness was seen. With the skirt in his hand David showed Saul that his life was in his hand that day and only by his insistence

was he yet alive (vv. 9-10). Surely this was witness to his integrity. He rebuked Saul for concerning himself with one so insignificant (v.14), while he reminded him that ultimately God would judge between them and plead his cause.

Saul was humbled by David's integrity and experienced a moment of sanity. He acknowledged that David was more righteous than he in rewarding him good for evil by sparing his life (cp. Matt. 7:12). He even called upon Yahweh to bless David, and went on to declare his conviction that David would succeed him on the throne of Israel, and asked that David would at that time show favour to his house (vv. 16-21).

We might pose the question, if that was his conviction, why did Saul not bow to it? Pride and power derange judgment and balance. With the lowly there is wisdom. Though once small in his own sight, Saul was now too entrenched in his position to relinquish the throne. Yet in returning good for evil, David had baffled Saul. In the soberness of the occasion all Saul could do was to go home, while David remained at a safe distance.

LESSONS FOR US

- In the extremities of his exile David was caused to rest heavily on God, for vain was the help of man. "This poor man cried, Yahweh heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psa. 34:6).
- David's faith in providence made him eshew every evil way, even when it constrained the promise of immediate attainment of the goal God had promised him.
- Saints must restrain themselves and wait patiently and faithfully for the day of Christ's return and the fulfilment of their hopes. Vengeance belongs unto God.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

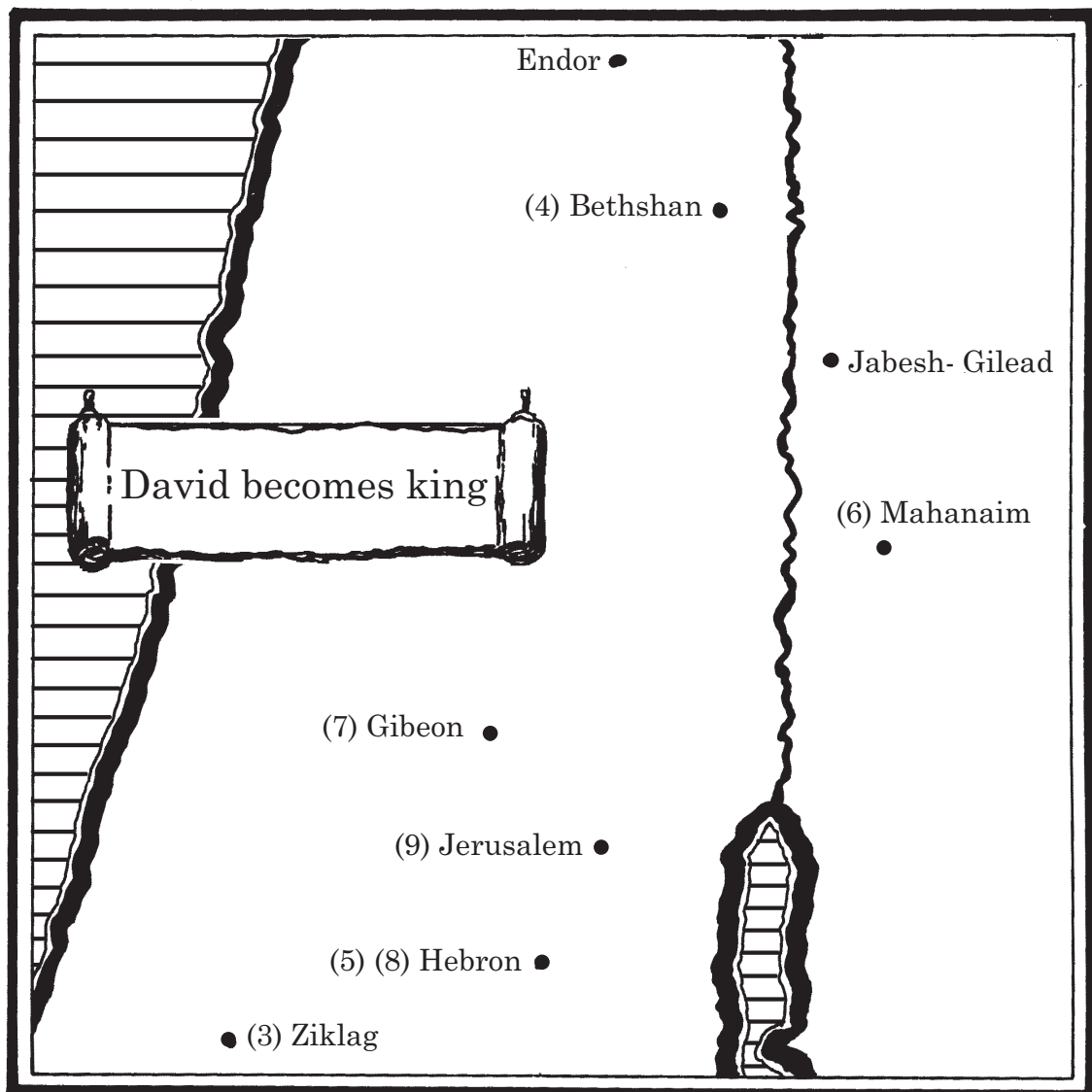
"The Ways of Providence" (R. Roberts)—Chapter 16.

"The Story of the Bible" (H.P. Mansfield)—Vol.3, No 10

"The Man David" (H. Tennant)—Pages 46-66

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. *What lessons did David learn while in exile?*
2. *Outline what happened to David at Keilah.*
3. *Why did David spare Saul in the cave of Engedi?*
4. *Outline the conversation between David and Saul after David had spared his life in the cave of Engedi.*



- (1) The Philistines prepare for war against Israel at Jezreel. David assembles with them, but then is told to return to Ziklag (29:1-11).
- (2) Saul gathers his army at Gilboa. He seeks solace from the witch of Endor but hears only of his impending defeat and death (28:4-20).
- (3) Meanwhile David and his men, returning to Ziklag, find it burned by the Amalekites, but all is recovered (30:1-20).
- (4) Saul; is defeated on Mt. Gilboa. The bodies of he and his sons are hung by the Philistines upon the walls of Bethshan, but the men of Jabesh-Gilead take them back for a proper burial (31:1-13).
- (5) David is brought to Hebron and anointed King of Judah (2 Sam.2:1-4).
- (6) Abner, the captain of Saul's army, establishes Saul's son Ishbosheth as king over Israel in Mahanaim (2:8-11).
- (7) Civil war breaks out at Gibeon between the two houses of Israel, during which Abner slays Asahel, Joab's brother (2:12-32).
- (8) Following the murders of Abner and Ishbosheth, the way is clear for David to be anointed king over a united Israel at Hebron (5:3).
- (9) David takes Jebus (Jerusalem) which he makes his capital (5:6-9).

23. DEFEAT ON GILBOA

“And the battle went sore against Saul”

In this lesson we follow Saul as he sinks to his lowest depths in seeking out the witch of Endor. Finally he receives the reward of his iniquity – death at the hands of the despised Philistines. Saul should have recognised that his jealousy of David was a symptom of hurt pride and not allowed it to grow. Instead he refused to accept the will of God in exalting David and went from bad to worse, bringing shame on the name of the God of Israel and on himself. So the lesson warns us that the carnal mind must be put to death. If evil thoughts are nurtured over the years, they can take control of us, and then it may be impossible for us to forsake them (compare 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Phil. 4:8; Isa 55:7; Prov 23:7).

On the other hand, David continued to endure the trial and hardship of exile: “driven out from abiding in the inheritance of Yahweh”. Yet in this he had not forsaken the principles of righteous living and he cast his care upon God. It was during this period that he wrote many of the Psalms which mirror the inmost thoughts of Christ. Suffering and trial have an appointed place in the purpose of God. Those called upon to endure them for righteousness’ sake can assure their hearts that they are sons of God (cp. Matt. 5:10-12; Acts 5:41; 1 Pet. 3:14, 4:12-14). Our aim in this lesson is to see how refusal to obey the Word of God eventually brings disaster.

1 Samuel 26-31; 2 Samuel 1

DAVID TAKES REFUGE IN ZIKLAG

1 Samuel 26 and 27

The Ziphites again sought to betray David into Saul’s hands, but instead, Saul was once more placed at David’s mercy. David and his cousin Abishai invaded Saul’s lines at night, but David still refused to touch Yahweh’s anointed. Saul awoke to see his spear and cruse of water in David’s hand and, confessing that David was more righteous than he, he returned to his place (1 Sam. 26). David, despairing of Saul’s future actions, judged that he would be more secure in the land of the Philistines and he and his men and their households removed to Achish in Gath. Thereupon Saul sought David no more (27:1-4).

Perhaps for reasons of privacy, David asked Achish if he would appoint him a town to dwell in and Achish gave him Ziklag where he dwelt for 16 months. Now David was free to please himself. From this place he and his men invaded the nations south of Judah as far as Egypt and left none alive to divulge what had happened. Achish, naturally curious, enquired where David had made his raids. David replied, “Against the south of Judah...” From that Achish assumed



that David had totally forsaken his people and that he could now place full confidence in David. Apparently he had lurking suspicions that David could become his enemy one day. No doubt he had heard the rumours about David being destined to become King of Israel.

DAVID MARCHES WITH THE PHILISTINES **1 Samuel 29**

It came to pass that the Philistines mustered their forces to battle against Israel. David had won a place of affection and admiration in the heart of Achish and he was invited to participate. David complied and marched with the Philistine host up the maritime plain of Israel to Shunem, while Saul gathered Israel together upon the mountains of Gilboa (28:1-4; 29:1-2).

There can be no question that David would have proved an adversary to the Philistines had he been permitted to remain with them. His feelings for the name of God and his disdain for the uncircumcised, which he had uttered when he defeated Goliath, were unchanged (cp. 17:26, 45-47).

Moreover, his bitter lament upon hearing of Israel's defeat shows plainly where his allegiance lay (2 Sam. 1:19-21). When the other lords of the Philistines learned that David was marching with them, they summoned Achish and told him to send David back. When Achish protested David's loyalty, they were unimpressed: "Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place that thou has appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in battle he be an adversary (Heb. – Satan) to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men?" (vv. 4-5). Besides fearing his valour, they could not trust him. Their fears were well grounded. Half apologetically Achish informed David of the decision and so the Philistines proceeded to Jezreel to confront Saul while David returned to Ziklag (vv. 6-11).

SAUL AND THE WITCH **1 Samuel 28**

The sight of the gathering Philistines struck fear in the heart of the King of Israel. How different Saul was to David. He hurriedly searched for consolation and strength of Yahweh, but Yahweh "answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (vv. 4-6). He was in a desperate plight. To whom could he go? Samuel was dead and he himself had put away those who had familiar spirits (v.3; Lev. 19: 31; Deut. 18:9-14).

In his extremity Saul sought a woman with a familiar spirit. Nearby at Endor one was to hand and, with tragic hypocrisy, the King of Israel disguised himself and wended his way at night across the Philistine lines

to her house with two of his men. She was at first reluctant to comply with his wishes, remembering the edict of Saul and thinking they had come to ensnare her. With the confusion that belongs to those that forsake Yahweh, Saul reassured her with an oath sworn in the name of Yahweh. The woman yielded to his request and, by and by, from the darkness a figure appeared clad in a mantle. Saul perceived it was Samuel (vv. 13-14; cp. 15:27).

Saul made request of Samuel as to what he should do, seeing God had departed from him and he was fearful of the army of the Philistines. Saul had his worst fears confirmed. In a precise and detailed answer, Saul was told that on account of his disobedience God had left him and the Kingdom would be given to his neighbour David. Moreover, Israel would suffer defeat the next day and he and his sons would perish. With that Saul collapsed and fell headlong on the earth (vv. 15-20).

Saul had departed from God's ways and now he was left alone. What a tragic spectacle the King of Israel presents as he frantically seeks consolation. But it was too late and the time of his judgment had come. It is wise to seek God while He may be found and there is no more sure time than the present. We cannot afford to put off the things of God till tomorrow as we do not know whether that day shall come.

Saul's sin came to a head when he sought out the witch. When men depart irretrievably from the ways of God, God chooses their delusions and places stumbling blocks before them so that they might fall: "... because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess. 2:10-12; Isa. 66: 3-4; John 12:39-40). Thus when wicked Saul sought Samuel, a vision of Samuel was sent along with a prophecy that sealed his doom.

When the witch saw Saul prostrate upon the floor and troubled of mind it seems that she felt somewhat to blame. She told him that she had only obeyed his request. Perhaps she thought she would suffer on account of the bad news. She suggested that Saul receive a morsel of bread to strengthen himself, but at first he refused. At length he agreed and they did eat. Soberly Saul and his servants rose up and went their way in the night with the fears of the following day pressing heavily upon them (vv. 21-25).

SAUL'S DEATH

1 Samuel 31

On the next day the battle was joined and Israel fled before the Philistines. The Philistines were determined to clinch victory by slaying the royal family of Israel: they “followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons” (vv. 1-2). At length his three sons fell and he became the chief mark of the archers and was sore wounded. Death stared Saul in the face. Rather than giving the “uncircumcised” the satisfaction of slaying and mocking him, he called upon his armour bearer to “thrust him through”. When he refused, Saul took a sword himself and fell on it. The sight of his lord slain upon the field of battle, induced Saul’s armour bearer to do likewise (vv.3-6).

The fateful news soon spread abroad bringing panic and despair to Israel, but jubilation to the Philistines. The Philistines cut off Saul’s head and the gory trophy was paraded among their peoples, with the victory being attributed to their idols. His armour was put on display in the house of Ashtaroath, while his headless body was fastened to the wall of Bethshan. How the glory of Israel was departed. Saul’s defiance of God had brought shame upon the whole nation and the name of God. How different was this day to the one in which faithful David had slain Goliath.

But all spirit was not lost. The valiant men of Jabesh-Gilead, whom Saul in better days had saved from the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11), arose and recovered the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Bethshan and gave them an honourable burial in Jabesh.

TIDINGS OF SAUL'S DEATH REACH DAVID

2 Samuel 1

Meanwhile David and his men had returned from the Philistines to find Ziklag burned to the ground and all its inhabitants taken away. Despair overcame his men, but David strengthened himself in his God and all was recovered (1 Sam. 30).

Two days later a man wandered into David’s camp with clothes rent and earth on his head. On learning that he came from the camp of Israel, David immediately asked how the battle went. The young man, an Amalekite, which nation Saul was commanded to eradicate (1 Sam. 15:3), recounted the story of Saul’s death, claiming that he was responsible for finally killing Saul. He handed David Saul’s crown and bracelet as evidence, obviously hoping to find favour of David. But David was smitten with sorrow, not joy. He and his men “mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of Yahweh, and for the house of Israel” (v. 12). The young man was duly

slain for daring to “stretch forth his hand and destroy Yahweh’s anointed.”

David’s lamentation over Saul and Jonathan reveals the greatness and graciousness of his character. He felt the shame upon Israel personally. The Truth had been crushed before the enemy. There is a lesson in this. We should avoid bringing shame upon the great Name we bear. The alien should never be placed in the position of gloating over the faults of those who bear Christ’s name (cp. 1 Cor. 6:1-8). Further, David extolled Saul’s prowess in war and remembered only his virtues: “Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions” (v. 23). Even the daughters of Israel, who had at the first incited Saul’s jealousy of David (1 Sam. 18:6-7), were commanded to remember Saul’s blessings (v. 24).

David’s final words in his lamentation relate to his beloved friend Jonathan and are filled with anguish and tenderness. He speaks as though Jonathan were yet alive: “I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women”. And then accepting the tragic reality: “How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished” (vv.26-27).

LESSONS FOR US

- Refusal to obey the Word of God caused Saul to be forsaken in the hour of his greatest need.
- When men depart irretrievably from the ways of God, God gives them up to their own delusions, “that they should believe a lie” (2 Thess. 2:10-12).
- If instead we, like David, draw near to God, He will draw near to us (Jas. 4:8). There is no better time to learn to trust and obey God than youth when the mind is unclouded with evil thoughts and habits and readily receives the impressions of the Word.
- David was very gracious towards even the man who jealously raged against him.

It is a good thing to develop friendships in the Truth which will remain strong and inspiring to our faith in times of adversity. Such was David’s tender relationship to faithful Jonathan.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

“The Visible Hand of God” (R. Roberts) – Chapter 23

“The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield) – Vol. 3, No. 11

“The Man David”: (H. Tennant) –Pages 67-87

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. *What lessons can we learn from Saul’s defeat on Mount Gilboa?*
2. *Why was Saul’s visit to the witch of Endor hypocritical? What does this teach us about those who deliberately despise God’s Word?*
3. *Briefly recount what happened when Saul was defeated on Mount Gilboa. What was the basic cause of Israel’s defeat?*
4. *What did the men of Jabesh-Gilead do for Saul following his death? Why did they do it?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. *Give an account of Saul’s visit to the witch of Endor and the events which took place on the following day.*
2. *Why did God depart from Saul? What does this teach us?*
3. *What lessons do we learn from Saul’s life and character? Why did God refuse to answer his prayer before his final battle with the Philistines?*
4. *Give an account of David’s thoughts when he heard that Saul and Israel had been defeated by the Philistines.*



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24. FROM THE SHEEPCOTE TO THE THRONE

“Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron”

Many years had passed since David had been anointed by Samuel as King over the whole house of Israel. We might have imagined that the anointing meant David would immediately be placed on the throne. Instead of that, David the shepherd first became the popular head of the army, then the King's son-in-law, next an exile under royal disfavour, next a mountain chieftain, next a Philistine auxiliary. Finally he became the accepted monarch of a small section of the Kingdom of Israel, before the full development of the divine purpose was reached.

We learn the lesson that God is never in a hurry and time is at His command. David's patience was tried and David's faith was rewarded. “David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker” (2 Sam. 3:1), until at last the Kingdom of Saul collapsed, and David's authority was established in all the land. The principle has not changed with the passing of time. “Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope” (Rom. 5:3,4). Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matt. 10:22). A place on the same throne that David occupied is offered to the faithful, by the King who shall reign on it forever: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne” (Rev. 3:21; Luke 1:32-33).

Our aim in this lesson is to see how God rewards those who patiently endure to the end.

2 Samuel 2 to 5

DAVID, KING OVER JUDAH IN HEBRON

David took Saul's death as a sign that the time had come to take the throne (cp. 1 Sam. 26:10). Even so he did not take matters into his own hands but enquired of God, “Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” Having received an answer from God, he and his men went up to the cities of Hebron, where they dwelt. Israel was without a king and in disarray. On hearing that David had returned from exile and knowing God's promise to him, the men of Judah anointed the popular hero as their king (v.4).

2 Samuel 2:1-7



The question now pressed itself in the mind of David: how would all Israel be gathered to him? When he learned that the men of Jabesh-Gilead were responsible for giving Saul an honourable burial, he blessed them in the name of God. He also reminded them that Saul was dead and he was now King in Judah. Plainly he was implying that they should take the lead and join forces with him. But such was not to be at that time.

DIVISION IN ISRAEL

2 Samuel 2:8-32

Abner forestalled David's hopes of uniting Israel by installing Ishbosheth, Saul's son, upon the throne. Abner had been Saul's captain and was the real strength behind the feeble monarch. He seems to have known that David would eventually succeed Saul's house, yet he kept the kingdom apart, probably to preserve his own position (3:9-10, 17-18).

Civil war broke out between both houses of Israel. Joab, the son of Zeruiah, led the servants of David, and Abner the servants of Ishbosheth. Both sides faced each other on opposite sides of the pool in Gibeon and a force of 12 men from each group all perished in a token battle. As always happens when brethren fight, there is tragedy and both sides lose.

In the sore battle that followed, Abner's men were put to flight. Asahel, Joab's youngest brother, pursued the experienced Abner with the fleetness of a roe. Ignoring repeated warnings to turn aside, Asahel perished by the skilful spear of Abner. The sight of fallen Asahel ignited the fires of vengeance in his brethren, Joab and Abishai, so that they pursued Abner and his host to the wilderness of Gibeon.

There Abner received help from the Benjamites. The battle was stalemated and, following Abner's call to remember that they were brethren and that the sword could only produce bitterness in the end, both sides ceased. When a count was made of casualties it was revealed that only 19 of David's men were lost, but 360 of Abner's men had fallen. Clearly God was with David (3:1); Abner's folly, in refusing David the Kingdom, was manifesting itself. At length it would cost Abner his life. Refusal to obey God always leads to death (Prov. 8:34-36).

DAVID WAXES STRONGER AND ISHBOSHETH WEAKER

2 Samuel 3

The strength of David's position is emphasised by a direct statement in the record (v.1), and also by the fact that six sons were born to him in Hebron (vv. 2-5). But in the house of Saul there was division. Abner had taken Rizpah, Saul's concubine, to wife, probably to demonstrate that he was the strength behind Saul's house (cp. 16:22). When Ishbosheth, charged him with fault concerning the woman, it offended his pride and he vowed to give the northern kingdom into the hands of David. He also declared that in this he would be doing the will of Yahweh for He had sworn to give David the throne over Israel from Dan to Beersheba (vv. 6-11).

Accordingly he sent messengers to David with his intentions, but David

refused to make a league until his wife Michal was restored to him (vv.12-16). Diplomatically Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and later the Benjamites. They were pleased with his decision to transfer the northern kingdom into the strong hands of David. Abner could now speak to David with the confidence that all Israel endorsed his action. David received Abner and his men with festivity and they were sent away in peace with the purpose of uniting Israel unto David (vv. 18-21).

But alas, Joab was not a party to the agreement. He was away fighting the king's battles. When he heard what had transpired, he rebuked David for making an alliance with his enemies. Unknown to David, Joab sent for Abner who, without suspecting his malicious intentions, perished by Joab's deceitful and deadly sword (vv. 22-27). He had exacted his vengeance for the death of his brother, Asahel. But God has declared, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay" (Rom. 12:19). At length, in the wisdom of God, he too, became the victim of the sword for his treachery (1 Kings 2:28-3-4).

Joab's action was foolish indeed. Israel was about to unite under David. Matters were delicate and crucial. And now the chief negotiator from Israel had perished in Judah. David pronounced a bitter curse upon the house of Joab and wisely made it plain that he disapproved of Joab's action and was not party to it. He caused the people to rend their clothes and personally accompanied the bier. He made a public lamentation over Abner, extolling his virtues, and refusing to eat till the sun went down. David was a king with a wise and understanding heart. His subjects were impressed and pleased. Moreover, it was obvious to all Israel that he deplored Joab's brutality (vv. 28-29).

ISRAEL CRUMBLES WITH ABNER'S DEATH **2 Samuel 4**

Upon hearing the news of Abner's death, Ishbosheth's "courage failed" (v1, RSV). Israel was confused. Perceiving this and the need to unite with David, two brothers, Rechab and Baanah, contrived to bring unity about in a way which they thought would secure their honour. They slew Ishbosheth while he slept on his bed and conveyed his head to David as the evidence that the day of Yahweh's vengeance upon the house of Saul had come. But David was not impressed. He was a just man, believing the law, "thou shalt not kill". Rechab and Baanah had slain a righteous man asleep on his bed (v. 11). (Ishbosheth had actually been forward in returning Michal to David (3:15), and had, no doubt, hoped that the Kingdom would have been transferred to David peaceably). David was troubled. The two brothers would be rewarded with shame

not honour. They were quickly slain and hung over the pool at Hebron as a public witness that King David would not tolerate iniquity (vv. 9-12). Their hands and feet were cut off, for “hands that shed innocent blood... and feet that be swift in running to mischief” are an “abomination” to Yahweh (Prov. 6:16 -18).

ISRAEL AND JUDAH UNITED UNDER THE ANOINTED

2 Samuel 5:1-10

David’s firm but merciful rulership attracted the northern tribes which were now in disarray. Without coercion all the tribes rallied to David in Hebron and willingly offered allegiance. They pleaded three points:

1. “We are bone of thy bone”;
2. “Also in time past, when Saul was King over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel”; and
3. “Yahweh said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be captain over Israel” (vv. 1-2).

With such ready homage, a covenant was made in Hebron and David was anointed King over Israel.

David was 30 when anointed King over Judah and it was seven and a half years later when he was made King over all Israel (vv. 4-5). Thus God’s word of promise came to pass in a remarkable way – without David presuming to grasp power. Truly God could later say, “I gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah” (2 Sam. 12:8).

David next took the city of Jerusalem from the hands of the Gentiles. Jerusalem (or Jebus) was situated in Benjamin on the border with Judah and so it was an appropriate place for him to reign over all the tribes. The nation of Israel was now about to move into the most glorious period of its history.

DAVID A TYPE OF CHRIST

In many ways the accession of David to the throne is typical of the Lord Jesus Christ - the one who is to occupy the throne of David (Luke 1:32-33).

The table on the following page shows a number of points in this comparison.

David – A type of Christ		
	David	Christ
1. Both were shepherds of their people.	Ps. 78:70-72	Matt. 26:31
2. Both were exiled and rejected by their countrymen.	1 Sam. 26:19	John 11: 53- 54 Isa. 53:3
3. Both were honoured and loved for their integrity and righteousness and were followed by men.	1 Sam.18:16, 30	Mark 3:7-9
4. Both were promised the throne of Israel. Luke 1:30-33		1 Sam. 16:1, 13
5. The Lord Jesus will, like David, save Judah first.	2 Sam. 2:1-4	Zech. 12:7
6. The Lord Jesus will, like David, unite both houses of Israel.	2 Sam. 5:3	Ezek. 37:22
7. Like David, Christ will redeem Jerusalem from the treading down of the Gentiles (Jebus = 'trodden down') and rule therefrom.	2 Sam. 5:7	Luke 21:24; Jer 3:17; Joel 3:16

LESSONS FOR US

- David's prospects were never darker than when he returned to Ziklag to find it burnt with fire and all the families missing. Yet he was on the verge of day-break.
- Like David we are tried in the furnace of affliction, but in due season we will reap if we faint not.
- Now is not the day of our exaltation and glory. We must submit to the yoke of Christ by putting aside the prizes this world has to offer, yet sacrifice and selfdenial for Christ's sake shall give glory, honour and immortality in the Kingdom soon to dawn.
- A worthy end does not justify unscrupulous means. Though Abner and Ishbosheth had to be moved aside to make way for David, he lamented the violence men used to hasten these events.
- Righteousness and justice become keynotes of David's reign (cp. Psa. 72:2).

REFERENCE LIBRARY

- "The Ways of Providence" (R. Roberts) –Chapter 17
 "The Story of the Bible" (H. P. Mansfield) – Vol 3, No. 12
 "The Man David" (H. Tennant) –Pages 88-105

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

- 1. *Why did David punish Rechab and Baanah for slaying Ishbosheth?*
- 2. *Why did David disassociate himself from Joab, when he slew Abner?*
- 3. *On what occasions was David anointed king in Hebron?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1. *Describe how God brought both Judah and Israel under the rulership of David.*
- 2. *In what ways was David a type of Christ?*
- 3. *David had to patiently wait for many years before he was made king over all Israel. How was his character developed in these years? What lessons can we learn from this?*



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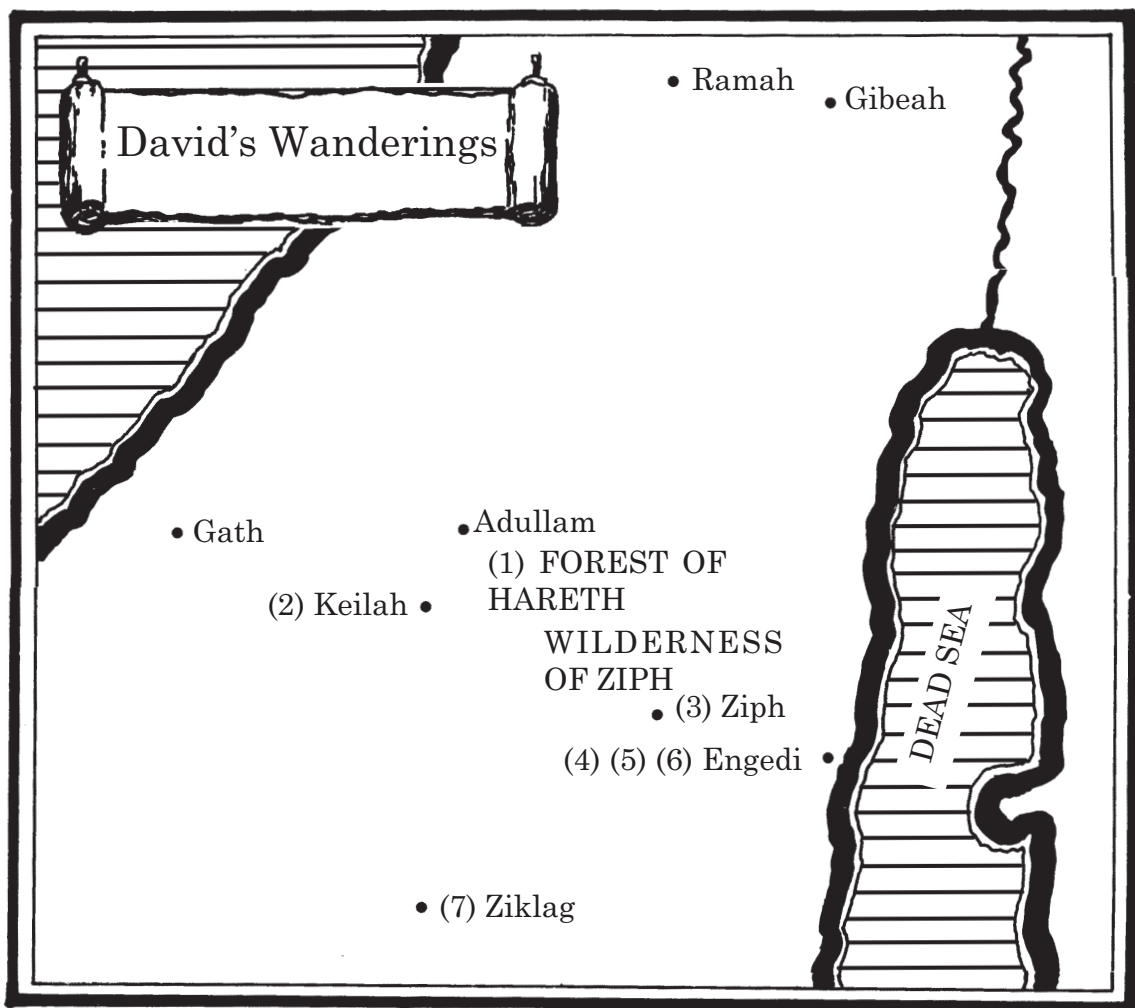
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- (1) After escaping from Gath, David comes to the cave of Adullam where 400 men gather around him. On the advice of Gad, he removes to the forest of Hareth (1 Sam.22:1-15).
- (2) While hiding in the forest of Hareth, David hears of the Philistines fighting against Keilah and moves against them, saves Keilah, and makes it his new base (23:1-6).
- (3) Saul comes against Keilah with his army, but David and his men escape to the wilderness of Ziph, knowing that the men of Keilah would have delivered them into Saul's hand (23:7-14).
- (4) The Ziphites tell Saul where David is hiding, Saul's men surround David, but suddenly Saul is called away to fight the Philistines and David removes to Engedi (23:19-29).
- (5) Saul, having returned from repelling the Philistines raid, pursues David again. He enters the cave where David and his men are hiding and David cuts off part of his robe but leaves Saul unharmed. The King is touched by David's mercy and goes back to Gibeah (24:1-22).
- (6) The Ziphites again inform Saul of David's whereabouts, David and Abishai cross Saul's lines at night. Taking his spear and cruse of water. Again Saul is touched by David's mercy and returns home (26:1-25).
- (7) David takes refuge with Achish, king of Gath, and dwells with his men in Ziklag (27:1-7).



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25. GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID

“But my mercy shall not depart away from him”

The promise which God made to David is the third and last great promise of a coming triumphant seed. The first of these great “seed covenants” was made in Eden and concerned the seed of the woman who would overcome sin and death (Gen. 3:15). The second was made with Abraham and concerned the inheritance of the Land of Israel to be gained by those in Christ (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 22:16-18; Gal. 3:16, 26-29). The third has to do with the throne, kingdom and descent of God's Anointed.

The importance of the promises can be seen from the fact that the first verse in the New Testament links Jesus Christ with his forefathers Abraham and David (Matt. 1:1). At his birth he was confirmed to be the seed of Abraham and David (Luke 1:32-33, 54-55, 69-73). His death, likewise confirmed the “promises made unto the fathers” (Rom. 15:8). The promises fulfilled in Christ became the basis of the gospel preached by the Apostles (Acts 2:29-31; 3:13, 25-26; 13:22-36; 26:6-7; etc.). Our aim will be to understand the great promise God made to David and to see how it relates to Christ and our own salvation.

2 Samuel 7

DAVID DESIRES TO BUILD GOD A HOUSE

2 Samuel 7:1-7

God had told Israel that when He had given them rest from their enemies, there would be a place chosen by Him where he would “cause His name to dwell” (Deut. 12:10-11). That time was imminent. David sat in a house of cedar with his enemies at his feet (2 Sam. 7:1). He knew that there was something incongruous in the fact that the ark of Yahweh rested in a tent, while the king dwelt in a cedar house. David felt uncomfortable. He sent for Nathan the prophet and made known his concern for the ark. Nathan replied, “Do all that is in thine heart, for Yahweh is with thee” (v. 3).

Nathan's answer was unpremeditated and without divine sanction. That night by revelation God corrected Nathan's first impulsive answer to David and made known to him a greater and more beautiful house than David could have conceived. David had envisaged a house of wood and stone for God, but God revealed that He would build David a house, not of wood and stone, but of people – his would be a royal house. This was more than any man could provide.

David listened, enthralled and deeply moved as Nathan repeated the words, “Shalt thou build me a house for me to dwell in?” (v. 5). Perhaps for the first time David realised how great a thing he had desired to do.

Can a man build a house for God? Would God dwell in it? Gently David was led along the path of understanding: “Since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, (I have not dwelt in any house) but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle” (vv. 6-7).

God dwelling in a tent is a salutary exhortation and lesson. God cannot dwell with men –yet. Even Solomon perceived the inadequacy of a temple of divine design to contain God (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 7:48). God dwells with the humble in heart who tremble at His word (Isa. 66:1-2; 57:15; Eph. 3:17; 4:6; 2 Cor. 6:16), who are part of the house whose foundation stone, Jesus Christ, has been laid by God (Isa. 28:16; Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11; Psa. 118:22).

THE WORK OF GOD

2 Samuel 7:8-16

David received the unfolding message with deepening understanding. God reminded David that his ascent from the sheepcote to the throne was under His hand and that He would further elevate him and make his name great. This whole work would be a work of God: “I took thee from the sheepcote...I was with thee... I will appoint a place for my people Israel... Also Yahweh telleth thee that He will build thee an house... I will set up thy seed... I will establish his Kingdom... He shall build an house for my name... I will be his father...” (vv. 8-16).

The final resting place for the Name of God, the house in which He would dwell, would be built by a son of the house of David who would be the Son of God. Even the house built in the days of the kings would not be built by David because he had shed much blood, as was later explained (1 Chron. 22:8-10). Indeed the temple would be built by his son Solomon, whose name means “Peace”, thus foreshadowing the greater work in Messiah’s reign of peace.

DETAILS OF THE PROMISE

2 Samuel 7:10-16

There are six elements in the promise which are especially relevant to the gospel:-

1. Israel to be settled in the land and at peace with all nations: “I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more” (v. 10).

This has never yet been fulfilled. The prophets, however, show that these conditions shall prevail when Christ reigns over Zion

(cp. Ezek. 34:28-29; Amos 9:14-15; Zeph. 3:15; Jer. 33:11, 14-15).

2. The promised seed to be David's own flesh and blood –Son of Man – and hence mortal: "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels" (v. 12).
3. The seed to build an house for God's name: "He will build an house for my name" (v. 13). Two houses are referred to:-
 - (a) A literal house – the Temple of Ezekiel, the wonderful "house of prayer for all nations" to be built in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2, 3; Mk. 11:17; Zech. 14:16; 6:12-13).
 - (b) A spiritual house –composed of persons "in Christ" (Heb. 3:1-6; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5; 2 Cor. 6:16).
4. God (as well as David) to be His Father –He would be the Son of God: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (v.14). This is the crowning feature of Jesus' Messiahship. By it he was uniquely fitted to become the sinless Saviour (cp. Luke 1:32-35; Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; John 1:14, 49; 3:16).
5. God's mercy to remain with David's seed despite the iniquity of many of its members, who would be punished accordingly (e.g. Solomon in 1 Kings 11:11-14): "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul" (vv. 14-15; cp. Psa. 89:28-33; 132:12 where this portion of the promise is expounded; Jer. 17: 24-27).
6. David's throne to be established for ever before him at Christ's return: "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever" (v. 16). The restoration of the Kingdom of Israel with the Christ, David's son, as King is the ruling sentiment of the prophets and the subject matter of the Hope of Israel (cp. Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5, 10; Jer, 33:14-26; Ezek. 37:25-27; Amos 9:11-15; Luke 1:30-33; Matt. 19:28; Acts 1:6; 2:30; 3:19-21; 13:23-36; 15:16; 28:20; etc.)

FULFILMENT OF THE COVENANT

Who is the seed of promise? From what has been said so far it is evident that Jesus Christ is the Son of David through whom the promise will be fulfilled. However, the promise does have general reference to the descendants of David who sat on his throne, especially Solomon. Note how the terms are applied to Solomon in the following references: 1

Kings 1:48; 5:5; 8:20; 9:4-6. The promise was conditional upon obedience. Solomon disobeyed, forfeited the promise and was “chastened with the rod of men” (2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Kings 11:11-14). The following reasons also show why Solomon did not fulfil the covenant other than in a limited sense:-

1. If it was fulfilled in Solomon, there would not be further divinely inspired mention of a coming fulfilment after his death, viz.
 - 250 years after his death – Amos 9:11;
 - 450 years after – Jer. 33: 14-26;
 - 500 years after – Zech. 12:6-8;
 - 1000 years after – Luke 1: 32-33.Hence it must refer to someone else at a much later time. The words of the angel to Mary recorded in Luke 1 show that it must refer to Jesus Christ.
2. 2 Sam. 7:14 is quoted and applied to Jesus Christ in Hebrews 1:5.
3. Zedekiah was the last king to reign on David’s throne. Because of his wickedness he was rejected and God declared the throne would be without an occupant “until he come whose right it is” (Ezek. 21:25-27). Jesus claimed this right (John 18:36-37) and Peter and Paul both declared him to be the rightful heir by a resurrection (Acts 2:29-32; 13:22, 23; Rom. 1:3-4).

Basic doctrine of the Davidic covenant- Resurrection

There are apparent inconsistencies in the promise. These can only be explained on the basis of the resurrection. God gave the promise knowing that the resurrection would be essential for its fulfilment (just as He gave promises to Abraham which required the resurrection);

1. The promised king was to be David’s son and hence a mortal man and yet his throne was to be established forever. How? Through the resurrection. David worked this out and spoke accordingly in Psalm 16:8-11. Peter and Paul both explain that this Psalm teaches the resurrection of the Christ (Acts 2:24-31; 13:35-37).
2. David is told that he will die (“sleep with his fathers”), but he is also informed that his son will reign forever “before him” or in his presence. The question arises – how? Besides appreciating that his seed would have to be a resurrected man, he realised that he, too, would have to be raised if he were to witness Christ’s kingdom:

“Thou...shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth” (Psa. 71:20-21).

Sealed by divine Oath

Another important feature of the promise to David is God’s oath confirming it: “Yahweh hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it” (Psa. 132:11). Like the Abrahamic covenant, the promise to David is irrevocable and unchangeable (Psa. 89:3-4, 34-36; Jer. 33:20-26; cp. Luke 1:69-74).

THE EFFECT OF THE PROMISE UPON DAVID 2 Samuel 7: 18-29

Nathan departed, his work done. David arose and walked over to the place where the ark rested, enclosed in its curtains. He sat humbly before Yahweh, transported by the wonder and grace of God’s promise to him. No longer was he the king in his house of cedar seeking how he might bestow, albeit reverently, some blessing on the ark of God by bringing it to a permanent abode in Jerusalem. He went back in mind to his lowly origins and poured out his prayer: “Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight O Lord GOD: but thou has spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come” (vv. 18-19).

The great God had spoken to David, and caused him to tremble at the grace received. He contemplated in wonder the one who would be the centre of the promise and the Son of God: “Is this the manner of man?” (lit. “the law of the man”). Later he realised that his Son would be greater than himself, for he called him his “Lord” (Psa. 110:1; Matt. 22:44). David’s son was David’s Lord because he was also the Son of God.

David continued and thanked and praised God for His revelation (vv. 21-22). He then spoke of the greatness of the nation of Israel, redeemed by God (vv. 23-24). He prayed that the name Yahweh might be magnified through the fulfilment of the promise made to his house (vv. 25-26). His final words sought that the blessing might surely come upon his house (v. 29).

LESSONS FOR US

- A correct understanding of the promises to David is very important for the gospel of the Kingdom is based on the Davidic Covenant.
- David felt that he should do something for God to enable the kingdom to be settled, but God revealed that any work for good is a work which God has already prepared.
- David was humbled when he realised that God had bound up his

“house” in the eternal scheme of things. So too, all who belong to families in the Truth are highly privileged.

- ➔ God has drawn nigh to us and invited “our house” to participate in the throne and Kingdom of David.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

“The Ways of Providence” (R. Roberts) –Chapter 17

“Elpis Israel” (J. Thomas) –Pages 302-307

“Christendom Astray” (R. Roberts) –Lecture 12

“The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield) –Vol.4, No. 2

“The Man David” (H. Tennant) – Pages 119-124

“God’s Way” (J. Carter) –Chapter 6

“First Principles Bible Marking Course” (C.S.S.S) –Pages 63-66

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1. *God told David that He would build him an house. Explain what God meant.*
2. *What were the circumstances which led to God promising David a house?*
3. *What did David do and say when the great promise of a house was made to him?*
4. *The Davidic Covenant does not primarily refer to Solomon. Give reasons for this statement.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. *What great lessons did David learn when he proposed building a house for God?*
2. *How does the covenant to David relate to the Gospel?*
3. *Explain how resurrection is essential in order for the Davidic Covenant to be fulfilled.*
4. *Explain how the covenant made to David refers to Jesus Christ.*
5. *List four major aspects of the promise made to David and explain their fulfilment.*