

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**LIFE OF
SAMUEL THE JUDGE
AND SAUL THE KING
(LEADERSHIP IN TIMES
OF OPPRESSION)**

BY

DR JOHN C McEWAN

21 April 2014

CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 2 |
| CHAPTER 1 | 3 |
| CHAPTER 2 | 9 |
| CHAPTER 3 | 18 |
| CHAPTER 4 | 21 |
| CHAPTER 5 | 24 |
| CHAPTER 6 | 26 |
| CHAPTER 7 | 29 |
| CHAPTER 8 | 33 |
| CHAPTER 9 | 36 |
| CHAPTER 10 | 40 |
| CHAPTER 11 | 47 |
| CHAPTER 12 | 53 |
| CHAPTER 13 | 58 |
| CHAPTER 14 | 62 |
| CHAPTER 15 | 71 |

THE LIVES OF SAMUEL, SAUL AND DAVID

INTRODUCTION

In the Hebrew Bible the two books of Samuel are one, and are included as the "First Book of Kings". The books we have as 1 and 2 Kings are, in the Hebrew Bible, one book titled the "Second Book of the Kings". The change in the way the books were titled and read occurred in the third century BC when the Alexandrian Jewish Community wrote the Septuagint (LXX) Greek translation of the Bible for the use of Jewish people who no longer spoke Hebrew as their first or even second language.

By this time the Jewish people were scattered into many provinces of the empires established by Alexander the Great and his generals and they spoke Greek as the common language, and the local dialects of their regions. The Jews of Palestine in this period spoke Aramaic, which was the common language of the Middle East from around 600 BC into the Roman period, and is the language of the second half of the book of Daniel. Few spoke biblical Hebrew by this date outside the synagogues of the land.

The two books of Samuel, as we have them, are divided at the death of Saul. Samuel himself dies in the period covered by the first book and his death is recorded in 1 Samuel 25. It is clear from this that Samuel is not the author of the books that carry his name, but he is given the honour by the Alexandrian Septuagint translators because his presence saturates the lives of Saul and David and he establishes and consecrates the line of the kings that will lead to Messiah himself.

The two books that now carry Samuel's name cover a period of about 150 years, from the birth of Samuel around 1140BC through until the close of the reign of David around 1015BC. We do not know who the author of the two books was, but with no references to the later troubles flowing from the division of the kingdom, they must have been written quite early; well before the fall of either Samaria or Jerusalem. It is possible that Nathan the prophet, or Zadok the priest may have been authors.

The first book begins in a time of apostasy and the false exercise of religious power in the closing days of the high priest, old Eli, who fails to control his evil son's behaviours. The very tabernacle services are being profaned by Eli's sons and their immorality hides the truth from many. There is corruption, but in the midst of it all there is also faith and integrity on the part of simple believers.

These are books of hope flowing from the days of the Judges, for they remind us that even in the worst times, the ordinary people who believe the Lord continue to worship silently, unnoticed by the rich and powerful, but not unnoticed by God. 1 Corinthians 1:27. Hannah is a woman of faith and truth, and in the midst of depravity and evil she calmly serves the Lord and worships in truth. This is what the Lord requires of us all. Her son will be a prophet, not a king, but he will be more important than all the so called "great men" of his generation and he will bring in God's purpose for his people.

Let us remember that the written histories of men contain the stories of the great and powerful, yet often, unseen by these men and those who praise them in their histories, the real work of God is being done by the simple and ordinary people of God. If you have ever felt that you were too normal and ordinary to serve the Lord in power, take heart from Hannah and her husband, for she quietly serves the Lord and wins eternal renown for her "faith-rest" life and its result in the birth of Samuel. In God's eternal "books of history" it will be "His Story" that is told, and it will be the simple people who are the heroes and heroines by faith through his grace. Ephesians 2:1-10.

A brief overview of the two books bearing Samuel's name is as follows:

Book 1 – Samuel and Saul the king who is rejected by God

1. Chapters 1 – 7 Samuel the Judge the true leader of the people.
2. Chapters 8 – 15 Saul's reign from his election until his corruption and rejection by God.
3. Chapters 16 – 31 David's appointment and his training in adversity to be the Lord's true leader.

Book 2 – David the King

4. Chapters 1 – 4 David's reign over Judah from Hebron.
5. Chapters 5 – 8 David as king over Israel from Jerusalem.
6. Chapters 9 – 20 The many crises in his reign due to his fall into sin over time.
7. Chapters 21 – 24 David's last years – the lessons of old age for all leadership.

CHAPTER 1**INTRODUCTION**

Samuel comes from a polygamous family and is adopted into a totally immoral and corrupt High Priestly family. Anything less likely to succeed, in accordance with the psychology of men could not be imagined, yet the Lord's hand is upon this little boy from before his birth, just as his hand is upon us all from before the beginning of time itself.

Let us remember as we read of Hannah and Samuel that the Lord's hand has been upon us all, as it was upon them, from before our births also. It is also a reminder that when one ministry comes to an end due to death or disobedience then there is no halting of the Lord's plan because one man falls. In the Lord's eternal plan there is always a replacement ready to lift the ministry to new heights through the obedience of that next generation.

1 SAMUEL 1:1-28

1:1 Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. 2 And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. 3 And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there. 4 And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: 5 But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb. 6 And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. 7 And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. 8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons? 9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD. 10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. 11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. 12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. 13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. 14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. 15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. 16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. 17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. 18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. 19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her. 20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD. 21 And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. 22 But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever. 23 And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the LORD establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him. 24 And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young. 25 And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. 26 And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. 27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: 28 Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 5. Polygamy is never God's best plan for mankind. Monogamy is God's plan, but even if believers find themselves in polygamous situations they can relax and serve the Lord there and seek the Lord's path for them, and that is what Hannah (her name means "gracious", or "gracious gift") does. In the early years of her marriage it is with tears, and her fellow wife Penninah (her name means "coral" or "pearl") was not her fellow worker in the household, but acted as her rival and her enemy. This was not a happy home, although the husband here is a godly man.

Good people can get into morally wrong situations, and this man is a good man, and he loves the Lord, but he does not manage his two wives without unnecessary troubles for Hannah. He honours both women but favours Hannah, even though she has no children. In this culture having children was important, and her failure to produce an heir for the family was felt deeply, and her fellow wife really was unpleasant about her inability to have children. The Lord takes full personal responsibility for her childlessness, for it is the Lord who has stopped her having children to this point. She

must learn to cast all her cares upon the Lord, and she does in prayer. 1 Peter 5:5-7. She does not recognize it at the time, but the Lord is saving the life of Samuel by having him born well after the sons of Penninah.

The family live in the town of Ramah. Samuel will spend all his adult life serving from there after the destruction of Shiloh by the Philistines. He is born into a Levitical family, descended from Kohath, son of Levi. Because the family lived initially in the Ephraimite area they were counted as Ephraimites. Elkanah, the father of Samuel, went twice yearly to the tabernacle ceremonies in accordance with the Mosaic Law. Exodus 23:14-17, 34:23, Deuteronomy 12:4-14, 16:16. They go to serve the "Lord of Hosts". This is a new name for the Lord and reminds us that the Hebrews had many names for the different aspects of the character of the Lord their God.

The two sons of Eli are mentioned in verse three, and no further note is made of them at this point. They "serve the Lord" in the tabernacle, but we will find they are "sons of Belial", not sons of God. 1 Samuel 2:12. These two men will be a reminder to us all that not all who wear the right clothes and say the right things actually stand for those things. These men dress as priests of the living God, but by their behaviours they will show themselves true sons of the devil. Numbers 16:5, Psalms 5:4-6, Matthew 7:15-23, John 8:42-47, 2 Timothy 2:19.

Verses 6 – 8. The evil fruit of resentment breeds real dangers in a polygamous home. Jacob suffered greatly because of the evils of polygamy within his household, and this household here experiences the same great psychological pain. Nastiness is always a sign of unconfessed sin, for it is a fruit of the Old Sin Nature, and an indication of carnality on the part of Penninah. The key sin is pride and arrogance and such things have a habit, if unconfessed, of coming back to bite us strongly. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, Galatians 6:14-23, Ephesians 5:1-7, Colossians 3:5-15. Hannah shows her spirituality under pressure by taking the constant bullying insults to the Lord in prayer, leaving her case in the Lord's hands.

Elkanah loves both women, but Hannah most of all, and clearly doesn't see the extent of the bullying by the other wife. He sees that his love for Hannah should be worth to her as much as ten sons. He is not placing any pressure upon Hannah regarding having children, but she feels the pressure from within herself. Both women's sons will go on to serve the Lord, and their descendents will stand in Solomon's temple to praise God, but for Penninah there will be great pain and sadness before that occurs.

They ought both to be leaving their concerns about their children in the Lord's hands and simply concentrating on walking in the Holy Spirit's power. 1 Chronicles 6:25-28. Hannah will do this, although we do not know whether Penninah ever dealt with her bitter spirit. We can grow older in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord, or we can grow older in mental attitude sins, and become more and more bitter.

Put bluntly, there is no skill attached in having children; it is simply something that happens or does not according to natural processes that are mostly beyond the skills of man. Having children ought never to be a source of pride, but bringing them up in a spiritual household where they learn to show forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit should be a great source of thankfulness and praise.

There is no room for pride, arrogance, or boasting in the walk of the spiritual believer, but there is every opportunity for praise, thankfulness and graciousness. Let us ensure that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is the abundant fruit in the midst of our families, not the fruits of evil. If children are raised in a home where the fruits of the Holy Spirit are abundant, then they have the best start in life.

Verses 9 – 12. Hannah has been fasting through the time in Shiloh, and doing so to the great concern of Elkanah. She is still sad, but she eats and drinks a little and then heads for the door of the tabernacle enclosure and stands there in great sorrow and pours her heart out to the Lord. It is a bitter prayer of great pain. She feels the years of arrogance and all the "put downs" of the other wife, and she pours this all out to the Lord in silent prayer. She enters into worship with her bitterness and she leaves her deep pain and bitterness at the door of the tabernacle. This is one of God's purposes in prayer. Psalms 5:5-8, 27:1-4, Isaiah 54:1-10.

Her prayer is an oath, and as such is an oath that she must be ready to follow through on all her life. She prays for a son to give away to the service of the Lord as a Nazarite for all his days. Numbers 6:1-8, 30:1ff. She does not just pray once and go, she keeps on praying, so that old Eli notices her there and observes her lips moving constantly and her tears pouring to the ground. This is how we are to pray. Luke 11:9-13, 18:1-8, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:4-7, Colossians 3:15-17, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 5:15-18.

Verses 13 – 18. As we will later see, Eli is used to seeing his sons drunk, and so he jumps to the wrong conclusions about Hannah. He corrects her, yet, as we will see, he hasn't corrected or acted against his own sons. Hannah quickly responds with the truth. Eli is doing the devil's work here, but his wrongful accusation will not rob Hannah of her spiritual peace after prayer. She doesn't accept the wrongful rebuke and go off more bitter again; she immediately corrects the impression Eli has gained. She is not drunk and doesn't get drunk; she is full of sorrow.

It is a reminder to us all, that we often are too hasty to jump to conclusions about others without the real evidence to back our judgment. Let us be careful of jumping to wrongful conclusions. She tells him bluntly that she has poured out her soul before the Lord. Having prayed, she trusts in the Lord, who answers prayer, and heads away and eats and relaxes into her faith in the Lord with confidence her petition has been heard. James 1:5-8.

She is not a “daughter of Belial”, like the sons of Eli are sons of Belial, and she will not allow the falsehood to go unchallenged, and neither must we. Having been corrected Eli gives his blessing to Hannah and prays also that her prayer might be answered by the Lord God of Israel. This is the way to truly bless people; join them in their prayers, and agree with their prayer. Psalms 42:1-5, 62:5-8, 142:1-7, 143:6, Matthew 18:19-20, Mark 11:24, 1 John 5:14-15.

Verses 19 – 21. Having spent their last day at the tabernacle for the feast time they retire to rest for the night, and rise the next day, eat, drink, and leave early to return home to Ramah. They arrive back home and in the normal run of married life, Elkanah and his wife Hannah have sex, and this time, in God’s time, she conceives. She gives birth to a son and calls his name Samuel. The name Samuel means, “heard of the Lord”, for he is the answer to Hannah’s prayer. She apparently takes the initiative with the naming, which was unusual in this day.

She names him as a result of answered prayer and in this name she expresses that she is ready to pass him back to the Lord, that he might be more than the priest he was born to be as a son of Elkanah. Elkanah trusts her with the naming of their son and also the care and upbringing of him until Samuel is weaned. He trusts her physically and spiritually with this boy, for Elkanah knows that this boy is a special child. He heads away each year to worship the Lord at the tabernacle and he gives thanks to the Lord for this blessing into his household. He also “pays his vow”, and offers the sacrifice of thanks for the answer to his wife’s prayer and pays her vow with a thanks offering.

Verses 22 – 24. Hannah excuses herself from coming up this time, as would be expected. After the circumcision of an Israelite it was expected that he be presented by his mother and father after a further 33 days to the Lord at the tabernacle. Exodus 13:1-2, Leviticus 12:1-8, Numbers 8:17, Luke 2:21-24. Hannah does not bring him up to the tabernacle at this time but Elkanah offers the sacrifice on the family’s behalf. Hannah does not come up at this point for she intends to bring him to the tabernacle herself and leave him there once he is weaned (after age four years). Elkanah’s sole concern is that the Lord establishes His word to Hannah and brings all the blessing through Samuel that He had promised her. These are God focused people, who serve the Lord in spirit and in truth. John 3:5-8, 4:24, 6:27-35.

Verses 25 – 28. They bring up a significant offering when Samuel is brought to the tabernacle to stay for service. Three bullocks are brought up, with the meal, oil, and wine that was required for a full burnt offering, Meal Offering, Peace Offering, and Sin Offering. Leviticus 1:3-9, 2:1-3, 3:1-4, 4:1-12, Numbers 15:8-10. Each of these offerings speaks of honest confrontation with the sin of man and the need for God’s work through salvation and sanctification.

They are the “top end” sacrifices, which tell us that Elkanah is a wealthy man and able to bring a very expensive set of offerings to honour the Lord and recognise his and his son’s need for a Saviour. Samuel is God’s chosen vessel for His service, born in a miraculous process, but he is still born a sinner, like us all, and he needs blood shed to cover him and sanctify him for service. Each of these sacrifices represented the Lord Jesus Christ and His perfect work to provide the solution to sin for mankind.

Hannah’s joy is telling her story to Eli. She reminds him that she was the woman who was praying at the tabernacle all those years before and that the Lord answered her prayer and this boy is the result. He is now here to stay at the tabernacle and to serve the Lord with Eli. This four year old will replace the sons of Eli, for this boy will grow to become the holy man of God that Eli’s sons have failed to be.

We are shocked that a mother could leave her four year old here and head home, but this woman knows her son is where the Lord wants him, and remember this is the **only four year old** so assigned in history! Some mothers would like to leave their four year olds at church some days, but Samuel was a unique child and for him it was safe to be left here. He doesn’t experience any trauma in this, for the Lord is over him.

Remember the sons of Eli are evil and we will see below that even the women who serve the tabernacle are being sexually played with by these men (1 Samuel 2:22-26), yet Samuel is not abused in any way; he is under God’s protection. He is cared for by women at the tabernacle and he is quickly entered into service by Eli, even though the normal time for a priest to serve was only from 25 – 50. Numbers 8:24-25. He is possibly saved from trouble at home by being at the tabernacle, rather than in the polygamous household, especially given Penninah’s bad mental attitude. Genesis 21:8ff.

God’s hand is upon Samuel, just as God’s hand is upon you and me today. We each have a unique path to walk through this life, with each element to be woven into a garment of praise for the Lord. Samuel was guided through things that were traumatic to others around him and he was stabilised in the midst of both great and evil events by his service of the Lord. These godly people are looking for what God is doing, and how God is weaving together events and people to his glory and their blessing.

I was myself a little orphan, and adopted at three months. In that first year of my life I nearly died of the measles, and had childhood asthma as a result, and nearly died several times from that before age fourteen. At thirteen my adopted sister in the family drowned in the school swimming pool in mid December and lingered on in hospital for several days, dying on 24 December. All these things were “tragedies” to many but to me they were all parts of the great tapestry God was weaving to bring my sister to glory, and make me the man I am today.

I have just returned from the hospital this morning as I first write these words. My father is slowly dying and I have been with him, holding his hand and being able to read some scripture and pray for him. He was calmed and given peace from

the Lord in answer to prayer. The nursing staff commented on my being there with him from midnight until 3-30am, and I reflected to them that he had carried me through difficult times in my childhood, and so it was no burden now to be with him at this time.

As the Lord's children, we are in the Lord's hands in this life, and so we are here to learn from all things (pleasant and awful) and to bear godly fruit to bless others and glorify our heavenly father in whose hands we rest. "The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms". Deuteronomy 33:27, Psalms 27:1-5, 56:1-4, 91:1-11, John 14:1ff, Philippians 4:6-7. These words record for us why Samuel was safe, for he was in the hands of God his Father, and that is always the best place to be. We don't need our earthly father's all the time, but we certainly need our heavenly Father forever, and we have Him there for us forever! 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, 1 John 3:1-2.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Hannah spoke of her son as being "lent to the Lord for service" and this is the way we are to see our children. They are in fact "lent to us" for our brief time upon this earth, and so our joy ought to be to "lend" them back to the Lord so that they might be the people He has called them to be. Let us have loose hands holding our children, so that the Lord can hold them and use them in all ways He sees fit. Let us focus all our energy on bringing them up in the beauty of holiness so that they can rest in the Lord and serve Him all their lives.

2. God is with us in all the paths of our journey through this life. In dangerous places the Lord will keep us. Psalms 23. There were not many more dangerous places than the household of Eli, but Samuel was kept there from evil and brought through to life long service and praise. Let us rest in the care of the Lord and rejoice that we are safe in His hands.

3. God is the God who answers prayers. Sometimes we are told "no", and other times we are told "not yet", but all our prayers are answered. Let us cast our cares upon the Lord for He truly cares for us. Let us not forget also to thank Him for the answers we have received. 1 Peter 5:5-9, Philippians 4:4-7, Colossians 3:16-17.

REFLECTION UPON THE POWER OF BELIEVING PRAYER

1. We may know the provision of God but we must communicate with Him in order to obtain this provision.

- a) Prayer is the believer's means of communicating with God.
- b) The Bible is God's way of communicating with man.

2. Promises Involving Prayer

- a) Matthew 21:22 We should ask believing.
- b) Matthew 18:19 The power of corporate prayer.
- c) Psalm 116:1, 2 God is always available to hear our prayer.
- d) Isaiah 65:24 God will answer while we are yet praying.
- e) Matthew 7:7 We are commanded to pray.
- f) John 14:13-14 We can ask for anything in His name.
- g) Philippians 4:6 The prayer should be with thanksgiving.
- h) 1 Thessalonians 5:17 We should pray without ceasing.
- i) Hebrews 4:16 We can come boldly to the throne of Grace.

3. Prayer Divided into 4 Segments

- a) Confession of sins (1 John 1:9)
- b) Thanksgiving (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- c) Intercession for others (Ephesians 6:18)
- d) Petitions for one's own needs (Hebrews 4:16)

4. Power of Prayer

- a) Individual - Elijah and the burnt offering (1 Kings 18:36-39)
- b) Corporate - the release of Peter from prison (Acts 12:1-18)

5. One Prayer that could not be Answered The prayer of our Lord on the Cross (Psalm 22:1-18)

6. To Whom are Prayers Addressed?

- a) Directed to the Father - (Matthew 6:5-9)
 - b) In the name of the Son - (Hebrews 7:25)
 - c) In the power of the Spirit - (Romans 8:26-27)
- The Son (Jesus) and Spirit are interceding for us.

7. Prayers can be Divided into Petition and Desire

- a) Petition - What you ask God for (e.g. a new car).
- b) Desire - The desire behind the petition (e.g. happiness because you have a new car).

8. There are Four Possible Combinations to answered prayer

- a) Petition answered - Desire not answered. Psalm 106:15 - The quails of the Exodus generation. 1 Samuel 8:5 - A king to reign over Israel.
- b) Petition not answered - Desire answered. Genesis 18:23 - The preservation of Sodom. 2 Corinthians 12:7 - Removal of the thorn in Paul's side.
- c) Petition answered - Desire answered. 1 Kings 18:36-37 - Elijah requests fire for the offering. Luke 23:42 -The penitent thief's prayer. Type c) represents the perfect prayer.
- d) Petition not answered - Desire not answered. Type d) unanswered prayer has 8 main reasons which are shown in paragraph 9.

9. Reasons for Unanswered Prayer

- a) Lack of belief (Matthew 21:22)
- b) Selfishness (James 4:3)
- c) Unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:18)
- d) Lack of compassion (Proverbs 21:13)
- e) Pride and self righteousness (Job 35:12-13)
- f) Lack of filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18)
- g) Lack of obedience (1 John 3:22)
- h) Not in the Divine will (1 John 5:14)

Most of the reasons for unanswered prayer, is some form of sin in the life, which can be solved by confession of known sins as per paragraph 3 a) under the concept of 1John 1:9.

10. Intercessory Prayer

- a) This is one of the four factors in a prayer, which are:-
 - i) Confession of sins
 - ii) Thanksgiving
 - iii) Intercession
 - iv) Own needs.
- b) The power of intercessory prayer is taught in (1 Kings 18:42-46) the principle being found in (James 5:16-18)
- c) The power of prevailing prayer is shown in (Acts 12)
- d) The prayer for the unbeliever (Romans 10:1)
- e) Prayer for an unknown believer (Colossians 1:3-11)
- f) Prayer for the known believer (Ephesians 1:15-23)

THE LEADERSHIP CHARACTER OF SAMUEL – PROPHET, PRIEST, JUDGE

1. SCRIPTURE 1 Samuel 1:20 - 28:20.

2. BIOGRAPHY

Samuel, whose name means "name of God" was the son of Elkanah and Hannah. His father was an Ephraimite of a Levite descent though not from Aaron (1 Chronicles 6:33-43). Hannah had long been barren. She vowed to the Lord that her son should be dedicated to Him and serve God (1 Samuel 1:1-1). To emphasise this Hannah vowed that the vow of separation as outlined in Numbers 6:5 should apply to Samuel. When Samuel was weaned Hannah took Samuel to the house of the Lord at Shiloh (1 Samuel 1:24) and left him with Eli. Hannah's presentation ended with her prophetic prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-11). Samuel was shown the downfall of Eli's family which occurred when the Philistines captured the ark, and killed Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Samuel 4:11). Eli, shocked by what had taken place, died at the age of 98 from a fall, having judged Israel 40 years (1 Samuel 4:15-18). Samuel became the judge over Israel and called for repentance and dedication (1 Samuel 7:3) and erected a stone Ebenezer (1 Samuel 7:12) to remind Israel of God's faithfulness. Samuel's sons, who would normally have succeeded him, were bad, causing Israel to call for a monarchy (1 Samuel 8:5). God directed Samuel to anoint Saul but after some short time Saul, by his impatience and arrogance, forfeited his inheritance as Israel's king. Samuel was then directed by God to anoint David as the future ruler of Israel. Samuel died before Saul's reign terminated and was buried at Ramah. All Israel lamented (1 Samuel 28:3). Samuel's last appearance was at the witch of Endor incident where, brought up from Sheol, he informed Saul of his fate and that of his sons (1 Samuel 28:19).

3. EVALUATION

- a) Samuel was stated as the last and greatest of the judges (Acts 13:20).
- b) Samuel is shown as the first of the prophets (Acts 3:24).
- c) Samuel is indicated as the greatest figure in Jewish history since Moses (Jeremiah 15:1).

- d) Samuel succeeded Eli as the priest and kept the Passover in a great manner, in fact, better than any observances until Josiah (about 620 BC) (2 Chronicles 35:18).
- e) He cared for the tent of meeting by appointing gatekeepers (1 Chronicles 9:17-26).
- f) He was a man of prayer (1 Samuel 15:11; Psalm 99:6).
- g) He is a hero of faith (Hebrews 11:32).
- h) Samuel acted decisively when he killed Agag with his sword at Gilgal (1 Samuel 15:33).
- i) Samuel eventually disassociated himself from Saul (1 Samuel 15:35).

4. PRINCIPLES

- a) God provides the right man for His purpose in a time of national decline (Judges 2:16).
- b) Dedication of parents can have a great effect on history (Exodus 20:6).
- c) A dedicated parent can have children who do not desire the things of the Lord (Proverbs 10:1).
- d) Samuel is a person under whose leadership the course of Israel's history changed dramatically (2 Chronicles 35:18; Acts 3:24; 13:20).
- e) Disassociation from apostate Christians is necessary if biblical principles have not caused the apostate to change direction (Romans 16:17,18).
- f) National repentance leads to revival (Nehemiah 9:1-3).
- g) The spiritual man knows what to do in time of crisis and is willing to make hard, right but unpopular decisions (e.g. the death of Agag) (1 Kings 18:40)-
- h) The turning away by a nation from the Lord (1 Samuel 8:7) may cause people to reject good leaders.

THE NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

God reveals Himself and His character by His names.

1. EL - The strong one (singular) - 2 Samuel 22:33
2. EL ELYON - The most high God - Genesis 14:18-22
3. EL OLAM - The everlasting God - Genesis 21:33
4. EL SHADDAI -The almighty one - Genesis 17:1
5. ELOHIM - The all powerful one (plural) - Genesis 1:1
6. JEHOVAH - The self-existent one - I AM - Exodus 3:14
7. JEHOVAH-ELOHIM - Lord God, Creator - Genesis 2:4
8. JEHOVAH-JIREH - Jehovah will provide - Genesis 22:13, 14
9. JEHOVAH -NISSI - Jehovah is my banner - Exodus 17:15
10. JEHOVAH-RAAH - Jehovah is my Shepherd - Psalm 23:1
11. JEHOVAH-RAPHA - Jehovah that Heals - Exodus 15:25, 26
12. JEHOVAH-SABOATH - Lord of hosts - Psalm 46:7, 11
13. JEHOVAH-SHALOM - Jehovah is peace - Judges 6:24
14. JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH - Jehovah is there - Ezekiel 48:35
15. JEHOVAH TSID KENU- Jehovah our righteousness - Jeremiah 33:16

Notes

CHAPTER 2**INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter we have the wonderful juxtaposition of spiritual life and carnal life; of the results of living faith, and the strong contrast to the results of carnal living. Hannah's song begins the chapter, and it is the result, and fruit of her faith. She pours out her thankfulness and joy to the Lord. The result of living faith is that the believer who walks in the Spirit is able to pour out this sort of offering of praise, for the acts of the Lord in their life will bring joy to the world. The fruit of the Holy Spirit's presence in the life is joy. Matthew 7:15-20, John 15:1-14, Romans 6:21-23, 7:4-6, 9:16-23, Galatians 5:22-26, Philippians 1:9-11, 4:4-14, Colossians 3:12-17.

The contrast to Hannah's song of praise is the prophet of God's word of condemnation to Eli and his house. Hannah has been faithful to the Lord and her prayer of faith has brought her the birth of Samuel, and the spirit of thankfulness of a heart that is devoted to God. In strong contrast to Hannah, Eli has fallen into a carnality that has corrupted his household and made him unable to correct his sons.

His failure to correct his sons will lead to their deaths and the end of his line. He was called to minister and mentor spirituality, but his household had become the example of worldliness. Even though he is corrupt and his house is judged, the Lord will protect and train Samuel within it, and the judgment will not fall upon Eli until Samuel is old enough to take the priestly office over. The Lord will do the same thing later in the household of Saul, where David will be trained, and where he will learn what not to do as a king. He also will be kept safe in the midst of Saul's madness, just as Samuel will be kept safe in the midst of Eli's carnality.

A prophet enters the scene at some point after the birth of Samuel. Prophet's bring warning and judgment, and this man of God is no different to the other prophets in later times. We don't know his name, but we can see in his message the work of God amongst men. There is still hope for Eli if he acts, but he fails to do so. He will die old and obese, and his sons will be slain in battle and the very tabernacle itself will be destroyed by the Philistines. The wages of persistent sin is death. Romans 6:23.

1 SAMUEL 2:1-36

2:1 And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. **2** There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. **3** Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. **4** The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. **5** They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. **6** The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. **7** The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. **8** He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them. **9** He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. **10** The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed. **11** And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest. **12** Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD. **13** And the priest's custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; **14** And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. **15** Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. **16** And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. **17** Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD. **18** But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. **19** Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. **20** And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. **21** And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD. **22** Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. **23** And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. **24** Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD's people to transgress. **25** If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them. **26** And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men. **27** And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? **28** And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father

all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? 29 Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? 30 Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. 31 Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. 32 And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. 33 And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. 34 And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. 35 And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever. 36 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

REFLECTIONS

Verse 1. This verse introduces the song of Hannah. Let us read this as the poetry it is. The free translation below gives a glimpse of the original Hebrew poetic form.

My heart is joyful in the Lord
 My horn is exulted in the Lord
 My mouth is opened wide over my enemies
 For I rejoice in the God of my salvation.

Hannah reflects upon the battlefield that is her household with Penninah, but sees that the Lord has given her the victory over the jibes and cruel comments of her fellow wife. The reference to the “horn” is the symbol of strength for the Hebrew people. It is not the, “horn of plenty”, nor a reference to sexuality, as in the surrounding pagan nations. Psalms 18:1-3, 89:8-19, 112:8-9. Hannah rejoices in the strength that the Lord has given her. Her spirit has strengthened within her through the work of God in her life in the birth of Samuel. Hebrews 12:12-15.

Her joy is in the Lord and her focus for worship and thankfulness is the Lord. Mary will rejoice in a similar fashion in the birth of Jesus 1100 years later. Luke 1:46-55. The depression Hannah felt at the cruelty of Penninah is dissolved away in her joy at Samuel’s arrival and in her worship of the Lord. “The Joy of the Lord is our Strength”. Nehemiah 8:10.

Verses 2 – 3. Hannah's stability now is firmly resting in the truths of the CHARACTER OF GOD, for the Lord is stable and His plan for her is stable and sure. She is resting securely in the Lord's will for her.

None is holy as the Lord
 For there is none besides thee
 There is no rock like our God

Do not speak swelling words of human pride
 Do not let insolent words come out of your mouth
 For the Lord is an all seeing/knowing God
 And it is with Him that all man's deeds are weighed

Hannah's words in these two verses remind us of the eternal nature of the one true God. There is no other God than the one who made the heavens and the earth, for He alone is the author of space and time. Exodus 15:11-13, Deuteronomy 32:3-4, Psalms 111:9-10, Isaiah 6:1-3, 57:11-15. Like Moses, Hannah, David, and Isaiah, we need to centre ourselves in the truth of the mighty awesome power of the one true God. He alone is worthy of worship.

Hannah used the Mosaic metaphor for the Lord's stability and the believer's security in Him by referring to the Lord as “her ROCK”. Deuteronomy 32:30, 31, 39, Isaiah 40:18ff. The arrogance of man is misplaced. The Lord alone is our “rock” of stability and significance. We are “small fry” on this tiny planet amidst billions of galaxies and trillions of stars and planets within them. We have no grounds for any self centred pride or arrogance of any sort. We are creatures on a very small planet. It is our relationship with the creator that alone gives us significance and purpose.

One American preacher, Louie Giglio, has done a series of DVDs on this fact. In one of these, “How Great is our God”, he compares our earth's size with the sun, and then with other suns in the known universe. If the earth is the size of a golf ball, then our sun is a disc fifteen feet in diameter, but if we compare the earth to a large star like Canis Majoris (The Big Dog Star) then we get a shock. If the earth is the size of a golf ball then the diameter of Canis Majoris is the height of Mt Everest! It is seven miles high to our earth – golf ball! Any arrogance on the part of man is seriously misplaced! We are small fry in this universe and we gain our significance from the Lord's plan for us alone.

Verses 4 – 8. Hannah continues to reflect upon the power of God and the arrogant strength of puny men. This is an important reflection, for the Philistines are powerful enemies and will continue to be so all through her life, but she sees with the eyes of faith that they will be humbled by God in His timing.

The Heroes with their strong bows are confounded
They stumble in their fear and strap on their strong armour

Rich ones hire themselves out for food to eat
Those who are too poor or weak just die
Yes – the woman who was barren bears seven children
The fertile woman just pines away with grief

The Lord kills, and the Lord makes others live
He leads down to hell, and He leads away from hell

The Lord makes poor and He makes rich
The Lord humbles and He also lifts up and exalts

He raises the poor out of the dust
He lifts the poor out of the dung heap
In order to set them beside the nobleman

And He gives them the seat of glory in the feast
For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's
He sets the earth upon its foundations

God is the one who lifts us up, and he is the one who casts us down in judgment. The Lord alone decides the fate of individuals; the time of their exultation and the time of their deaths. The men who think they are powerful will stumble about in fear and dismay. They will strap on their armour as their strength, and tighten the straps to hold them upright, but they will lack the inner power to stabilise their minds and bodies in the days that are coming.

Fear paralyses those who have no eternal hope and these powerful warriors will live in fear, whereas Hannah lives in godly hope. Men trust their physical strength, yet against the power of God and the threats from the enemy, their strength is puny indeed. Psalms 37:12-28, 2 Corinthians 4:8-11.

Men also trust their own wealth and political power, yet these things are fleeting and easily disrupted by events beyond their control. When men face the reality of their powerlessness they are safe in God's hands, but if they arrogantly trust themselves, then they will be terribly let down, for their wealth is no guarantee of safety or survival. Psalms 34:8-11, Even the wealthiest men will have to fight for their bread in the days that are coming, and those who have not provided for themselves in better days will simply die of starvation.

In the midst of this carnage Hannah will be blessed and bear many children, but Penninah, who previously boasted of her fertility, will be desolate, as her older sons will be caught up in the battles, and they will die. What appeared to be victory for Penninah will end in bitter defeat; she will face the judgment of God and she will live to regret her cruelty to Hannah. It is always a foolish thing to lift ourselves up at the expense of others, for when God truly lifts us up no one is disadvantaged, and all are blessed. Rejoice in the Lord believer, never in any imagined superiority to others.

It is the Lord who decides who lives and who dies in all situations. Psalms 68:20, 116:15, Jeremiah 15:1, 24:4-7. Our challenge is to do what the Lord commands and mentally rest in the care and protection of the Lord, for in His hands alone is there safety and strength to do the things He has called us to do. In each of the verses quoted above the principle is strongly reinforced; those who serve the Lord can relax in otherwise dangerous places, and they can serve the Lord with peace. Our lives are in His hands and we will not die one second before our allotted time.

Wealth, power and position are things men strive for, yet the Lord is the one who allows men to rise or fall according to His will. Some men are raised out of the very dust and the dung heap. Many men have been despised until they were raised to rulership.

Joseph was in the centre of the prison, and Jeremiah in the sewer jail of Jerusalem, but both were not doomed to die, but to live and serve the Lord, as God's chosen men for their age. We are not to judge by external indications, but see as the Lord sees, for He sees the hearts of men and HE raises up those who humble themselves before Him. Psalms 75:7, 102:10-12, Isaiah 2:10-12, 1 Peter 5:5-9.

On this minor planet, in a small sector of the Milky Way, there is no room for arrogance on the part of any pathetic little man! As one of the great historians said, "Man proposes but God disposes". It is the Lord alone who laid the foundations for the earth's movement around the sun, and for its place in the universe, and it is He alone who lifts us up. Psalms 30:1-12. Just in recent weeks as I revise these words (March 2014) scientists have discovered the "echo of the moment of creation", the radio signature of the "Big Bang" that began space and time. The Bible has spoken of that since the days when Moses wrote Genesis and Peter speaks of the nuclear implosion that ends this present universe. 2 Peter 3:10-18. He encourages us to face our finitude as creatures, and celebrate our born again eternity with Jesus.

Verses 9 – 10. The Lord keeps those who serve Him, and He protects those who follow His plan for their life. The Lord is our protector and our shield in times of trouble. Read the following texts as encouragement to your use of the

“shield of faith” (Ephesians 6:10-18) in the storms and battles of this brief life of ours. Genesis 15:1, Deuteronomy 32:38, Psalms 3:3, 18:35, 28:7, 33:20, 84:9-11, 91:4, 115:9-11, 119:114, Proverbs 30:5. Let’s see these two verses of Hannah’s poem now:

The feet of His saints He will keep secure
And the wicked shall perish into darkness
For by the power of man no-one becomes strong

The Lord is Lord – those who argue with Him are confounded
He thunders above in the heavens

The Lord will judge the ends of the earth
He will bring mighty power to His chosen king
He will anoint the horn of His anointed one

God’s truth is our shield, and if we are well briefed by God’s Word we can dwell in safety upon this temporary planet with peace of mind and joy of spirit. If we delude ourselves by the wisdom of man we are truly deceived. Psalms 1:1-6, 2:1-4, Proverbs 1:7, 2:1-12. Man’s power is an illusion, and the man who thinks he is powerful is gone in a moment. The smallest virus can kill the strongest man in twenty four hours, and the tiniest cancer cell can multiply and eliminate the strength of the greatest and wealthiest person in weeks.

I have worked in the cancer field for nearly twenty years now and watched many wealthy people die, and many have flown to and fro in their private jets and helicopters to their private physicians, but they have all died, just like the poor people they previously despised. The only strength man has comes from our place in God’s plan for our lives; there is no other strength.

In verse ten Hannah looks forward to the rulership of the King of kings and Lord of lords, and identifies that it is the Lord God who will rule over all one day, and He will rule His way in His time. God is the final judge for all, and all mankind will be judged after the fallen angels have been judged. Revelation 20. Hannah has great understanding of the words of Moses, and she is clearly a prophet herself, seeing far into the future in her song, which is both a proclamation of received truth and a prophetic vision. Her song ends with the coming of the Messiah, for her son is but a step on the path that will lead to the Christ, and she rejoices in the advances of the plan of God.

Verses 11 – 17. The writer brings in a strong contrast now between the acts and faith of Hannah and the acts and blasphemy of Eli’s sons. These men abused the priestly office, taking the best of everything for themselves, rather than offering up the assigned portions to the Lord. Young Samuel ministers to Eli and serves in the household as a servant of the High Priest, and so learns the true role of the priestly office by observation, but Eli’s sons are evil, and they will not repent of their evil. These men believe they are above and beyond the Law of Moses and can play act religion and abuse the Lord’s people with impunity.

Now Eli is in his nineties when he dies, so his sons are not youngsters when they sin as they do here; they are men in their fifties at least, and God has graciously delayed judgement long enough to allow them to repent and change their hearts and behaviours. They have abused the people and God’s grace towards them, so that by their evil deeds they seal their fate. Men must remember that just because God does not judge them today, it does not mean they have gotten by with their sins; the Lord is gracious and longsuffering, desiring their repentance, but judgment comes to them in the end if they refuse to bow their knee. Exodus 34:6-7, Numbers 14:18, Psalms 86:14-15, 1 Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 3:9-15.

The sons of Eli are servants of Baal; they do not know the Lord. Many men and women think they know the Lord, but they do not at all. The Lord’s own words are to be our warning here. Matthew 7:13-23, 25:31-46. Those who know the Lord are those whose behaviours resemble the Lord, and whose lives point to the reality of His fellowship within them. Luke 13:24-30, James 1:22-25. If people do not have the fruit of righteousness in their lives, then they do not know the Lord at all. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is evidence of His presence, and without that evidence there is no reality to the person’s profession of “faith”. The sons of Eli show the signs of self-centredness and these are the signs of satanic religion, not of godly faith.

Their job as priests is to serve the tabernacle and administer the sacrifices in the way Moses had described under God’s solemn instructions. A portion of every sacrifice was set aside for the sons of Aaron. This was described clearly in the Mosaic Law, and to go beyond it was to steal from God and actively hinder the faith of those who came to offer sacrifice to the Lord. Exodus 29:26-28, Leviticus 7:28-36.

It was clear that the shoulder was the priests, but the fat was to be burnt upon the altar. These evil men seized all the meat that could be hooked out of the cooking pot with a three pronged meat hook as it was cooking. They didn’t take just the shoulder, but any of the best meat that could be taken. They also took the fat, which was the Lord’s for burning as part of the offering. They had a taste for fatty food and were overweight, like we will see their father also was.

Eli is guilty here. He has gotten overweight because he also is taking of the fatty portions and eating them in violation of the Law. He hasn’t asked his sons where they get their meat from, and he shares their guilt, for he is too fat to actively check out the actions of others and oversee the tabernacle work as he was supposed to. When priests violate their trust

before the Lord and take of the holy things for themselves, or abuse the people who are coming to worship, then the Lord will judge them. Hosea 4:6-14, Malachi 2:1-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4, 2 Peter 2:9-20.

Verses 18 – 21. The contrast of the adult sons to the child Samuel is total. The older men are sons of Belial, and the young Samuel is a child of the living God. To these men he is of no account; just an unpaid child servant, dressed up in a cute coat (ephod). Eli had made for him a linen coat modelled on his own, and the little boy (now between ages 5 – 14) serves with Eli as his little shadow. Eli is not doing the overseeing he ought to be doing, but he was still operating as the High Priest at times and so Samuel saw all the duties of the High Priest being performed through the years he lived in Eli's house.

Hannah made Samuel a formal coat each year and the family brought it up to Shiloh for him each and every year of his childhood. Eli blesses the family and prays for more children for Hannah and she bears five more. The boy Samuel grows close to the tabernacle and he is under the gracious care and protection of the Lord. The same things are said over John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus. Luke 1:80, 2:40.

Verses 22 – 26. Eli hears and understands the significance of the evil his sons have been doing. He is without excuse and his weakness is culpable. His correction of them is appropriate for a minor misdemeanour, but is a gross under-reaction to the extent of the evil. These men are guilty of sins that are punishable by death and the death penalty alone would have atoned for their sins and saved their sons from the disaster that will unfold. Eli offers mild rebuke. He gives them a verbal "tap on the wrist" when there is need for total judgment. He tells the truth in verse 25 reminding them that their sin is directly against the Lord and the Lord will judge them if they do not repent, but he fails to act as Moses had directed.

At very least his sons should have been stripped of their office and publicly beaten 39 times for their wickedness! He closes his eyes to the evil his sons do as servants of Baal and so the evil grows and rots the heart out of the nation itself. The nation that loses its faith, loses its inner stability and strength. The evil unchecked for years at the tabernacle's heart will rot out the hearts of the soldiers of the nation so that they cannot stand against their enemies. The Ark itself will be lost because of the sins of Eli and his sons. Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 17:2-7, 27:15-26, 28:15ff.

Verses 27 – 36. When the warning of the Lord is not heeded by a servant, then the Lord in grace will warn again, but the second warning will tend to be an announcement of judgment. A prophet of the Lord comes to Eli to announce the judgment upon his house because of his failure to act in accordance with the Mosaic Law. The prophet reminds Eli of his great position, graciously given his ancestor Aaron from the Exodus to the present day. He reminds Eli that this was a sovereign act of God and as such was dependent upon God's grace and favour, and that Eli's persistent disobedience could see the position lost. Exodus 4:13-17, 28:1-4, 29:1-9.

Eli himself was of the second surviving son of Aaron; he was a descendent of Ithamar, not Eleazar. Numbers 25:7-13. In itself this meant he was twice blessed, for the older son's descendents would have had precedence. He has been "lifted up" yet he has despised the blessing of the Lord and insulted the Lord by his sinful tolerance of evil at the heart of the nation's religion. 1 Corinthians 5:6. He has valued his sons ahead of his solemn duty to the Lord (verse 29). It is a reminder to us that the Lord gives us our children, and if we fail to correct them, then they will be judged, and we will be through their judgment. To fail to bring up children in the love and worship of the Lord is to open your self to disaster later. Matthew 10:37-42, James 3:17-18.

Eli is directly challenged for "making himself fat" from the offerings. He has eaten of the sacrificial meat brought by his greedy and blasphemous sons in violation of the Law. He has eaten the fatty portions that were to be burnt to the Lord on the altar. If we eat fatty meat we become obese over time and that had happened to Eli. His fat layers are testimony to his sin, not just of gluttony but of blasphemy. Isaiah 56:9-13, Ezekiel 13:17-23, 34:1-10, Hosea 4:6-9, Micah 3:5-11.

God lifts men up through their obedience to His plan, and He pulls men down when they blaspheme His holy name and Word. Psalms 18:20-21, 50:21-23, Malachi 2:7-9. The Lord honours those who honour Him, but if we despise the Word of God and disobey the truths of the Lord's Word then we will be judged by being replaced in the Lord's work and lowered back to where we were drawn from.

The Lord can only use those who have "holy hands", and so the natural consequence of unconfessed and undealt with sin is being removed from the Lord's work. Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:3-7, 21:6-8, 1 Corinthians 3:17, 9:27, Ephesians 1:4, 5:27, Colossians 1:22, 1 Timothy 2:8, 1 Peter 1:15-16, Jude 20. Do you get the idea believer? We are to be holy before the Lord or we will share the fate of Eli.

The consequences of the sin of Eli is then very specifically noted by the prophet. He will see the enemy arrive at the tabernacle, and he will see the looting start of the wealth of Israel stored there. 1 Samuel chapter 4, Psalms 78:59-64, Ezekiel 44:9-14. He will lose his posterity, and no man of his house will stand before the Lord to serve in the tabernacle again after him.

All the adult members of his house will die in the prime of their life when the Philistines sweep into Shiloh and kill everyone. In one day both his sons will die. His house will be replaced by another and their house will stand before the Lord forever. Any survivors of Eli's house will beg bread at the door of the tabernacle from their relatives who have replaced them there.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God can keep His servants safe in the place He has called them to minister, even if to all human eyes it looks like the place of greatest danger. The only thing for us to be concerned about is our position in the Lord's will, for if we are positioned in the place of the Lord's will we are safe. Let us seek the Lord's path alone through this life. The individual, church, or nation that forgets this truth will cease to enjoy the blessing of God upon them, and will face all the evils that flow from rejection of their creator and saviour. Judgement is God's strange work, Isaiah 28:21, but it is certain to follow all active and persistent disobedience. Let us serve the Lord our God in holy fear, for our God is a consuming fire. Hebrews 12:28-29.

2. The Lord is our "rock" and upon the stable base of our relationship with Him we can rest secure in the storms of this brief life. God is our point of absolute stability in an uncertain world. We are built upon the solid rock of Christ's character and work upon the cross. He is our rock. Let us rest securely upon His stability and find our own in fellowship with Him alone. In the Lord's plan for our life alone is strength and power to live and serve in this world.

3. Let us stand with Hannah and rejoice in the advance of the Plan of God. Let us see that all that happens to us when we walk obediently is in His plan, and so let us rejoice in all the little details of our life, and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith. Let us always remember that the history of mankind itself centres in Him. Hebrews 12:1-3.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE BELIEVER'S SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Categories of Believers

1. Standpoint of Spirituality:

- a) Spiritual believer - the Holy Spirit controls the inside of the believer (Romans 8:6b).
- b) Carnal believer - the sinful nature controls the inside of the believer (Romans 8:6a).

2. Standpoint of Growth:

- a) Baby - one who has just received Christ as Saviour.
- b) Adolescent - one who has learned some doctrine but is not yet in the application state.
- c) Mature - one who knows and applies doctrine and spends a maximum amount of time in the filling of the Holy Spirit.

3. Relationship of Maturity and Spirituality:

- a) Spirituality is an absolute. The Holy Spirit either controls or He does not. One cannot be a little bit carnal. If he is carnal he is NOT spiritual.
- b) Maturity is speeded up by spirituality, but a baby believer can be either carnal or spiritual, and a mature believer can be carnal or spiritual.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT – THE SPIRITUAL ANALOGY OF “WALKING”

1. Physical walking is analogous to the faith rest life: step by step. Romans 14:5,6, Ephesians 5:16-18, James 4:13-15.

2. Being regularly filled with the Spirit and feeding on the Word are similar to walking.

3. Attacks on believers occur when they are caught off balance. Romans 13:13.

4. Walking depicts the pattern and function of the believers life in time. Philippians 3:18, Ephesians 4:17.

5. It can also represent a backsliding believer who are said to be walking backwards. Ephesians 4:17.

6. We are all told to:

- a) Walk in the spirit. (Galatians 5:16, 25)
- b) Walk in the faith. (2 Corinthians 5:7, Colossians 2:6, 4:5)
- c) Walk in doctrine. (3 John 3)
- d) Walk in the truth. (2 John 4)

7. Walking is an analogy for spirituality

- a) Walk not after the flesh. (Romans 8:4)
- b) Walking in Love. (Ephesians 5:2)
- c) Walking in newness of Life. (Romans 6:4)
- d) Walking worthy of our vocation. (Ephesians 4:1)
- e) Walking worthy of the Lord. (Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12)
- f) Walking honestly as in the day. (Romans 13:13)
- g) Walking in good works. (Ephesians 2:10)
- h) Walking in light. (Ephesians 5:8, 1 John 1:7)
- i) Walking in Christ Jesus. (Colossians 2:6)
- j) Walking circumspectly. (Ephesians 5:15,16)

k) Walking as ye ought. (1 Thessalonians 4:1)

WORLDLINESS

1. Worldliness means to follow the beliefs and philosophy of man rather than that of God
2. Worldliness is the opposite to godliness; it is thinking/doing in opposition to God's revealed word. Titus 2:11-14.
3. All people are faced with the constant choice of following God's way or the world's. Romans 5:12, 3:19, 1 Corinthians 1:21, Ephesians 2:12, James 1:27, 2 Peter 1:4, 2:20.
4. Satan is the "prince of this world", and has power to deceive those who are negative to God's plans. John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, 1 Corinthians 4:4, 1 Peter 5:8,9.
5. We must not love the world, 1 John 2:15-17.
6. We must hate all the world stands for, in thought and in deed. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, 11:30-32, Galatians 6:14, James 1:27, James 4:4, 2 Peter 1:3,4, 1 Corinthians 3:18, 19.
7. We must not return to our old behaviour patterns, Ephesians 2:1-7.
8. This evil world system and the prince of this world will be condemned. Matthew 18:7, John 12:31, 16:11, 1 Corinthians 6:2, 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 2:1ff.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY ACCORDING TO ST PAUL

1. ROMANS 7:14-25 THE "WRETCHED MAN" – FACING OUR SINFUL REALITY

Unless we face the facts about our need of a Saviour and our daily need to deal with our sins (1 John 1:9) we live a lie and are open to deception from all sources; human and angelic.

2. ROMANS 8:1-18 THE GLORY OF KNOWING THE POWER OF THE INDWELLING CHRIST.

There is hope for all who face the facts of their Old Sin Nature and the greater power of the indwelling Lord and Holy Spirit, 1 John 4:4-6, for then we are "plugged into" the power for spiritual victory)

3. EPHESIANS 4:20-32 PUTTING OFF THE OLD AND PUTTING ON THE NEW

4. COLOSSIANS 3:8-16 PUTTING OFF AND PUTTING ON

Our old behaviour patterns are the result of our early childhood and adolescent "programming" and the choices we have made later. All of this has been laid over our genetic strengths and weaknesses (our Old Sin Nature), but in Christ, and through the Holy Spirit's power we can re-program our inner computer and think as the Lord intends. God's challenge is to replace our old patterns of thinking with his way of thinking.

5. EPHESIANS 5:17-29 THE RELATIONSHIP OVERFLOW OF THIS CBT TOOL

6. COLOSSIANS 3:17—19 RELATIONSHIP OVERFLOW OF CBT

If the Holy Spirit is active in our life there will be evidence of it in our daily walk through life, and especially in our relationships with loved ones and others we meet. No change = no Spirit! Love will be the overflow of the Holy Spirit's presence, and we build up the power of love in our life, as we have seen in 1 John 4, by praise and prayer to the Lord reflecting on his love for us.

7. PHILIPPIANS 3:10-17 - FORGETTING THE PAST AND FOCUSING FORWARD

It is not a "one shot decision" to make changes in our life patterns, for the old patterns are tenacious. They must be identified, understood, targeted and replaced. Then we must rebuild new patterns through the Holy Spirit's work upon the Word of God applied into our life, to firmly establish and live and celebrate daily in the new life we now have.

8. PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9 FILLING THE MIND WITH POSITIVE THOUGHT PROCESSES SQUEEZING OUT THE NEGATIVES FROM LIFE

The mind acts like a vacuum; it will suck in all evil around if there is not positive pressure from good working out from the centre of our being. We squeeze evil out by leaving no room within for it to grow. As we fill our waking moments in praise of God's goodness we squeeze evil thoughts out.

9. COLOSSIANS 2:20-22 - SAYING NO TO THE "EASY FIX" OF LEGALISM

The great "cons" of Satan are initially focused on down playing sin and evil so that believers are neutralized by them uncontrolled within their lives, but if that fails he has an even better plan to neutralize the grace of God within us. This plan is the "super-spiritual" plan of legalism, whereby foolish men get to feel really superior because their sins are more refined than their neighbours! Legalism is false spirituality that feeds of the great sin of pride and arrogance, the very opposite of God's grace and mercy, and the complete opposite of the servant heart of the Lord Jesus. Matthew 7:15-20. God's grace, mercy and love are the antidote to all of Satan's lies. Reflect upon them and praise Him.

DEPRESSION – PRINCIPLES FOR DEALING WITH IT

Proven Biblical techniques which you can use to successfully deal with depression in your life, REGARDLESS OF THE CAUSE:

1. CONFESSION OF PERSONAL SIN

Make it a spiritual habit to confess sins the moment that you become aware of them. This step toward recovery from depression is absolutely critical!! 1 John 1:9

2. THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit fills you and controls your life when you have no unconfessed sin in your life. You can trust the Holy Spirit to reveal sin to you when you commit it, or even before. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is given in Galatians 5:22-23 it is: Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control. These 9 virtues replace depression

3. LIVING IN THE WORD OF GOD:

Make it a daily practice to read and study the Bible each and every day. By living in the Word of God you are constantly reminded of GOD'S viewpoint, of His Plan, of His provision, of His awareness of our spirit of heaviness; and we are reminded of what He wants to accomplish in us with the tests or trials that we are going through.

A Christian's response to the Word of God should be:

- [a] READ IT - Deuteronomy. 31:11; Isaiah. 34:16; Luke. 4:16; Ephesians. 3:4; Colossians. 3:16; 4:1; 1 Thessalonians. 5:27; 2 Timothy . 4:13; Revelation 1:3.
- [b] HEED IT - Psalm 119:9; 1 Timothy. 4:16.
- [c] SEED IT - Matthew. 28:19, 20.
- [d] DESIRE IT - 1 Peter. 2:2.
- [e] PREACH IT - 2 Timothy 4:2
- [f] RIGHTLY DIVIDE IT - 2 Timothy. 2:15.
- [g] LIVE BY IT - Matthew. 4:4
- [h] USE IT - Ephesians. 6:17.
- [i] SUFFER FOR IT, AND IF NEED BE, DIE FOR IT - Revelation 1:9; 6:9; 20:4.

THE CHILD OF GOD IS TO:-

KNOW IT in his HEAD

STOW IT in his HEART

SHOW IT in his LIFE

SOW IT in the WORLD:

Deuteronomy 4:1-10; 12:32; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 33:6; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Mark 4:24; Luke 8:12; John 12:48-50; Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:1-4; Revelation 1:1-3; 20:12; 22:18; 19.

4. APPLY THE PRINCIPLES OF GRACE:

Depression is often caused by PEOPLE, and most of the time by people we cannot escape, or people we love, or people we cannot confront, or people we trust.

By applying the principles of grace we will develop the ability to look at people and see them as GOD sees them.

This includes the ability to let them live their lives as unto the Lord, and trusting God to make His way clear to them. This technique lets people make mistakes without your judging them. Matthew 7:1-5

5. FOCUS ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:

When we focus on Jesus Christ it helps to cure depression because it gets our eyes off our spouse, our children, our neighbours, our friends, ourselves and our problems. Hebrews 12:2

Instead, as we move through the day, we are thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ, His plan for our life, the Father's provision for each incident in our life, and His provision of wisdom for each decision we must make.

6. TRUSTING AND APPLYING THE PROMISES OF GOD

When we trust and use the promises of God we then enter into the "REST" phase of Christian living.

We need to have a good grasp of just who God is so that we will not hesitate to believe that He can do what He has promised to do. Hebrews 4:1-11 [see topic PROMISES]

We need to know Him as He reveals Himself in the Bible. We need to believe Him when He tells us what He will do for us. Cast your burden on the Lord because He really does care for you!! 1 Peter 5:7

7. RELAX – TAKE IT EASY – BACK OFF AND LET GOD DO HIS WORK.

A relaxed attitude is based on knowing God personally and intimately as His special child that you are. A relaxed attitude is one of the results of living in the Word of God, walking in fellowship with Him, trusting in and using His promises to you, and being focused on Jesus Christ.

If you are a Christian, YOU are His personal gift to His Son, who categorically stated that no one can ever snatch you out of His Father's hand, nor out of His John 10:27-29

You are personally being trained and groomed by God Himself to rule this entire universe with Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. God already sees you seated in heavenly places perfectly sanctified and glorified. See topic on ROYAL FAMILY OF GOD

To have the glory, you must also have some suffering for a little while on this earth. This is part of your training. See topic on CHRISTIAN LIFE - SUFFERING

8. STRIVE FOR INNER HAPPINESS IN YOUR LIFE:

Inner happiness is not possible for the Christian who is occupied solely with himself and his own needs. It is also not possible for the person who occupies himself solely with his own problems, his own circumstances and his own efforts.

Inner happiness is a state of happiness and joy based on knowing that God is everything He claims to be and that He can do ALL that He has promised. See topic on BEATITUDES

Inner happiness is the joy of living where every provision for physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being is being made by God in the life of a Christian who is walking in daily fellowship with Him.

Notes

CHAPTER 3**INTRODUCTION**

In the midst of the deepest darkness the light of God shines. Things could not have gotten much worse than they had under the carelessness of Eli and the sexually depraved paganism of his sons. The very Tabernacle of the Lord was defiled by the twin evils of Eli's neglect of his duty to deal with his sons, and the overt operation of paganism by his sons. The Lord had dealt with the two sons of Aaron when they sinned, but He has left the High Priest here to correct his own sons, and so restore hope in Israel, but he has failed to act over many years. Leviticus 10:1-7.

The Lord's way is the way of grace, and severe judgment is God's strange work, but it will come if grace is rejected. Isaiah 28:21. The Lord moved slowly against Eli and his sons, giving them all maximum time to repent and change. 2 Peter 3:9. The day came however when the men who were called to serve God had received enough grace, and had failed to utilize it and change their wicked ways, and their replacement was called to stand in their place. The three disobedient men will be replaced by one child. If we do not serve as we ought to serve, the Lord always has our replacement in the wings. There is no room for arrogance in the Lord's service, only obedience.

1 SAMUEL 3:1-21

3:1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision. **2** And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; **3** And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; **4** That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. **5** And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. **6** And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. **7** Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. **8** And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. **9** Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. **10** And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. **11** And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. **12** In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. **13** For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. **14** And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. **15** And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision. **16** Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I. **17** And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee. **18** And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good. **19** And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. **20** And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD. **21** And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. Young Samuel is still below the age when a priest was called to start their training at 25 years of age. The standard priest served service at 30 years of age and served until 50, but Samuel will be called possibly around age fourteen and will serve until he is in his seventies as a priest and prophet. He will stand almost alone in his generation as the servant of the Lord who hears the truth from God and speaks it plainly and powerfully to the people. He learns to be faithful in his service by being faithful daily in his service to the elderly and overweight Eli. He learns by service, just as Joshua did many centuries before. Exodus 24:13, Joshua 1:1. He serves Eli through possibly as many as ten years before the event described here occurs.

The ministry of the prophets was rare in these days. We have seen a couple of unnamed prophets, but their ministry was restricted and the word of the Lord through them was "precious"; it was very rare. There were no open visions being seen by men of God, for there were none whose lives were obedient for the Lord to use at this point of Israel's history. Deuteronomy 18:15ff, Matthew 7:15-23.

The biblical certainty is that if a person is disobedient to the Lord's words then they cannot be a prophet of the Lord, for the Lord only uses clean vessels. The first and most significant test for the truth of a prophet's call is the holiness of their life. If a person claims to be a prophet and their life is filled with sin and evil, then that person is not a prophet of the living God. Absence of the "Fruits of the Holy Spirit" means absence of the Holy Spirit, for wherever the Spirit of God is, then there is fruit of His holy presence.

The time is unclear, but Samuel is a young person, and is sleeping in a separate chamber to Eli or the women who had previously cared for him. Old Eli is now of an age where his eye sight is failing. The scene is set for this night when God speaks. The lamps that burn through the night in the tabernacle are nearly all out and the two are both asleep. This is taken by some commentators to mean that the two men sleep in the tabernacle but that is not necessarily the writer's intention.

The writer is making the point that it is early in the morning, not yet dawn, and each is in a deep sleep, and the lamps are low, just a few hours before their morning refill of oil, which the two men will do. They are both likely asleep in an associated building close by the tabernacle. The clear voice of the Lord comes to Samuel, and calls his name in exactly the same way Eli has done many times before. This young man is used to being called in the depths of the night to help Eli get up or bring something to him that he needs.

This sort of thing is very irritating if you are deep in sleep, or even half asleep, but Samuel is not irritated by or in his service. He is ready to serve and when he hears the voice in his mind he thinks it is old Eli, gets out of bed and responds aloud with the cry, "here I am". Genesis 22:1ff, Exodus 3:1ff, Psalms 99:6-9, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. He is ready to be used, and the Lord calls such to His further service. Amos 7:12-16. Are we always ready to answer the call of the Lord?

Verses 5 – 9. It is very early in the morning, possibly around 3-4 am and Samuel rushes in to Eli's room and wakes him up with his loud call of, "here I am". Eli awakens out of deep sleep and tells him that he didn't call, and for Samuel to go back to sleep as he is not required. The call comes to Samuel three times and the two men are still half asleep, and it is only the third time that Eli realises that the voice Samuel hears is probably that of the Lord and gives Samuel the correct instructions to hear God's voice.

His instruction to say, "Speak Lord, for your servant hears", is a poignant one. It tells us that once this old man had truly heard the words of God himself, and it tells us that he recognises that Samuel is the true servant of the Lord now. Eli is now partially blind physically but he is seeing the spiritual truth that he is about to be replaced by one who is worthy of the Lord. He quietly glories in the Lord here, for he sees that the Lord's words are being heard in Israel again. After years of disobedience and despair this old man can quietly thank God that there is light to come, even though sadly it will be at the cost of his own house. Psalms 85:8-13, Isaiah 6:8-13, Jeremiah 9:23-24.

Verses 10 – 13. Samuel is now briefed and lies down and waits expectantly, and the Lord speaks again. This time Samuel quietly repeats the words that he has been told, that he truly understands after years of service to Eli, and truly means with all his being. He seeks the Lord's will alone for his life. God tells Samuel that he is about to start a work in Israel that will make the ears of all men to tingle/ring aloud. The Lord tells Samuel that the judgment that the unnamed prophet spoke over the house of Eli is nearly about to unfold. All the disasters that Israel has worked for through their paganism and compromises will fall about their heads.

This disobedient nation has worked hard to produce judgment upon their heads and they will receive it all beginning with their leadership! Their seed sown in disobedience will now produce a crop of disaster. The reasons for the judgment are spelt out to young Samuel, so that he also might hear the truth and learn from it. Sadly even his own sons will later be evil themselves and take bribes rather than judge correctly. 1 Samuel 8:1-3.

Eli's sons will die and Eli's house will disappear because he failed to correct his sons and turn them away from their evil. Note - SIN AND EVIL MAKES A PERSON "VILE" BEFORE THE LORD. The Lord's holy hatred of sin needs to be grasped strongly by the believer, and we are to daily "flee from iniquity" in all its forms. 1 Corinthians 6:18, 10:14, 1 Timothy 6:9-11, 2 Timothy 2:22, James 4:7. He had the responsibility to correct and restrain his sons from evil, for they were under his authority as priests. Eli's failure will bring lasting, indeed eternal judgement upon his sons.

Eli had thought he was being gracious and lenient, and giving time for his sons to be reasonable but he has simply made the final judgment more thorough and lasting. Sin and evil is not a matter of "reasonableness", it is a matter of a volition that is going against God. Genesis 19:4-11, Judges 19:22-28. Evil and sin-filled men know nothing of "reason", for they have chosen to live by lust, not by thought of consequences. There is a time for grace and forgiveness, and there is a time for action in judgment. Time frames must be set for those who are being warned of coming judgment and Eli delayed too long. Forgiveness and even full restoration is possible with repentance, but the day comes when such things are not possible because the evil men have gone too far down the path of Satan.

These sons of Eli have gone too far and the Lord pronounces their doom. It is too late now for them to even ask for forgiveness, for their actions have gone too far. They could still have been forgiven, for all can be until their moment of death, but their deaths are now certain. They have committed the "Sin Unto Death". We see this principle in the thief on the cross beside the Lord. He could be forgiven and enter heaven that day, but he could not be restored to a new lease of life upon the earth. Matthew 27:38-44, Luke 23:39-43.

Verses 14 – 17. The message is one of total judgment upon the house of Eli. His family is to be all but obliterated from the earth. Samuel realises the terrible nature of the judgment that is coming and he lies still upon his bed the rest of the night wide awake as he reflects upon these things and the sad duty he has to tell Eli of this. No manner of sacrifices will suffice to wipe away the sins of the sons of Eli for they have gone too far for too long.

This is very hard news, even though the prophet of God has said this very thing many years before. The prophet of the Lord does not normally have good news to tell, for that is in the scriptures. The prophets of the Lord come to give

warning and bring messages of judgements. Samuel must begin his prophetic ministry as all prophets do, with a serious message of judgment upon the man who has been a father to him through these years. He must show his love to Eli by telling him the hard truth and reinforcing the message of the unnamed prophet from the years before. 1 Samuel 2:27ff, John 8:32-46, Galatians 4:16, Ephesians 4:15.

Samuel's first job in the morning was to open the doors of the tabernacle and he does this, but is fearful to tell Eli what he has seen. As a side reference here, the mention of "doors" of the tabernacle tells us that it has been modified down the centuries since Moses day, as then it had only tent coverings and curtains. Exodus 36-39.

Eli knows this boy, and even though his eyes are dim he can tell that Samuel is grieved and concerned. He quietly and lovingly asks him what the trouble is. He is very serious in his quiet inquiry for he knows that the matter which God has clearly revealed will have relevance to his house, for the previous prophet has set that stage well and truly. Eli fears the worst and needs to know that the time has come so that he can do what must be done to keep Samuel safe in the calamity that is to unfold.

When the Philistines come to kill the people of Shiloh Samuel will not be there, and this is Eli's part to play in the drama that is about to unfold. He cannot save his own sons, but he is to act decisively to save this young man for his future service. He warns Samuel that if he fails to pass the message on, then what is prophesied to happen to Eli will happen to Samuel. Jeremiah 7:12-15, 26:6-9, 41:5, Ezekiel 3:16-27.

Eli hears the hard words and he accepts them as the words and work of God, and that the Lord has the right to do all these things because of his and his son's disobedience. He prays the prayer, "Thy will be done". He is ready to accept whatever the Lord does, but when it occurs he will still die of the shock of it all, for he does not think just how bad the fall of the nation will be as a result of his sins. This man will however be in heaven to greet us, and he will put Samuel's survival ahead of his evil sons.

Verses 19 – 21. After this final warning to Eli things settle back into their normal routine and the quietness masks the deep evils that are still working in the nation and which will bring it to the crisis point. The Lord had warned the people through Moses that the consequences for disobedient were dependable and catastrophic, and Eli has been hoping all would be well, but the Word of God said differently! Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27:9 – 30:20.

We must be careful of this very same thing. God does not "wink" at sin, nor ignore its seriousness in the lives of believers. If we fail to deal with our sins, then we must accept the judgment that is the natural consequence of our disobedience. The Lord was with Samuel through all this time and he grew in strength and power in his walk with God. Eli is doing something right through this time, for he knows that Samuel is the one to save the people after he is gone.

No words of Samuels would ever "fall to the ground" and be wasted; everything he said was with purpose and every prophetic word was fulfilled. Samuel did not waste his words, but ensured that everything he said was to bring glory to the Lord and safety to his people.

The writer uses these last verses of this chapter to present a summary of Samuel's life before the actual story is told. He is the last judge and he will be the most widely respected and followed. His circuit of towns he visited regularly will be limited but his fame will be from one end of the nation to the other.

The Lord appeared again to Samuel through his years in Shiloh through the study of the Word of God; the Law of Moses. God speaks through His Word, and our job, like Samuel's here, is to open the Word of God and hear the will of the Lord for our lives.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The Lord's will alone matters in this brief life. Samuel was ready to serve and sought the Lord's will alone for his life and his nation's destiny. This is the model for us all. Only the Lord's instructions are to be heard and his will followed. Nothing else matters upon this earth. All the praises of men evaporate with the illnesses we suffer and the deaths we will inevitably die. Only the Lord's verdict over our life matters.
2. Sin is hated by God, and all who name the Lord's name as their own need to share this holy hatred of everything that separates us from the power of God operating in our life. Let us teach biblically about the reality of sin and its consequences.
3. Samuel grows in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord God. 2 Peter 3:18. Let us ensure we open the Word of God often and allow the Holy Spirit free reign in our soul. We need the washing of the water of the Word over and through us daily, and we need to take the Word and apply it into the fabric of our lives. Ephesians 5:26.

NOTES

CHAPTER 4**INTRODUCTION**

As you read this chapter reflect on the question I raised in the last one; where is Samuel? In verse one we are told that the word of the Lord came through Samuel to all Israel and then we hear nothing at all about Samuel until chapter seven, verse three, when the same basic point is made. It is as if the writer begins the story of the loss of the ark and it's withdrawal from religious life for over twenty years by reminding us that Samuel is the hope of Israel and he will be the spokesman of God, and then he takes the story back up again in chapter seven.

What occurs in these next chapters occurs without Samuel being a main player. When he begins to be the active judge in Israel he bases himself in the three last great camp sites of Israel under Joshua; at Mizpeh, Gilgal, and Beth-El. Joshua 7:5, 15-17, Judges 20:1ff. He also based himself from his own home town and it may be that this is the clue as to where he was when the Philistine attack came that led to the loss of the ark. It may be his parents were ill or other family business had called him home, or even that Eli sent him there, but the writer draws a veil over his words and actions during the Philistine attack.

Some speculate that maybe he gave the advice to take the ark, but I cannot even entertain such a foolish notion, for he had heard the doom pronounced upon Eli's sons. Samuel above all others knew that only death awaited the sons of Eli in this battle, and judgment and defeat awaited the Israelites because of their paganism. He was still a young man and may have stated these things, but he was over ruled by the older men and they head off anyway, and Eli gets him out of the way before the terrible events described below unfold.

1 SAMUEL 4:1-22

4:1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. **2** And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. **3** And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. **4** So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. **5** And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. **6** And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp. **7** And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. **8** Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. **9** Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight. **10** And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. **11** And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain. **12** And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head. **13** And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out. **14** And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli. **15** Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see. **16** And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son? **17** And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken. **18** And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years. **19** And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her. **20** And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it. **21** And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. **22** And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. The enemy of the Israelites from 1200 BC through until David's total vanquishing of them around 1040 BC were the Philistines. They were a robust war worshipping culture who invaded this area around the year 1200 BC and had settled the coastal plain from Gaza northwards with Egyptian permission, or possibly even encouragement. They were brutal and fierce and took few prisoners except those they wanted as slaves. They controlled

the Shephelah area and exacted tribute from the Israelite tribes and forced them to utilise their iron smiths for the upkeep of their farm implements, leaving the Israelites without significant iron weapons.

The army of Israel at this time had very poor equipment and they are up against seriously well equipped professional warriors with iron weapons to their bronze farm implements. The only way Israel can win is to depend upon the Lord their God, and they have forsaken him in their compromise worship of the pagan gods. 1 Samuel 7:3ff.

The Philistines pitch their challenge camp at Aphek within the borders of Ephraim. They are challenging the Israelites of Dan, Ephraim, Benjamin and Judah to battle by doing this, as they are poised there to march north east to Shechem, then head straight down the hill crests to attack Shiloh and the cities of Benjamin and Judah. The tribal armies gather to resist them and the two camps sit opposite each other. The Philistines move out in battle array first and entice the Israelites into a pitched battle which they have the better of on the first day. It is a fairly evenly matched affair and will go into the next days.

Ancient armies could camp opposite each other and posture like this for a number of days, with minor or major sorties from their strong point on their respective hill tops and then back again. It was a game of chess where the first army to panic lost everything. The Israelites lose four "elephs" that first day. Remember from our study of Exodus through Judges that this term in this time period may mean a group of men of anything from over one hundred to under one thousand. The losses are significant, but not catastrophic and the two armed camps are still sitting opposite each other.

Verses 3 – 4. It is at that point that someone in the camp of Israel has the great idea of bringing the ark into the camp to lead them into the battle as with Joshua of old. This is what I refer to as "lucky rabbit's foot religion". People in past days had the foot of a rabbit cut off and made it their "good luck" charm. I have always been sarcastic over such things, noting that if it didn't help the rabbit, how can it help you? To use the ark like a good luck charm was to be confused about the significance of the ark.

These people are saying in effect, if we have a "magic box of power" with us, then God will protect and support us. They have forgotten that it was not the presence of the ark, but the holiness of those who carried it and the spiritual power of those who led the people that brought victory to Israel. It was spiritual life in the heart, not what they carried on their shoulders that gave them certainty in their walk through life. John 4:23-24, Romans 8:1-16, Galatians 5:5-25.

The two sons of Eli accompany the ark. They were sons of Belial, yet they, like many pagans today, want to carry Christian symbols with them on travels, even wearing crosses, while rejecting the one who suffered there for them. It is not what is on our chest, but what is in our heart that delivers us!

A veil of silence is drawn here over the permission being given by Eli for this to occur, and it may even be that he encouraged this foolishness, feeling that the national need may have been met by focusing people on what the ark meant, but of course they only saw it as a magic box! Eli's later shock at the loss of the ark tells me he knew what was happening, supported it, and hoped it would bring the people back to God. He did not think that the Lord would let the ark be captured and all the people be slaughtered. He was not thinking spiritually, but as a confused old man who was now totally out of touch with spiritual reality.

Verses 5 – 8. The correct response to their defeat ought to have been prayer and repentance before the Lord and for them to seek from the Lord, through the High Priest, what they might do to turn things around. An example of this is to be found in Judges 20:18-28. The lessons learned in the battles against Benjamin were not understood by this generation, and they have failed to follow the correct procedure, and Eli has not corrected them.

When the ark arrives in the camp initially it looks to all observers that the Israelites have made the right decision, as their morale lifts and the Philistines get worried. These pagans are just recent arrivals from the north, but they have heard the stories of three hundred years before of the wonders achieved by the God of Israel, and they think (as pagans do) that it is by means of the ark that the miracles occurred.

Pagans are always seeking a physical "thing" that explains the reasons why certain spiritual phenomena occur. The reasons are related to the spiritual status and positioning of the people, not any "tricks" or techniques, but pagans don't see that. God says, "Be holy!" Ephesians 1:4, 5:27. Those who do not obey this command can expect nothing but judgment from the holy God.

1 Peter 1:12-16. *"12. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

13. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16. Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

The Philistines are great soldiers and quickly their leaders gather them together and give them the military briefing to "harden up", face forward, and be ready to test the Israelites again in battle, and beat them in the name of their own

gods. They correctly see that the contest is between the gods of their people and the God of Israel, but they do not understand that the God of Israel will not support his now pagan people, even though they are carrying His ark!

The Philistines think that the ark is the visible presence of the God of Israel, but they do not understand that the God of Israel will not support His people when they are living in disobedience. The Philistines and the Israelites will learn new theological truths over the next seven months.

Verses 9 – 11. The message is quickly given by the seasoned warriors of Philistia to their more superstitious fellows and the panic that is spreading is stopped. The enemy forces commit themselves to a titanic battle of the gods for the next day. They spiritually ready themselves for death or glory, but the Israelites, trusting in the ark's presence amongst them, do not purify their hearts before their God and so the ark will mean nothing to them.

The Philistines are committed and ready to die for their gods. As the great Chinese general Sun Tzu advised around 250BC, never back your enemy into a corner, for he may just come out really fighting for his life and beat you! That is exactly what the Philistines do; they really fight for their lives, and the relaxed and over confident Israelites get thoroughly beaten and killed in large numbers. The survivors flee and the men carrying the ark are all killed and the ark falls into the enemy's hands.

The writer especially notes that the two sons of Eli are killed holding onto the visible sign of the salvation of Israel, and yet unsaved. They die the "sin unto death", like Judas, so close to salvation and yet by their own choices, so far away. Psalms 78:57-64, Matthew 27:3-10. We can be close to the truth and yet far from it in our hearts, and still 100% lost.

Verses 12 – 18. The results of the battle and its aftermath were far more catastrophic than the writer records here, but the psalmist takes the story up and records the death of the priests and their wives and children in Psalm 78. The first death in Shiloh is old Eli, but sadly he won't be the last. Old Eli is devastated, doubly so, because of the death of his sons, and the loss of the ark. He has been the custodian of the ark and the keeper of the tabernacle for over forty years and he has ended his life failing to keep the ark safe, and the people from the destruction Moses foretold if they disobeyed. Deuteronomy 28:25-26. Eli dies of the shock he has received. At age ninety eight we cannot blame his obesity for his death, but it is a sad reminder that this man valued food ahead of obedience to the Lord.

Defeat was a sure sign that the Lord was not with them and that they needed repentance. It was too late for the dead men on the battlefield, but not for those who survived, and they would be corrected by Samuel. The end of life for Eli will be the beginning of independent life and ministry for Samuel. It is not noted by the writer but as I have speculated above, Eli has ensured that Samuel escapes the assault on Shiloh, and the carnage there, and he re-gathers Israel at Mizpeh within a short time of the Philistine assault.

Verses 19 – 22. In the settlement of Shiloh Phinehas' wife is closer to going into labour as the terrible news is received. She hears of the death of her husband, her father-in-law and the loss of the ark (the centre of their world at Shiloh) and she enters labour in a depressed state and dies giving birth to a son. She is in such a low state by the time the baby is born she does not even hear the news that it is a boy with any joy, and she calls the little boy "Ichabod" (no glory).

Notice that her death cry is a parallel statement to that of the pagan Philistines. They thought that the arrival of the ark was the arrival of the God of Israel, and her feeling is that the ark and God have departed from Israel. All that has departed is the box made by man to be the blood sprinkled meeting place between God and man, but God is not finished with Israel because of their disobedience, and the Lord is only just starting to deal with the Philistines.

They leave the battlefield in triumph carrying the ark as their booty, but they will soon discover that their celebration is premature. The Israelites will also discover that their mourning is only for a season; as repentance by the people will open the door to greater victory than they have ever had before. Both groups will discover that it is their spiritual position in relation to the one true God that separates them from blessing or judgment.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. There are no "good luck charms" in this created universe; there is only the presence of the living God with us to keep us safe. Only a spiritual walk with God along the exact path He has for us will keep us safe and secure. God's path through this life alone is the safe path.
2. Be sure your persistent sins will find you out! The sons of Eli are mature men in their fifties at least and they have felt that they have got away with their compromise religion, but they have not. Their day of judgment comes and they die under God's judgment. At any point repentance could have opened the door to forgiveness, but they failed to act, so God did act. Isaiah 28:20.
3. Genuine spirituality is what the Lord demands of His servants, not any fake religious compromises. The Lord wants us to walk before Him in holiness and serve Him with focused Holy Spirit controlled energy. Any thing else does not prepare us for disaster or challenge. Let us walk before the Lord in obedience.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

Pagans of yesterday and today think in a set satanic way when it comes to spiritual things. They do not think in terms of spirituality-carnality, but in terms of magic and ritual. They believe that the genuine believer in the one true God is like them, focused on rituals, and comfortable with hypocrisy. Satanic religion makes few deep demands on man, and once the followers have done some basic rituals daily, they are encouraged to relax and feel "saved". They therefore believe that the worship of the true God centres in the rituals they see believers doing, not in the heart attitude of the people.

The Philistines make this error and believe they have literally "captured" the true God of Israel. Their gods are tied into their own statues and so they believe that the true God is tied into the ark. They discover that the God of Israel is significantly more powerful than their demons. God is not to be treated as if He has any limitations to His power, and He is not to be compared to any of the pagan gods, for they are all inferior demons and will all be judged by Him.

There are none like the Lord God who made the heavens and the earth. Exodus 8:10, 9:14, 15:11, 20:4, Psalms 2:1-5, 86:8-10, 89:5-14, Isaiah 40:18-31, Jeremiah 10:6-16, Micah 7:18-20. Read each of these passages and draw comfort from the truth here, and praise His holy name. Paganism is for losers; for the demons will all join their leader Satan in the Lake of Fire, Revelation 20, and while his people may win temporary victories in time, their rejoicing is for a season only.

Israel had been told that their God was a "mighty" God. Moses had used this word again and again in Deuteronomy to describe the power of God, but the people had failed to hear his words of warning regarding the Lord's demand for holiness on the part of His people. Deuteronomy 4:34-37, 5:15, 6:21, 7:8-23, 9:26-29, 10:17, 11:2.

The Israelites erred in their behaviour, and in their understanding of the holy character of God. They thought that God's mighty power was always available to them irrespective of their spiritual state. Israel needed to repent, and they will repent as they hear and believe the young prophet Samuel, and then they will experience the mighty deliverance of the Lord again. The Philistines will however realise that the Lord is a mighty God well before the Israelites repent!

1 SAMUEL 5:1-12

5:1 The Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod. **2** When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. **3** And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again. **4** And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him. **5** Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day. **6** But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof. **7** And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god. **8** They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither. **9** And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts. **10** Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people. **11** So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. **12** And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. The Philistines have gained victory by their courage and tough professional military training, and the main spoil of victory is the ark, but they also capture all the gold of the tabernacle as well when they sack Shiloh. They then march back to their capital at Ashdod and set the ark down as an offering before the statue of their god Dagon in his temple there. The writer records that they capture the ark on the battlefield close to the place where later Samuel will set up the great stone and call the place Ebenezer (the stone of help – or the rock of salvation). There is one rock of salvation alone! The place of defeat and disaster where the sons of Eli died will become the place where they later celebrate victory. Isaiah 2:10-22, Romans 8:28.

The Ark will not be intact at this point. When people captured solid gold objects they were nearly always broken up and smelted down. The top of the Ark is solid gold and would be smelted quickly I believe, as a sign of their total defeat of the God of Israel. Their later gift of gold would approximate in value and weight to the top of the Ark (refer below for this discussion). Their defiling of the Israelite cultic object and celebration of victory is premature. The first day the men arise after placing the ark before the statue of their god they enter their temple to give thanks again for their great victory and

their god has fallen to the earth in front of the ark. They quickly re-erect their statue and place it upright again. The second day they wake to find not only has the statue of the god fallen, but the head and the upturned hands have been snapped off, and the trunk of the statue is broken, with only the base left intact.

Initially the entire statue toppled, and they could blame an earth-quake that they didn't feel as the reason, but this second day their "god" is judged totally and only the one true God could do this. They see the facts immediately. Their god is judged by the God of Israel and they get the ark out of there quickly and close that temple for good. That "god" will not be worshiped again by these people for it failed the test and was defeated by the Israelites God. They will get another "god" to be their object of worship and fool themselves that it will have the power to stand against the God of Israel.

Verses 5 – 7. The snapping of their god into pieces is only the start of the troubles for the people of Ashdod. They abandon their temple, and probably build a new one, with a new "god", but they soon realise that the God of Israel is not finished with them. The people develop "emerods". This is an old term for massive haemorrhoids in the anal area of all the people. They were people who practised homosexuality and heterosexual anal intercourse as part of the religion of Dagon, and so this was a direct moral judgment on them, and they see this clearly.

They call a crisis meeting of the local elders, and later of all the lords of the Philistines; the council of elders of the five cities of their alliance. The men of Ashdod reject their claim to primacy and the holding of the ark of Israel; they want rid of it. It was their arrogance in being the "leading city" with the most powerful temple of their gods that led them to claim the ark as their booty. Now they set all such boasting aside.

Verses 8 – 9. Pagans are slow learners of spiritual things, for they are blind to spiritual realities. Isaiah 6:9-10, Matthew 15:14, Ephesians 2:1-8, 4:18, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 1 John 2:9-11. These people feel that it may simply be that the god of Ashdod is not powerful enough to deal with the God of Israel and so they seek one of the other temples and gods as possibly powerful enough to deal with the ark. They are seeing the one true God in terms of their limited gods. The lords of the Philistines believe that if they just send the ark around the cities they will discover which of their gods is superior to the God of Israel. They are of course correct, but they will discover that all their gods are inferior to the God of Israel.

All the men of each city they take the ark then get the haemorrhoids, and they start to form on their penises as well as their anus areas now. This plague is seen by them as a judgment, but they keep moving the ark, hoping they can find one of their gods who is superior to the Lord. They are desperate to hold their paganism, and do not think about accepting the God of Israel at this point, as many will from their area in the days of David. Some from this area will be saved in later years, but not at this point. This judgment is the start of evangelistic opportunity amongst these people, but it will be a later generation who is ready to forsake their gods as useless and worship the one true God.

Verses 10 – 12. The people of Ekron are the next victims of their own arrogance, but very quickly they cry out for mercy. They even accuse their fellow Philistines of trying to murder them all by using the ark. This tells us that the serious nature of the plague upon them is a little more than a few haemorrhoids; many die of the judgment the Lord brings upon them. As they hold onto the ark the judgment of God gets worse and worse by the day. The term "deadly destruction" is a direct reference to great suffering and disasters that befall these pagan peoples.

They are smart enough not to try to destroy the ark, and all recognise that this item must be sent back to where they took it from. They cannot take it back to Shiloh because they have destroyed it and killed all the priests they could find there. They know there is no way they can return the ark themselves and so they call a conference and ask direction from their own "wise men and women".

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Pagans are blinded by Satan to the realities of spiritual life, but even they may be "softened up" by judgment. It is often seen that a divine judgment opens the door to later evangelism as the people need first to recognise the powerlessness of their gods before they are open to accepting the truth. When facing blinded people, pray for the Lord's conviction and judgment upon them, for the Lord alone, through the Holy Spirit, is able to break down the walls of the enemy.

2. God is not to be put into any box. God is superior to all the demons of paganism. God is Lord of all, and we need to get a glimpse of the mighty power and majesty of the Lord God over the heavens and the earth to balance out any worries or doubts we may have about the Lord's ability to save and deliver.

CHAPTER 6**INTRODUCTION**

The loot that the Philistines seized in the attack upon Shiloh and the destruction of the tabernacle is now going to be used to make votive offerings to the God of Israel. There is no lasting victory for those who fight God. They may rejoice for a moment, but their regrets last a life time and eternity itself if they persist in their evil ways. These pagan people take seven months to repent of their evils regarding the ark and the tabernacle, but they thoroughly repent. They are an example to believers, for they determine to get things right in the return of the ark so that the judgment of God upon them ends. They show a care and concern for details that the Lord demands of us all.

1 SAMUEL 6:1-21

6:1 And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. **2** And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place. **3** And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you. **4** Then said they, What shall be the trespass offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords.

5 Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land. **6** Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? **7** Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them: **8** And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go. **9** And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us: it was a chance that happened to us. **10** And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: **11** And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods. **12** And the kine took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Bethshemesh. **13** And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it. **14** And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD. **15** And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD. **16** And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day. **17** And these are the golden emerods which the Philistines returned for a trespass offering unto the LORD; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one; **18** And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: which stone remaineth unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Bethshemite. **19** And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter. **20** And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us? **21** And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 - 2. The Philistines now know they are facing a supernatural threat to their very existence as a people. They won the battle over Israel, but they have learned that the God of Israel is truly and finally superior to all their gods. They know they need to pay their respects to the God of Israel or they will all die. They will not bow their knees to God, but seek a way of placating God's anger. At this point they remain pagan, although many will be saved in the days of David. They send for their priests and diviners. These are satanically inspired priests of the false religion of the Philistines, but they have direct access to Satan through the demons that are the power behind their gods.

Satan's strategy in such situations is to give advice that will secure these people's allegiance to his demonic forces for a lot longer. To help them placate the Lord God and thereby win a longer time to fool these people is Satan's aim. His strategy is always centred in holding power and influence over those who he has blinded to the truth about the one true God. He will help them escape the ark, but not escape the power of the demons behind the defeated "gods".

Verses 3 - 5. The real servants of Satan are always spiritually well informed, for their master knows all passages of the Bible and has been around since before time was made. James 2:19. He is able to work out what will fool men most easily, and hold them in his clutches most securely. The Lord allows men who hate and reject Him to be

fooled, for that is their choice, and Satan is even allowed to work his own miracles (lying wonders) at times. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12.

When you meet a person claiming to be a “clairvoyant” they may be in three possible categories; firstly, they are the real thing, and they have satanic power and information, or secondly they are self deluded fools, or thirdly they are conmen. The great magician Houdini, over one hundred years ago, proved most he met were fraudsters and conmen, but there are some who are really in touch with the demonic forces and these ones here have real power and insight. They know that they must recognise the lordship of the God of Israel, for He is indeed Lord of all.

Remember the words of Jesus and James, Matthew 7:21-23, James 2:19. These words clearly teach that it is not affirming God’s lordship that saves a person, for the devils affirm that Jesus is the Lord. Accepting that the “four spiritual laws” are facts never saved anyone, for the demons know the facts about Jesus and they hate them, but they still acknowledge them as true. It is the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Saviour and Lord that saves, and it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the life that proves salvation. James 2:16-26.

These pagan priests know that they cannot come before God “empty”; they must deliver a trespass offering to the Lord for the evils their people have done. They must acknowledge their sins or they will not have the judgment lifted from them. Many believers do not understand this; we must confess our sins or we will not be forgiven and the judgment of the Lord will sit upon us.

The offerings made, for each city of the Philistines, are strange and unusual, but symbolic of the plagues that had beset them. Many people have died, and the causes may be two fold; firstly from the anal fissures and secondly from the plague brought by the rodents. It appears from the reference to mice that there was an explosion of rats and mice amongst the crops and cities of the Philistines, and they bring both famine (as they eat the seed crops) and disease in the form of the plagues.

Each city, and even the villages, will need to take of the gold they seized from the tabernacle/ark and make golden mice and emerods and bring them to the place where the ark is to be returned from. These offerings are termed “votive” offerings, as they resemble the thing that God is to deliver them from, and many of these, of all shapes and sizes have been found from wells, springs, and other “sacred” places in the ancient world.

Verses 6 – 9. These pagans have only been in the land since 1200 BC, but they have quickly identified the history of the place before their arrival, and have heard the stories from 1445 BC through until the taking of the land by Israel around 1400 BC. They know that the Egyptians suffered great and terrible things, still spoken of, because they thought they could play with the God of Israel and not follow through on their promises. Exodus 3-19.

The priests of the Philistines warn their lords not to play any games with the God of Israel or they will suffer like the Egyptians did. The lords are in no mood for any fooling around; they simply want rid of the ark once and for all. There are some leaders amongst them however who still think the whole thing is just awful coincidence and are arguing that they can still defeat the God of Israel.

This is a testimony to the strength of paganism amongst some men and women. They are desperate not to accept that God has any power over them and will not accept even the most powerful evidence. This facet of unsaved human nature will be seen during the ministry of the Lord, and will even be found after His resurrection. Matthew 28:11-15, Luke 16:19-31, John 11:45-53, 12:17-19, 37 - 50.

They know that to absolutely prove to these people that it is the God of Israel who has afflicted them they need definitive proof, and so they develop a way of returning the ark through which it will be clear that God has caused their misery, and also has accepted their offering and repentance. They direct that two nursing cows be chosen to pull a new cart that is especially built for this task. These are cows that are not use to pulling a cart and will not know what to do naturally. Their calves will also be locked away so that their natural instincts will be to stay put and try to get close to their calves. On two natural grounds the cows ought not to pull the cart in any direction, and certainly not away from their calves.

They are making it hard for the God of Israel to accept their offering so that if it is accepted they know that truly God has accepted and forgiven them. The lords of the Philistines will accompany the ark at a distance to see where it goes and assure themselves that it is back in Israelite territory safely. They set as many tests for the Lord as Gideon did! Judges 6:17, 36ff. These are careful pagans, and we, in our own lives, need to be better than they prove themselves here, and in our prayers and service seek the Lord’s will as carefully as they do.

Verses 10 – 12. The men of the Philistines do exactly as their diviners and priests have ordered. They do not deviate from the instructions, and when the cows are released they head straight along the highway towards Israelite territory and show no indication that they will head to north or south, but head directly towards the town of Beth-Shemesh on the borderlands of the tribe of Judah.

The cows pull the wagon reluctantly, mooing as they go, but they head away from their crying calves, and towards Israel as if drawn there by supernatural force. The lords of the Philistines follow after the two cows pulling the wagon. They stay well back and just watch the progress of the wagon out of their area. They must walk the best part of a long day and these pagans follow them. They are determined that the ark will be out of their territory by the next nightfall. God drives the cows onwards towards Beth-Shemesh.

Verses 13 – 16. The people of Beth-Shemesh are reaping in their fields as the wagon with the ark appears in their valley. The Philistine Lords are well behind it, but their appearance would have caused great consternation, for the lords of the five cities would have been accompanied by their full armies. The people realise very quickly that a great event is unfolding before them. They ignore the Philistine lords and their armies because they realise that the ark's return means there is no danger from their enemies any more. The wagon comes to rest in a field of one man and the cows stop before a great stone.

The people of the village of Beth-Shemesh immediately offer up a sacrifice, using the wood of the cart and the two cows as the sacrifice of thanks for the return of the ark. They offered up then burnt offerings and praise offerings, and the Levites amongst them removed the ark and the offerings and placed them upon the great stone, now sanctified by the blood of the sacrifices. The people are rejoicing in the joy of the Lord. The ark has been returned by the work of God and their enemies watched and then left without killing or trying to kill one Israelite. The people are overjoyed.

The Philistines also are relieved that the Israelites have their ark back and the offerings have been placed high on the rock, a sign of their acceptance by the people here at least. The Philistine lords return to Ekron, their closest town for that night, and I suspect they offered up a thanksgiving offering themselves.

Verses 17 – 18. The place where this sacrifice occurred became a famous place in the towns of Judah. The great stone was revered as the sight where the offerings were made for the return of the ark. Even after the next events that will occur the place and the gifts received were famous. The gold mice were numerous, for every walled village of the Philistines had to give up their golden booty and make a golden mouse to present to the God of Israel to release themselves from the plague.

Verses 19 – 21. Emotion is a great thing, and emotions are to be enjoyed in bone fide ways. The danger with emotion however is that people stop thinking and holiness is put aside and forgotten. The people of Judah thought that their joy for the return of the ark would cover a multitude of sins, but it did not. They went too far and looked into the ark and treated it as an ordinary object rather than the holy object it was. None were to look at the ark, let alone look into it.

The Levites who carried it should have known the rules, covered it immediately, and ensured none touched it, but Eli has failed to teach well over his forty years as a Judge, and the people are not aware of the basic Mosaic Law regarding the holy things of God. Those who thought they could be casual with God paid with their lives. This object was not a thing of curiosity, but was a holy meeting between God and man. Exodus 19:18ff, Leviticus 10:1-3, Numbers 4:4-6, Deuteronomy 29:27-29.

How many men died of the plague that struck the town and surrounding area? This is a small town and there are nowhere near 5000 people there, let alone 50,000 men in this vicinity. This is another reminder that the word translated "thousands" (eleph) is a term that covers a family group that may be more, or a lot less than a hundred. Fifty groups of men may have looked into the ark, and this may have added up to 70+ individuals, and they all died. At this distance of time it is impossible to know exactly who and how many died, but enough died here for the people of this area to ask another town to take the ark away from them, just as the pagan Philistines had done.

It is a strong warning to those of us who want to get too casual in our church services, and let emotion lead us rather than Bible doctrine, for the holy things of God are not to be treated as if they are common or profane. A similar judgment fell from the Lord upon the church at Corinth due to their casual attitude towards communion and they also died. Let us be careful of the things of God. 1 Corinthians 11:27-34.

The question asked by the men of Beth-Shemesh is the right one; "Who shall stand before this holy God?" The answer is clear; none may stand before the holiness of the Lord God, for all ought to be on their knees or faces before Him. The Israelites of the Exodus generation had to learn this lesson and each generation of believers **MUST** learn this lesson or their effectiveness will be slight in the Angelic Conflict. Numbers 16:47-50, 17:10-13.

Those that follow exactly the rules of God regarding His holy worship will be blessed, but those who think they can treat the things of God casually will be judged. 1 Chronicles 13:5-14, Malachi 3:2.

Why do they specifically ask the men of Kirjath-Jearim to come and take the ark from them? We have a problem at this point, for the evidence indicates that the tabernacle and Shiloh were completely destroyed. Another tabernacle is made and used by the days of Saul and the early days of David, 1 Samuel 21:1-6, and David himself makes a new tent for the tabernacle to ensure there is a place for the ark to be, 1 Chronicles 13:1-3, but we are not given all the facts we need on this matter and cannot be sure why this town was chosen and how and when the ark got back together with the tabernacle at Nob, and how many of the other items of original furniture survived.

Kirjath-Jearim was apparently a town in a heavily wooded area and may have been chosen as a good place to hide the ark away from any further Philistine attack. By the days of David the ark is back in the tabernacle at Nob but only in heaven will we get all the details on how this was done and exactly when it occurred over the next fifty years.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The obedience and carefulness of the pagan Philistines is a lesson to us all. They did not try to get around the orders they received, but accepted that the ark was to be handled in a holy manner and they were to be careful of the things of God lest worse befall them. Let us be careful on the holy things of God. The communion service and other services are not to be mocked, nor made into foolishness. God's truths are not to be treated as common but seen as holy and we are to stand before the Lord in holy silence as often as we stand in loud praise. We serve a holy God and so let us remember to be holy! Let us be guided by the doctrines of God's Holy Word, not by our emotions. Emotions are to be enjoyed, but are not sure or stable guides for any decision making at all.

Notes**CHAPTER 7****INTRODUCTION**

The time frame for the next series of events is given to us in verse two here. Twenty years will pass before the ark is restored to the remade tabernacle and starts to function fully again at Nob. During this time the judgment of the Lord is felt upon the nation Israel. Samuel begins his ministry during this time and his main message is recorded here below; it is a message of repentance. When that message is fully accepted, then and only then, is there victory for Israel against their enemies.

Exact time frames are missing here, as before, and this is another indication that the writer is working well after the events and does not want to add "facts" in unless he is sure of them, and so his silence tells us that much has been lost about the chaotic events of these terrible years of judgment. I am encouraged by the writer's silences, because the normal thing in the ancient world was to add in details if some were missing. The Greek historian Herodotus never let the truth get in the way of a good story. He would add in details that he heard in a pub as if it was certified truth, but our writer here is far more careful, for he speaks of the things of God. His carefulness is another testimony to the truthfulness of the records before us.

1 SAMUEL 7:1-17

7:1 And the men of Kirjathjearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. **2** And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. **3** And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. **4** Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only. **5** And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD. **6** And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh. **7** And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. **8** And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. **9** And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him. **10** And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. **11** And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar. **12** Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us. **13** So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. **14** And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. **15** And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. **16** And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. **17** And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. The men of Kirjath-Jearim come straight away and fetch the ark. This makes me think there is a pre-arranged situation here. In some way the surviving priesthood has identified where the ark is to be hidden until it is safe to set up the tabernacle again and begin worship properly. Kirjath-Jearim was on the road from Shiloh to Beth-Shemesh, and so may have been a town that the surviving Levites fled to after the massacre at Shiloh. It may even be that other items of tabernacle furniture that survived were stored there also.

We do not have all the needed details to be sure of all this, with so much left out of the record, but the speed with which the men of this town take and secure the ark tells us that a pre-arranged plan is being applied. The next time we meet the ark it is in the tabernacle which has been re-erected at Nob, and the priesthood is functioning there. Sadly many of the priests will also be murdered there. 1 Samuel 21:1-7, 22:11-23. These are difficult and bloody days.

During the initial twenty years of the hiding of the ark, the household of Abinadab is blessed. It is not specifically noted that Abinadab was a Levite, but given the sanctifying of his son to take care of the ark in a holy manner, and that they were blessed and not killed, the conclusion can be safely made that they were, at this point, careful Levites, unlike the careless and overly casual men of Beth-Shemesh. The ark is later restored to the tabernacle at Nob for a time after the defeat of the Philistines recorded here in this chapter before us, but after the massacre of the priests there (1 Samuel 21-22) the family of Abinadab take the ark again, but this time to another house in Gibeah. It is from there that David later brings it to Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 6:1-8.

The Ark is not central to Israelite worship for many years, and that is likely because it was “defiled” by the Philistine capture, and I suspect the top is missing and so it is now seen as an “empty box” without the Mercy Seat on which the blood can be sprinkled and without the angels at either side. This will be discussed when we get to the temple of Solomon in the book of Kings. The new temple will have separate golden angels to the sides of where the ark was placed indicating that the lid was not replaced but the ark simply used as was – an empty box above which the Lord met his people.

The reign of Saul was nearly forty years, and the reign of David in Hebron before he brought up the ark to Jerusalem was over seven and a half years. 2 Samuel 5:4-5. The ark was with the family of Abinadab for initially twenty years, then at Nob for possibly more than thirty years, and then again with the descendants of Abinadab for at least another 10-15 years. The “son”, Uzzah, who is killed for touching the ark on its journey to Jerusalem may then be a great-grand-son of Abinadab, as it is over one hundred years from the birth of Samuel to the arrival of the ark in Jerusalem. To the Hebrew mind a “son” meant a direct male descendent; it was not necessarily the immediate child of the father.

Verses 3 - 4. The people mourn for their loss in battle, and the many deaths there, but even more for the loss of the ark and the temporary cessation of their national worship rituals for twenty years. There is genuine sadness and at some point in this period Samuel stands up and preaches his first sermon to the people, and it is a sermon calling the people to a thorough repentance.

We cannot be sure at what age Samuel was when he fled from Shiloh, nor at what point Samuel stands up and speaks. It may be after twenty years, or at some time during this period. A priest began full time service around thirty and it may have been that Samuel is around this time when he speaks, and it is likely that it was towards the end of the twenty years of the exile of the ark.

The people have certainly had enough time to feel the pain that their idolatry has brought upon them, and to be ready to take the required action to deal with their sin. Remember, being sorry for sin is not repentance! Feeling sorry for your sins is called “guilt”, and unless it leads to genuine repentance and life change there is no forgiveness for the sinner. 2 Corinthians 7:10, James 1:22-27, 2:19-26. The people here genuinely repent, and prove it by rejecting their paganism and destroying its shrines amongst them.

The people of Israel had once again become idolaters as their fathers had before them, and had allowed the evils of satanic religion to enter into their homes and work places. Judges 2:11-18, 10:6-16. They had made or purchased small statues of the pagan fertility gods (Baal and Ashteroth) and had set up shrines for their worship. They were worshipping the Lord, but also using the idols for worship as well. They had done what the Mosaic Law forbade; they had put other gods “alongside” the one true God. Exodus 20:3-6. This was the popular religion of their day and all their pagan neighbours practised this sexually oriented immoral religion, so it was “easy” to fall into this particular evil.

It still is Satan’s main religious tactic today and sexualised religion is making a big come back today through internet pornography. It is to be resisted by all believers, and thoroughly repented of if it is fallen into. 1 Corinthians 6:18. 10:14, 1 Timothy 6:11, 2 Timothy 2:22, James 4:7.

Repentance required two definite actions; one internal and the other external. The people were to destroy their household shrines and the god statues in them, and they were to prepare their hearts to worship the Lord alone. They were to take time to do these two things and then they were to await the Lord’s confirmation of his forgiveness of them.

Verses 5 – 7. Having taken action against the paganism that had infiltrated into their homes due to their sin and evil, the people are called together for national mourning and revival to Samuel’s camp at Mizpeh. Samuel has

called the people to repentance, and to give evidence of their changed heart and mind by their destroying of their pagan gods, but that is not enough. He requires them to come in an act of national corporate worship to commit as a nation to following the Lord again. The tabernacle is not functional at this point and the altar for sacrifice is one built by Samuel at Mizpeh. If the brazen altar survived the Philistine assault on Shiloh it is packed away at this point and in hiding, as is the ark.

They draw water, as a symbol of the washing and cleansing of their sins, and pour out the water before the Lord. This ritual was a part of the feast of Tabernacles, and it indicates to me that this time of national repentance occurred around the time of this annual feast. It may be that Samuel used this first Feast of Tabernacles for many years to gather and focus the people back on their national religion. It may be after this that the tabernacle was set up again at Nob and starts the annual cycle of feasts again. Leviticus 23:33ff, Numbers 29:35, Isaiah 58:11, John 7:37-39. There is a time of national repentance and worship through the eight days of the feast of tabernacles.

The enemy have had things fairly quiet for possibly nearly twenty years now, but their intelligence network of spies would tell them that Israel has gathered together at Mizpeh. They knew this was significant, as it was a traditional national gathering place and meant that the Israelites were preparing for resistance to their over lordship. Judges 10:17, 11:11, 20:1ff. It would take at least a week for the Philistines to hear of the gathering, and then gather their own forces to march on Mizpeh. They move as quickly as they can to snuff out any rebellion before it catches fire amongst the tribes. They think that the people gathered at Mizpeh are just a group of rebels to be killed quickly; they do not understand the spiritual dynamics at work in Israel, and they do not realise that God is now going to fight for Israel.

The Israelites have not gathered at Mizpeh to make war with men, but to make their peace with God. They have their weapons with them, as all people had when they travelled, but this is not an organised army. The people are in fear when they hear that the professional army of the Philistines is drawing near. They are apparently caught, just as their ancestors were leaving Egypt, and the remedy is the same. They are to call upon their spiritual leader to pray for them and they are to trust the Lord for deliverance, and be obedient to His direction. Exodus 14:10-14.

Verses 8 – 11. They recognise that the Lord alone can deliver them and they ask Samuel to pray earnestly for them. Samuel takes a lamb and offers it up as a Burnt Offering to the Lord for the sins of the people, and asks for salvation on the basis of the blood shed for them. This is the only basis for deliverance and it is a secure basis. The Lord hears the prayer of Samuel and delivers His people by means of direct divine intervention. The Lord sends a great thunder and hail storm upon the enemy, as He had done before to deliver His people. Exodus 9:18, Joshua 10:7ff.

This is the second hail storm in the same basic area as that described in Joshua, and it is an area where such storms still occur at times, although these two are particularly fierce and fatal to those caught in the open in the path of the storm. The prophet calmly keeps on worshipping and the people are there with him as the enemy army very draws near. The Lord deals with the enemy through the hail and when the Lord has beaten them with the hail stones Samuel orders all the men present to draw their swords and pursue after the beaten Philistines and kill all they can. This order indicates just how close the enemy army got to Mizpeh. This enemy army will provide much needed weapons for the Israelites.

Verses 12 – 17. Samuel sets up a great stone at the site of the Lord's victory over the Philistines with the hail stones. He calls the site "Ebenezer" (the stone of help) as a reminder that the Lord alone is their help, their rock of strength. The writer, writing this story many years after Samuel's death records that these enemies of Israel were subdued under Samuel's leadership, for the Lord was with Samuel. There was not only victory for Israel over the Philistines, but there was also peace with the Amorites of the Arabian pastoral lands during Samuel's day. Spiritual leadership provided spiritual and physical peace.

The tabernacle was not operative for nearly all the days of Samuel, and he dealt with that by returning to the spiritual rituals of the Patriarchs, and built an altar to the Lord at Ramah and regularly offered sacrifices there to the Lord. He also went annually around a circuit of places mentioned and judged the people there, before each year returning to his house at Ramah, where he was based.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Repentance does not require any emotion at all, although it may be accompanied by "godly sorrow". Emotion is evidence of nothing except tender feelings, and is neither necessary for forgiveness, nor evidence of it. It is action the Lord requires of us, not guilty feelings. Guilt and sorrow may be useful if we sit with them and reflect upon the cost of our sins, but only actual confession and rejection of our sins leads to forgiveness. Let us thoroughly deal with sin, by full confession, and total rejection of the path of life that leads to the sins that have defiled us.
2. Even if traditional rituals are lost or terminated in an area, we are to worship the Lord through the celebration and centring ourselves upon the blood of the sacrifice. It is the centrality of the cross of Christ that is to be the resting place of our worship and if traditional forms of worship cease for any reasons we are to re-centre ourselves upon reflection of the Cross and rebuild our worship in thanksgiving for the blood shed for us. Let us ensure our worship is centred in the blood shed for us and in our thankfulness for all the Lord has done for us.
3. The enemy is defeated by the Lord, not by the strength of our arm of flesh. We have no strength to defeat the enemy, but in Christ Jesus we have a sure path to victory in all the pressures we face in this life. Let us centre ourselves in Him today and so celebrate the victory over the still over-whelming problems we face.

REFLECTION UPON THE SATANIC NATURE OF EVIL

1. DEFINITION: Evil is Satan's policy in opposition to God's doctrine. Evil is therefore a collection of beliefs and practises that back up Satan's viewpoint rather than God's.
2. Evil does not necessarily appear to be bad, it is simply a policy that will take you away from the path that God prepared for you.
3. False religion may be very moral and even ascetic (and therefore look "holy"), but if it is leading people away from God's revealed will it is evil.
4. Often evil can masquerade as "good". People who believe that their "good works" can satisfy God's holy demands are deceived by evil doctrine. Romans 7:19,20
5. Only God's Word, Bible Doctrine can help the believer distinguish between true good and evil. Hebrews 3:13,14
6. Only a soul saturated in God's Word is truly protected from the subtlety of Satan's policy of evil. Proverbs 2:10-14, 3:7, 19:23.
7. Only applied knowledge of God's Word negates and neutralises evil. Psalms 54:5, Romans 12:21, Isaiah 45.
8. The issue for the believer is the daily choice to accept God's Word and therefore protect oneself against evil. God watches for our choices. Proverbs 11:18,19, 22:3, 24:1-4, Ephesians 5:16, 2 Thessalonians 3:2,3.
9. The company of evil people will distort the thinking of the believer and confuse his/her witness. Isaiah 5:20, 1 Corinthians 15:23
10. There is no evil in God at all. Psalm 5:4, 1 John 1:5, 4:4.
11. God judges evil and will condemn it to the lake of fire for ever at the final judgement. Psalm 34:16, Isaiah 13:11, Revelation 20:11ff
12. In spite of evil still existing in the world due to Satan's on-going presence throughout the Church Age, the Lord is still on the throne, and his hand is on all things.
13. Satan only does things by "permission" and we are in the Lord's hands and so are, in Christ, safe. Job 1:6-12, Proverbs 16:3, 4, Isaiah 45:6, 7

REFLECTION UPON THE DEVIOSNESS OF IDOLATRY

1. Idolatry is forbidden (Exodus 20:3,4,23; 23:24; Deuteronomy 4:28; 5:7; 6:14; 7:16; 8:19).
2. In the Ten Commandments, the first commandment prohibits mental idolatry, the second commandment prohibits overt idolatry.
3. Idolatry is spiritual adultery, an attack on the believer's love towards God (Jeremiah 3:8-10; Ezekiel 16:23-43; 23:24-30; Revelation 17:1-5).
4. Idolatry of mind precedes idolatry of practice. Mental idolatry occurs before overt idolatry (Judges 2:10-13; Ezekiel 14:7).
5. Idolatry occurs when the creation, rather than the Creator, is worshipped (Romans 1:18-25).
6. Demons function through idols and practices of idolatry (Zechariah 10:2).
7. Idolatry is the devil's communion table (1 Corinthians 10:19-21).
8. Idolatry is related to sexual sins under the phallic cult (Ezekiel 22:3-18; 23:37-49). Consequently idolatry has an adverse effect on both soul and body (1 Corinthians 6:9).
9. Idolatry causes the national judgment of destruction and enslavement (Isaiah 2:8; 2:18-20; 21:9; 36:18-20; Jeremiah 2:27:30; 3:6-11; 7:17-20; 17:1-4; Ezekiel 6:4-6).

CHAPTER 8**INTRODUCTION**

The end of chapter seven gave us a brief overview of Samuel's ministry and this chapter carries on that summary. Remember that the chapter divisions of the Bible were only added as a part of the printing process in the fourteenth century of our own era, and so we are never to take them as "inspired", although mostly the printers get them helpfully placed.

It is a common Hebrew technique to do a full overview of a person's life and then go back to the story, and so we get Samuel's adult ministry life summarised before we hear of the selection of Saul and David as the kings. Moses had already laid down the rules for the kings that he prophetically foretold would be appointed. Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Read these verses slowly and prayerfully, for we will see that even David, great as he was, broke these rules.

The people wanted a king, so that they could be powerful and co-ordinated in their military might, just like other nations around them, but they failed to see the cost. They looked to politics for solutions rather than God, and all power in the hands of a mere man will tend to corrupt that man over time, no matter how good he is to start with.

Moses had also identified that the king they will long for to give them national cohesive strength, will not save them from judgment when they turn from the Lord their God. Deuteronomy 28:35-51. This message regarding leadership is important for us to understand right until the end of time. No human leader can ever triumph in the affairs of men if he or she leads God's people away from God's Holy Word.

It is obedience to the Lord alone that gives a people their real strength and power; it is walking with God alone that gives stability in the midst of the attacks that will come to believers in the devil's world. John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, Ephesians 2:2. No political power, that any believer can obtain, will ever advance the kingdom, for the kingdom of the Lord is advanced by the Holy Spirit, and the Lord Himself.

The Lord will rule one day upon the earth, and our job here is not to try to "bring in the kingdom" by any puny work we can do. Our task is to obey His commands and fulfil our part in His plan for us, and look forward to the kingdom coming. Matthew 28:18-20, John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 11:26, Revelation 19:11-21.

1 SAMUEL 8:1-22

8:1 And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. **2** Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba. **3** And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. **4** Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, **5** And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. **6** But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. **7** And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. **8** According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. **9** Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. **10** And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. **11** And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. **12** And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. **13** And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. **14** And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. **15** And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. **16** And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. **17** He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. **18** And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. **19** Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; **20** That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. **21** And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. **22** And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. A godly father does not necessarily produce a godly son. This dynastic problem is only resolved by the truth of being "born again". Our children are fit for nothing in the spiritual realm until they are "born again" like our selves. Only as children of God do they rise up to serve the Lord; as our own children they are simply inheritors of our Old Sin Nature, and as such they will go to the worst that we could have been rather than the best. To serve the Lord, you must be born again, and you must be obedient. John 3:3-8, 15-18, 36, 15:4-16. However, if our children are

truly born again and walk before the Lord as we have done, then they will rise up in their spiritual service, and be a blessing.

Samuel promotes his sons to a judge role to challenge them, rather than appointing them because they were qualified to be judges. No job/task for the Lord ought ever to be given any individual unless there is clear evidence that the person has the spiritual qualifications for the job. Lesser roles are to be given to prove the character of the person to see if they are fit for a larger role, but they must have spiritual character for the lesser role before they are appointed. 1 Timothy 3:2-14, Titus 1:5-16.

They are appointed in the far south, the oasis of Beersheba, a place of great ancestral significance, where the well of Abraham is the centre of the settlement. It was a place for these two young men to serve and grow to later become national leaders, but they simply became corrupt and took bribes to give false judgments. Deuteronomy 16:18-20. Their corruption became a byword in the nation and they were dismissed by the people as judges and as men.

Solomon's son will make the same error of judgment. 1 Kings 12:1-19. Later on, Hezekiah's son Manasseh will do even more evil. 2 Kings 21:1-9. Had the sons of Samuel, and Solomon, and Manasseh, possessed the character of their fathers they could have followed them, but they are "castaways"; unfit for use in the Lord's service. God does not seek the appearance of spirituality, He seeks real spiritual transformation in our lives. Matthew 12:43-45, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 2 Peter 2:20-22. Every generation must stand afresh before the Lord, meet Him in salvation, and serve Him alone in truth. John 4:23-24.

Verses 4 – 6. Even though the boys are mentioned as judging in Beersheba, my suspicion is that they may have done a "circuit" like their father, and travelled the length of the country, for the entire nation's elders come and complain to Samuel about them, and the very thought of their being judges after his death frightens the elders. These events occur towards the end of Samuel's life, so his sons are well into their forties by this time and youth does not excuse their evil actions.

The people can see that no judge will come from Samuel's sons, but rather than trust the Lord to raise up a new judge to rule over them in Samuel's place they seek the other alternative form of dynastic rule; they seek a king, like all the other nations. God had called them to be different, but they longed to be the same and "fit in" with the other nations and have the respect of men. We must be careful of this tendency ourselves, for it is normal to desire the approval and respect of men you respect, but the respect and praise of the Lord alone is to be the believer's desire. Samuel does the right thing immediately; he takes the issue to the Lord in prayer.

Verses 7 – 9. The Lord answers Samuel. The people have not abandoned Samuel; they have abandoned God. They have rejected the Lord's rulership over them and have sought to be like other nations. The Lord will grant them their desire to have a king, but not ever grant them their desire to be like other nations, for they are to be different until time ends.

The Lord reminds Samuel of the track record of these people; that from the beginning of their walk with God out of Egypt, they have rebelled and wavered, and served other gods. Samuel is to pass on the Lord's acceptance of their petition, but not their desire, and he is to solemnly warn them of what is to come for them from their kings. Leadership must be known as "truth tellers", so that the people always know they will hear what is right from their leadership, never what suits them. Only the truth sets people free from evil, and no biblical leader can ever say what the people want, only what God wants.

At times people will directly rebel against the will of the Lord, and head away down a side path. In such situations the leaders of the people are to warn of the consequences of rejecting truth, and they are to keep standing for the truth continually, even though it is rejected by the people. Psalms 81:8-16, Isaiah 1:10-20, Jeremiah 1:7-10, Ezekiel 2:3-8, 3:4-11. Even when the words of the leader are rejected, and even if they are rejected, God's leaders remain responsible to pray for the Lord's people and to seek their forgiveness and their blessing. Numbers 14:1-6, 18-19.

Verses 10 – 14. As Samuel speaks he does so with prophetic accuracy, and he gives the people the full explanation of the consequences of their actions. They will suffer at the hands of their king, for to be powerful against their enemies he must tax them heavily. The taxation will not only be in money, but in manpower, and in their daughters as servants and concubines, and in crops to feed his vast retinue and army. He will seize lands for public works and to secure his supplies. They will have security from their enemies at the cost of their slavery to the will and, when they are bad, the lusts of their king.

Samuel prophetically knows that the kings will disobey the words of the Lord to Moses and they will build cavalry and chariot forces. Deuteronomy 17:16-20. The prophet "sees" the future and the visions the Lord gave him in order to say these things must have saddened Samuel deeply. To do this they will need vast resources of silver and gold and land and buildings to house their forces. They will not take their enemy's lands alone, but will be forced to seize their own people's lands. All this happens and the burden under Solomon became too great to bear. 1 Kings 12.

Verses 15 – 18. Taxation was at a flat rate of ten percent, and then the Temple taxes, and taxes to support the poor were on top of that, producing a rate in some years of 22.5% of the crop as taxation. While for some of us this is high, for other nations this is low and we cannot imagine any complaints, but these people were going from a straight tabernacle tax of under 10% to double that to have their army and their king and his administration.

The people are told that they will complain about the burden of taxation in one day, and that they may as well keep quiet, for the Lord **WILL NOT** hear them, for this is what they have sought and this is what they will get. If they do not repent now it will be too late and the consequences will flow onwards through time. Proverbs 1:22-31, Isaiah 1:15-20, Micah 3:1-5.

Verses 19 – 22. Notice the reasons for having a king are both narcissistic and cowardly. They want to feel good as they see their king march forth, and they want him to fight with a professional army so that they don't have to go out and fight themselves. God's plan was for every Israelite to be a soldier and fight for his nation, but they wanted to have ease and relaxation. Once again Samuel brings all that is said before the Lord and leaves his concerns there. 1 Peter 5:5-9. God's people are often lazy, and we are responsible to wake them up to their godly responsibilities.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Every generation stands alone before the Lord their God. Each person must be born again and must daily commit to following the Lord and obeying His Word. God has no grand-children. No-one is ever to be given a role in any believing organization unless they are personally spiritually qualified. Let us stand like Samuel, not his sons. Let us cast all our burdens upon the Lord and make prayer our regular communication habit.

2. Politics has no answer to any problem of man. "All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". The only exception to this rule is in the life of the Holy Spirit filled believer. It is Holy Spirit power alone that keeps all other power under check. Let us walk in the Spirit and seek only the fellowship and leadership of those who are like minded.

3. To grow in political power requires great resources and they must be drawn from somewhere. When churches plan expansion projects they must be sure that they are following the Lord's direction and timing, or all they will do is impoverish God's people and exhaust them for real ministry.

4. The great cathedral builders of the Medieval period exhausted their communities and while they built amazing buildings there was little spiritual gain to them and revivals that mattered happened outside them. Let us be careful of any focus on things, for the Lord works through Spirit empowered people, not in expensive buildings. Let us not multiply managers and administrators but empower Holy Spirit filled genuine leaders of God's people.

REFLECTION UPON THE TRUE NATURE OF DIVINE GUIDANCE: FINDING THE WILL OF GOD

1. There are three categories of will in history

- a) Divine will (sovereignty)
- b) Angelic will.
- c) Human will.

2. Main areas of the will of God (1 John 3:23)

- a) For the unbeliever - salvation (2 Peter 3:9)
- b) For the believer - spirituality (Ephesians 5:18)

3. Christ has free will (Matthew 26:42, Hebrews 10:7, 9)

- a) No free will in mankind would imply no free will in Christ.
- b) The basic principles of divine guidance however are based on the fact that man possesses free will to choose for or against God.

4. Type of will of God as related to the human race (e.g. Balaam)

- a) Directive (Numbers 22:12) - what God directs.
- b) Permissive (Numbers 22:20) - What God allows
- c) Overruling (Numbers 23) - When God overrules

5. Principles of Guidance

- a) Knowledge of biblical principles in the believer (Psalm 32:8, Proverbs 3:1-6, Isaiah 58:11, Romans 12:2)
- b) Surrender and filling of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:13, Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 5:17-18, 1 John 1:9)
- c) Growth - to eat meat and not rely on milk (1 Corinthians 3:1-4)

6. Categories of the will of God

- a) Viewpoint will of God - What does He want me to think?
- b) Operational will of God - What does He want me to do?
- c) Geographical will of God - Where does He want me to be?

7. An example of the will of God (Acts 11) - the Guidance of Peter

- a) Guidance through prayer (vs 5)
- b) Guidance through the mind (vs 6)
- c) Guidance through the word (vs 7-10)
- d) Guidance through providential circumstances (vs 11)
- e) Guidance through the filling of the Spirit (vs 12)

- f) Guidance through fellowship and comparison of data (vs 13-15)
 g) Guidance through remembering Scripture (vs 16)

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

Given all the problems from Benjamin in the days of the Judges it is a surprise that the first king is appointed from there. Judges 20-21. He is however a man who looks every inch a king; he stands head and shoulders above his peers quite literally. In his early life he is a man who appears to be spiritual, stable and humble. Power corrupts this man, as it will later corrupt David, Solomon and his sons and descendents. Before we meet this man I want to appeal to you to give him a fair hearing, for his story is tainted by what we know of his interactions with David later. He tries to kill David a number of times, and so it is significant to know this, but let us pause and reflect upon the full tragedy of this man Saul.

This is a man who was anointed by God, and could have been like the ring on God's finger to bring glory to Israel, but he is a castaway. Jeremiah 22:24-30. His failure to be the man he was called to be is a lesson for us all in the dangers of power, success, money, or fame moving us away from close dependence upon the Lord our God. To wield absolute power you need to be spiritually grounded in God, and you need to have dealt with any weaknesses of your Old Sin Nature well before the power arrives. Saul and then later David are all overwhelmed by the power they receive. Many complain about the testing of adversity, but the greatest tests to a person's character are often those that come with great prosperity. Many pastors fall into gross sin in their ministries and it is prosperity that destroys most.

1 SAMUEL 9:1-27

9:1 Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. **2** And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people. **3** And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses. **4** And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and there they were not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not. **5** And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us. **6** And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go. **7** Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we? **8** And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way. **9** (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.) **10** Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God was. **11** And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here? **12** And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came to day to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people to day in the high place: **13** As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him. **14** And they went up into the city: and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place. **15** Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, **16** To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. **17** And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people. **18** Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is. **19** And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. **20** And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house? **21** And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me? **22** And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons. **23** And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee. **24** And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! set it before thee, and eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day. **25** And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house. **26** And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee

away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. 27 And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on), but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. Saul is introduced as a great young man, with many good character traits that made him attractive to others. There is no clue to his later fall into madness in his appearance, nor in his early life experiences. He is tall, dark, and handsome, and he is strong and trustworthy, and so when his father has animals to find he is able to be sent far away to search for them with no danger that he will be attacked and killed, for he is a brave warrior, nor that he will get drunk and forget his errand, for he is absolutely dependable. This man is handsome and tough, and he is from a modest but stable family amongst the Benjamites, and he is morally stable.

Verses 3 – 5. Saul's father has a problem, that was for a farmer, an expensive one; his she asses have run away or been stolen. This sort of animal was prone to wander when in heat and they could have been a long way away by the time they are discovered missing. They were valuable animals. The father selects Saul as the most trustworthy of his sons to do this job and sends him off with a servant to assist in capturing the animals and bringing them back. They travel many miles over three days and they have no luck in locating any of the she asses. Saul shows his considerate nature after three days of searching (verse 20), as he recognises that his father may not now be thinking of the lost asses but of their lives. He makes plans then to start the return home.

Verses 6 – 10. They have been on the road for a long time now and their meagre provisions are nearly all used up. The servant is a believer and suggests they enter into a town they are passing where a "seer" of the Lord has lived or visited in the past, hoping that they can learn where to go to find the animals. They have searched for three days, but now there is apparently an opportunity to ask a man of God for direction, and they are keen to take it. Saul's only concern is that they have nothing to give the man of God for any help they receive. They don't want to enter any man's home empty handed, but seek to bring blessing before they ask for any. 2 Samuel 24:22-25, Malachi 1:7-10, 3:7-10. This was good cultural practise in this time and remains the norm in most cultures.

Believers would do well to have this "giving mentality" as they seek the Lord's will, for we are too affected by our modern "taking mentality". The servant has been given money from Saul's father, possibly to buy provisions, or possibly it is his own money. He is ready to spend all he has to learn where the asses are and make the trip a success. He is focused upon the outcome of the mission and seeks the best for his master Kish. Saul is happy with that suggestion and they head into the town to find the "seer". As the writer observes, the prophets of old were also called seers, as they saw the future, and saw into things hidden to others. Moses had laid down the rules for checking out a prophet to ensure he was true to God in Deuteronomy 18:9-22.

Verses 11 - 14. The two men enter the city while the young women are heading out of it to draw water. This tells us that it is mid to late afternoon and that urgency is required, as once the sun sets no travel will be possible or advisable, and the city gates will be locked. This town is unnamed, but certainly not the seer's home town, as Saul's servant had thought, and the men are told that the seer is preparing to leave the city to offer up a sacrifice for the towns people on their "high place", and if they rush they might catch him still there before he heads up to the high place.

The girls identify that he will offer up a sacrifice and then the people will feast upon it when the seer tells them to. This is a way of saying that even though it is late in the day, there will be some time before the gates of the city close for the night. The people will all be sitting up there at the high place waiting for the seer, and if the two men rush they will be in time for both counsel, and later food at the sacrifice. The two men rush into the city to find the seer and as they enter Samuel is coming out to head to the place of sacrifice.

Verses 15 – 17. Samuel is a genuine prophet and that means he is not surprised by events, for the Lord has told him what to expect at the right time for him to be ready to act. The Lord has told Samuel that these men are coming and exactly what to say to them. The Lord has told Samuel the night before the meeting that the man he meets from Benjamin this next day is to be the king to defeat the Philistines, and that he is to be anointed by Samuel as king over a soon to be united Israel.

The Lord tells Samuel that the prayers of the people have been heard and they will be delivered from Philistine oppression now that they have thoroughly turned from the evils of their previous idolatry. The Lord has told Samuel that it will be through this man of Benjamin that the deliverance will come. As Samuel sees Saul he hears in his ear again the words of the Lord, "this is the man who shall reign over my people Israel." This is a man who listens for the words of God and has learned through the years to follow the Lord's guidance.

The Lord still will prompt the heart of believers today to speak in certain situations, and when this occurs we will discover that the word is always the correct one and brings glory to the Lord. If this is not the case, then the word we heard was not from the Lord and we had better be silent in future until God has done more work upon and within us. The evidence of the reality of a prophetic voice is the fruit of truth to men and glory to God!

Verses 18 – 21. Saul asks Samuel where they might find the seer, indicating that he has never met Samuel before, nor does he know even what he looks like from others. Samuel tells him that he is the man they seek. Samuel invites the two men to the sacrifice and the following feast. He then tells Saul that he is to stay with Samuel until

tomorrow and that Samuel will reveal to him all that is in his heart then. This mind reading will prove he is the prophet. He also tells him that the asses are found and he is not to spend any time worrying about them.

Samuel then speaks of "the desire of Israel", meaning the hope of the nation for deliverance from their enemies, and he then states that the desire of Israel is Saul! Saul speaks in reply in very humble terms, feeling that he is unworthy of any great honour, for his family is not a chiefly one, and they have neither wealth nor power that would make them note worthy.

God seeks the humble to serve him, for if they remain humble and dependent upon the power of God they will achieve all the Lord requires of them. The humility of Saul will sadly be replaced over time by arrogance and independence. He will not draw closer to the Lord over time, but will become more self centred as he ages. This is the daily choice we all make as we walk through this present life, and those who draw closer to God stabilize themselves on their path.

Verses 22 – 27. The three men arrive at the high place and enter into the building there where the feasts occur under cover. Saul is taken into the circle of men awaiting the sacrifice; about thirty in number. Saul is placed by Samuel in the seat of highest honour for the first time in his life. Samuel then instructs the man who is the cook of the meat to bring Saul the most important piece of cooked meat, the shoulder.

The left leg was the holy portion that belonged to the priesthood, Leviticus 7, and so the right leg/shoulder was probably the one given to the man who is to be king. While this is logical, the text may open the possibility that Samuel gave Saul his portion, the left leg and shoulder. We cannot be sure of this. Samuel tells Saul publicly that he has foreseen his coming supernaturally and that this portion was set aside for him through his instruction to the cook well before Saul entered the town. Saul will be the centre of attention at this feast, for all present will know that God is doing something special in this event they see unfolding before them.

As the night comes on they go back into the city and Saul stays with Samuel, and Samuel speaks with him on the roof top of the house that night. They rise early in the morning and Saul prepares to leave. Samuel asks him to send his servant on before him so they can speak privately. They will have their direction to find the asses after Samuel's words to Saul, and the servant may move ahead and wait for Saul, and Saul will be spoken to privately.

In the Armed Forces any important information is classified, and is to be revealed to people on a "need to know" basis only. The servant does not need to know what Samuel will make known to the future king, and so Samuel speaks to Saul of the words of God for him. This man, like Solomon later, will have no excuse for his later fall from grace into madness and sin. He is fully briefed by the living words of God and only gets into evil and sin when he forgets his holy call and these words of Samuel's. 1 Timothy 1:18-20, 6:13-21, 2 Timothy 1:6-13, Titus 3:8-11.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God uses circumstances to lead us into situations of guidance for us. Let us be alert through each day so that we can see what the Lord has for us each day. Let us be attentive to the voice of the Lord. Let us practise hearing the Lord through daily prayerful Bible reading, and when we are convicted to speak words of the Lord to those in need, let us do so with confidence and spiritual power. Holy Spirit filled walking through this life is the key to spiritual power.
2. Saul was a pleasant and humble young man. Saul is not a monster at this point, although power will make him one over time. He will try to murder David and he will give orders that lead to the murder of the priests at Nob. How does such a lovely young man become such a monster? The answer is clear; over time he grows away from God rather than closer to Him, and each of us face the daily choice as to how we will grow through this life. 2 Peter 3:14-18.
3. We need to daily make the choice to be prayerful, and draw close to the Lord through opening His holy Word and deeply studying it in the filling of the Holy Spirit. If we fail to grow closer to God then we will creep steadily away from the spiritual path for us.
4. The greater the tasking God has for us the higher the stakes of obedience and disobedience, and the bigger the consequences of our failure to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. We either walk in the Holy Spirit, or we walk in the power of the flesh. We walk in spirituality or in worldliness, and to walk after the manner of this present world is to walk into Satan's power, and end as Saul does.

REFLECTION UPON APPARENT "POVERTY"

1. God can raise the poor out of the poverty of their circumstances. (1 Samuel 2:8, Psalm 113:7)
2. There is a special happiness for those who help the poor. (Psalm 41:1, 2, Proverbs 19:17, Proverbs 29:14)
3. The poor are not only delivered by God from poverty but in the reality of their poverty they often see their need of salvation and respond to the gospel. (Psalm 72:12-14, Matthew 11:5)
4. Whilst charity is good and honourable, it can be abused. (Proverbs 14:30-31, 19:17) Charity is for the poor, but excessive dependence upon welfare makes the poor lazy. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-11)

5. There is a special curse for those who ignore helping the poor. (Proverbs 21:13, 22:16, 28:3). There is also a special curse for those who take advantage of the poor. (Proverbs 22:22-23)
6. Until the Millennium there will always be poverty in the human race. (Mark 14:7)
7. The poor are a target for hypocrisy and its victim. (John 12:5). They are also the victims of backsliders. (James 2:2-4)
8. Poor believers have the same spiritual privileges as rich believers. (James 2:5). A person can be poor in material things but rich in doctrine.

WEALTH

1. Wealth may be in the form of money, gold or silver, goods or land. Wealth is always relative to the values within a society. What is wealthy within a poor culture is poor within a more wealthy culture. What individuals feel is wealthy will differ from person to person; some will never feel they are wealthy enough. The believer is urged to be content with what he has received, in his position, from the Lord. 1 Timothy 6:6-10, Philipians 4:11-13, Hebrews 13:5-6.
2. Money has a legitimate function, and wealth generally is, like money, a neutral thing; something to be used to facilitate daily life. Money and goods are used to pay taxes Matthew 22:17-22, Luke 20:20-26, buy goods needed for the family, and give towards the Lord's work in the church. Money is not evil. Genesis 29:3, Jeremiah 32:44.
3. It is not evil to have wealth or lots of money, it is the lust for money and goods that corrupts a man, as it did Baalam, Jude 11.
4. Money and wealth generally, are great slaves but terrible masters. Wealth is deceitful if a person believes it will buy him happiness, provide him with security, or give him immortality. Matthew 6:24-33, Luke 12:16-21 Proverbs 18:10-12, Proverbs 13:7.
5. Money and wealth will not buy respectability with God, nor will it purchase salvation. Mark 8:36,37, Acts 8:18-24, Mark 10:23-27.
6. Wealth may get in the way of the simple message of salvation, as the Rich Young Ruler found. Matthew 19:16, Luke 18:19,20, Mark 10:17-27.
7. Money may get in the way of spiritual growth, when we pay more attention to our wealth than we do to applying doctrine in our lives. Solomon in Ecclesiastes 5:10 6:2, Baalam in Jude 11, Ananias' and Saphira in Acts 5:1-10, All of us in James 5:1-6.
8. God is not impressed with money and pride filled shows of wealth. Luke 16:10-31, Proverbs 11:4,28.
9. Wealth can be a great blessing received by believers in maturity, and if it is it is to be used for the Lord's work, as well as for life style. Proverbs 13:8ff, Hebrews 13, Refer Doctrine Of Giving.

Notes

CHAPTER 10**INTRODUCTION**

Saul is privately anointed as king by Samuel, and then he will later be confirmed as king before all the people so that all the tribes can see that he is God's choice. The public ceremony does not make him any more the king than the private one, but it provides the opportunity for all to recognise what the Lord God has done amongst them in his selection. God works quietly, often selecting the most unlikely people to be His leaders. The Lord does not look upon people as we do, but sees deeply into the heart. Isaiah 55:7-9.

In Saul's case he looked like a king and the people quickly bind themselves to him, whereas in David's case, he does not look like a king, and it takes time for the people to bind themselves to him. Neither men are men of great wealth, or noble birth when they start, but they are chosen of the Lord. The greatest king will be the man who is initially most unlike a king in outer appearance.

Isaiah 53:3-5. *"3. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

4. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

In Christ today, we are all chosen of the Lord for a special tasking as we walk through this life. We are challenged to live up to our high calling, by walking in the power of God rather than any human ability we have, and if we do so, we will grow into our role before the Lord. Ephesians 4:1-4, Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-11, 2 Timothy 1:9, 2 Peter 1:10.

1 SAMUEL 10:27

10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? **2** When thou art departed from me to day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son? **3** Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine: **4** And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands. **5** After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy: **6** And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. **7** And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee. **8** And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do. **9** And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. **10** And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. **11** And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? **12** And one of the same place answered and said, But who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets? **13** And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place. **14** And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel. **15** And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you. **16** And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not. **17** And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh; **18** And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: **19** And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands. **20** And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. **21** When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found. **22** Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold he hath hid himself among the stuff. **23** And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. **24** And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king. **25** Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every

man to his house. **26** And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. **27** But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought no presents. But he held his peace.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 8. Saul has no idea of what is to come here and when Samuel takes out the holy oil and anoints him in God's name he must have been surprised that it is done so suddenly here in this private place. Specially prepared Olive oil was used, and as with the anointing of the High Priest, Exodus 30:22ff, Leviticus 8:12, the oil here speaks of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, without whose power the king will be unable to govern in a godly manner. The spices that Moses was instructed to put with the Olive oil for this anointing purpose spoke of the sweet smelling savour of the work of God amongst men when anointed and Holy Spirit filled people serve the Lord in holiness.

Saul is meant to be a blessing to his people, and he is meant to draw them to the Lord, for his work is to be Holy Spirit empowered, and so men are to look to God rather than him alone for their deliverance. He is to give God the glory, and the celebrity of salvation is to be the Lord, not any man. Saul must have been fairly well briefed on his tasking as the chosen king the night before, (in the discussion the two men had on the roof of the house that Samuel stayed in), but Saul may still be in a state of shock.

Saul is to be the "captain" of the Lord's people, but he is not to forget that the people of Israel are God's people, not his. He is the "under-shepherd", and the Lord is the "Good Shepherd", Psalms 22, the "Great Shepherd", Psalms 23, and the "Chief Shepherd". Psalms 24. Saul is to remember that holiness and humility are to be his values, and that obedience to the Word of God will alone keep him safe from the temptations that will come to him in the great prosperity he will receive as king. His call is to be compared to that of Moses, whose oil is used to anoint him. Exodus 3:3ff, 19:5-6, Deuteronomy 32:4-12, Jeremiah 10:10-16.

Our lives are meant to be a sweet smelling savour to the Lord. We are to place our talents and our time upon the altar of God's service and pour ourselves out to the Lord as our daily free will offering. The anointing of a servant of the Lord is a symbol of this readiness to pour life out to the glory of God. Exodus 25:6, 29:18-41, 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, Philippians 4:18. Refer to the BTB studies on the topic of SHEPHERD.

Saul needs to be encouraged further and the Lord knows this, and so Samuel is given multiple signs to give Saul to prove that he is the man who is to be king, and that he can trust the Lord to guide and direct him later in his life. The multitude of signs will not produce either strong or lasting faith. Signs by themselves never produce lasting faith; they simply prepare the ground for daily walking in the Holy Spirit. It is our daily walk alone that strengthens us in the spiritual battles of this life. Refer to the BTB studies, MIRACLES, SIGNS. The signs are powerful and beyond the chances of statistics to occur naturally.

1. He will meet two men by Rachel's tomb outside Bethlehem.
2. They will tell him that the asses are found, and that now his father is worried for him.
3. He is to go from there to the plain of Tabor (even though there is worry for him).
4. He will meet three men there, who are going up to the high place at Beth-el, carrying, three kid goats, two loaves of bread, and a wine skin of new wine. They will greet him and deliver the bread to him.
5. He is to go from there to the "Mount of God" (Gibeath Ha Elohim), where there is a Philistine garrison, where he will meet a company of prophets. They will be coming down from the "high place" where they have been worshipping the Lord. They will have a small orchestra in front of them comprising, a psaltery, a tabret, a pipe, and a harp. They will be prophesying as they come towards him.
6. Saul will start to prophesy with them and he will be transformed into another man.
7. As each sign comes to pass he is to praise God and serve the Lord in any way he can, both then and through all his life. He is to know that God is with him.

The last instruction Samuel gives, is that once these signs are fulfilled Saul is to go down to Gilgal, and there he is to wait seven days for Samuel. When Samuel arrives he will conduct days of feasting and sacrifices, and then he will instruct him further as to what he is to do. Saul is to wait for seven full days in Gilgal before Samuel will come to him there and he is to learn patience through this.

Even though he suspects his father is worried for his safety, he is to obey the prophet, and leave his father's anxiety in the hands of the Lord who has tasked Saul with this new errand. Saul is however to head back along the road towards his home town, but be ready for the divinely appointed signs, not be looking for any home coming celebration. He is not to be distracted by any other thought, but be focused solely upon what God is now doing in his life.

His Holy Spirit anointing is to occur by the hands of the prophets of God who are still faithful to the Lord and he is to learn from them, and learn to fellowship with them through his life. He is being drawn into the company of those who will assist him to be a great king, but sadly the grandeur of his role will later lead him astray and he will forget these things. In the very place where the Philistines have set up a garrison to control the surrounding area the prophets are serving the Lord and are openly praising God and prophesying.

God is not hindered by the malice of foreign powers, nor are His servants to be side tracked by politics and power; we are called to praise the Lord in the midst of all difficulties and pressures. We are called to preach and praise with the

people of God, to “give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garments of praise, for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called the trees of righteousness; the plantings of the Lord; that He might be glorified.” Isaiah 61:3. Refer to the BTB studies, MUSIC, WORSHIP.

The instruments used in the procession of the prophets were those used at this time for religious worship. Look up each of these in a good Bible Encyclopaedia, or on line, as individual references, or under “ancient musical instruments”. 1 Chronicles 13:8, 15:20-21, Psalms 33:1-3, 43:2-5. These instruments were used to express the emotions of those coming to the Lord for deliverance, to allow them to express their sorrow and their despair, and then their joy in the Lord after they had brought their burdens to the Lord in prayer. God wants the whole person committed to Him; body, soul and spirit. He wants our sorrows and our joys expressed in prayer before Him, for we are His and all is to be laid before Him, and all is to be rejoiced in through fellowship with Him. Psalms 55:22, 73:16-28, Matthew 11:28-30, 16:24-27, 1 Peter 5:7.

Saul will be Holy Spirit filled and he will receive a temporary gifting of prophecy. Refer to the BTB study now on the MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. Then refer to the studies on GIFTS GIVEN AT SALVATION, and SPIRITUAL GIFTS. It is important to see that Saul receives testimonies here that prove to us that he is genuinely a saved man, and that he has the door of spiritual service opened wide to him. This man could possibly have been the greatest prophet-king of Israel, but he will choose a path of regal kingship, and so he will be side tracked by palaces and power. He is saved, and he has the path of spiritual power made clear to him, but he will slowly, but steadily walk further and further away from daily dependence upon the Lord as the forty years of his reign unfold.

The last instruction of Samuel, for him to “wait” for the old prophet to come, is instructive and underlines the most important principle for his life. He is to learn to wait upon the Lord. He is to practise total dependence upon the timing and power of the Lord. He is to learn not to take matters into his own hands. Psalms 23:3-5, 27:14, 37:7, 62:5, 130:5, Micah 7:7, Habakkuk 2:3, Romans 8:23-25, 1 Corinthians 1:7, 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

Verses 9 – 12. As he obediently walks away from Samuel down the road home he receives the Holy Spirit, and is transformed within from that time. Had he continued to walk in the Spirit he would have served the Lord in Holy Spirit power, but this depends on the daily FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, and that means walking closely with the Lord, and dealing promptly with any sins that break our fellowship. He will fall short of this, fall into the sins of hatred and jealousy, and then murder and adultery, and so the Holy Spirit will be grieved and then quenched within him.

The danger for all servants of the Lord is that our hearts become hardened by secret sins or evil practises and beliefs. Isaiah 6:1-10. The heart is softened and kept open to the Lord’s work by the constant washing of the water of the Word and by prayer. Ephesians 5:26, Hebrews 3:7 – 4:12. Read especially the passage from Hebrews, as it underlines the importance of quietly, but steadily following the Lord into His Holy Word and applying it into the fabric of each and every day. It is the daily walk of faith that pleases the Lord, as we face difficulties with constant and joyful application of the promises of God into daily life testing situations.

Hebrews 10:35-39. *“35. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.
36. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.
37. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.
38. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.
39. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”*

The testimony to the reality of a person’s faith is their consistency in living a transformed life. People noticed that Saul was totally different that day; he was as a “son of God” unlike he had ever been before as a “son of Kish”. There was bafflement and surprise that Saul could also be “amongst the prophets”. We are not told all the details of his early life that made people so surprised, but he was tall dark and handsome, and so it may have been that he was a handsome man with the ladies and no-one associated spiritual life with him before. It was the missing dimension from his life and now they see it in him and are amazed. Matthew 7:13ff, John 15:1-6, Romans 7:18, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 3:14-19, 1 John 3:19-24.

Verses 13 – 16. After any great spiritual experience we can often receive a great test. In this case Saul receives a test of discernment and self control. When emotion is in charge of us it is easy to make a fool of ourselves and say things we ought not to say. Saul is gravely tested by his uncle here. His question is a direct one and indicates he is a politician who wants to have the power that the truth gives, but he is not entitled to the truth. Secrets are for the Lord’s people alone, and their full disclosure is on a “need to know basis” only. This man does not need to know the words of Samuel for they would be misused by him. Let us be careful of those who seek to know the truth about some thing but will always miss-use the truth for their own ends.

The uncle’s approach tells us another fact, that the servant of Saul is still with him, and was not sent ahead to tell his father where he was. From verse nine we identified that all the signs came true in the process of one day, and at the end of that day he arrives home anyway, so his father has not had worry for longer than necessary. Saul tells the uncle that they sought the asses and that Samuel helped them.

This man immediately knows something is up and asks for specifics to which he is not entitled. Saul does not lie, but only tells part of the truth to this man. We are to be challenged by this interchange, for many will seek information from us at

times to use against the plan of God, not advance it. Guard your tongue believer, or the devil will abuse you through your careless words. Proverbs 29:11.

Verses 17 – 20. Samuel calls all the tribes together again at Mizpeh. We have no idea as to the time delay between the two gatherings, but a year may have passed, and we may be at the same feast week of tabernacles again. Samuel is blunt with the people, that they have sinned in asking for a king, but as they are determined to have one, then they must accept the Lord's directions in the appointment of the king, and they must obey him once he is divinely appointed.

Samuel uses the Israelite practise of casting lots to determine who is to be king. We already know that Saul is God's choice, but the people do not, and so the public casting of lots, which could not be rigged by the prophet Samuel, ensures that all see that this is more than the prophet's choice. Evidence for all that is done is vital in the Lord's work, and the words of all prophets must be confirmed by clear and consistent evidence that their words are truth. Deuteronomy 18:9-22. When the tribes are all gathered Samuel has the lots cast and the tribe of Benjamin is the one selected by the first lot. The second lot is cast to determine which major family within Benjamin is selected.

Verses 21 – 27. The second lot identifies the descendents of Matri as the extended family or clan that is chosen. The next lots were then cast, and Kish and then Saul are identified. When they search for him he is not to be found in the public gathering. They have to look hard to find him for he is overwhelmed by the responsibility and role he is being asked to fulfil. The people have to ask the Lord directly where Saul is to be found. We are not told how this is done, whether by Samuel or through the High Priest, but the answer comes that he has hidden himself in the baggage.

The people run and search in the baggage pile and they pull him out. He is brought to the centre of the assembly and he stands a full head and shoulders above the others. All can look across the crowd and see him. Samuel calls all the people to see Saul and acknowledge that there are none like him. He is exactly what they want, and God has given him the Holy Spirit so that he can fulfil his tasking as he walks in the Spirit.

The nation is ready to face their destiny with this man. All the people shout aloud, "God save the king". Literally this is a shortened way of saying, "Let the king live before God and be blessed by Him". It is a reminder to all, that God alone will save and bless the nation and their king, and that it is through God's power alone that deliverance and blessings of all sorts will come. Let us walk daily, spiritual armour on, and prayerfully, so that we may walk in the power of the Lord alone.

Samuel then explains the nature of kingship from the Mosaic Law's perspective, Deuteronomy 17:14-20. He may also explain all the things that he has already passed on to Saul about his requirement to walk in the Holy Spirit's power. All that is explained is taken from notes that he has before him, then a book is written and passed to the king or the priesthood for safe keeping. It appears that when the Philistines took the ark and sacked Shiloh they did not seize the books of the Law, or many of the other things that were there, and that they are hidden away. These words of Samuel are now hidden away, and it may be this source that the later writer draws upon to write these words before us.

Everyone then heads to their various homes to await the call of the king once he has time to seek the Lord's directions. Once again we have excellent managerial training principles here. No new CEO of any organisation should ever try to stamp their authority upon an organisation in the first weeks; he or she needs to take time and be thoughtful and prayerful about what is needed to bring the people together in concerted action against the real objectives. Saul is joined in Gibeah through this time by a band of men who the Lord "touched" and led to join him.

As with all divine appointments the enemy's people will rise up quickly to oppose him. A man is known by his friends and even more by his enemies. These people despise the Lord's servant and they bring no presents to him to honour him as was customary. Saul does not take action immediately against these people, for the right timing for action is always the key thing, and he has learned this from Samuel and applies it at this point. Judgement must always fall, but in God's timing alone, so that the emotions of men do not "muddy the waters of education" by the actions.

Notice that Saul has not been formally anointed/appointed king at this point in front of the people. They have been told that he is God's choice, but no further action is taken at this point, for evidence is required by the people that he is indeed the man who can do the job. The people of Israel are doubters and require the same evidence of leadership as that required from all the Judges before they were accepted; Saul must defeat their enemies in Holy Spirit power. The enemy will deliver this opportunity to him within months of this meeting at Gilgal.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The anointing oil used to dedicate Saul to his service speaks of the essence of all service of believers to their Lord. We are to be Holy Spirit empowered; any human strength is useful only under the Spirit's control. We are also to be a sweet smelling savour to the Lord and to the people. All should rejoice in our service, and none should be revolted, offended, or embarrassed by us. Let us be Holy Spirit empowered, for then alone we bring glory to the Lord Jesus.

2. When God calls us to service we are to be obedient and the calls and demands of family are secondary. Matthew 10:34-39, Luke 14:26-33. We are to count the cost of being a disciple and serve the Lord without concern for social expectations of us, but only be focused upon what the Lord expects.

3. Let us “wait upon the Lord”. What does this mean to you believer? It means that we are to fill every available moment with the study of the Lord’s Word and prayer for the Lord’s power and direction in our life. It means to reject the daily distractions of this present world, and embrace worship at every opportunity and look for the Lord’s path.

4. It does not matter how we start in our spiritual walk, but it does matter daily how we go onwards and especially how we end. Let us be sure of the Lord our God and neither grieve the Holy Spirit by unconfessed sins, nor quench the Holy Spirit by any acceptance of evil.

5. The Bible is God’s management manual. In these stories we have many great principles for all leadership roles. Good leaders take their time and plan carefully. They ignore the words of fools and replace these people in their organisations with good people over time. When they have their plans carefully made, they move with decisive actions towards the real goals of the organisation. Let us be careful, thoughtful, perceptive regarding people, and decisive in our actions.

THE LORD IS OUR SHEPHERD – THE “GOOD AND GREAT” SHEPHERD

1. In the Bible, sheep represent believers. Matthew 25:33,34 – they are contrasted with goats (unbelievers)

2. Sheep are helpless, they need to be led, fed and protected. They cannot defend themselves.

3. In the Old Testament Israel was called the sheep of his fold Psalm 74:1, 79:13, 95:7, 100:3 Jeremiah 23:1

4. The Lord Jesus Christ, the true shepherd came to the fold of Israel and while some responded most rejected him and the Lord called out a flock to establish a new group – John 10:10-16

5. He is the only door to fellowship Acts 4:12 John 3:36, John 10:28,29

6. Judaism is the fold out of which the Lord led his sheep to form a new flock on the hills in freedom, the contrast between the fold and the flock. The fold no longer exists it was Jewish and legal and is gone, there is neither Jew nor Gentile but we are all in Christ Jesus. This is the theme of the book of Galatians, Romans and Hebrews, the just will live by faith. Our church should be a place where we learn to walk with the Lord under the control of the Holy Spirit.

7. In the fold the sheep are within four walls under the protection of the man in charge of the fold whereas the flock is moving, feeding and are under the control of the shepherd. This is where the walk in the spirit occurs. Christianity is a relationship and is active. Galatians 1:6-9 – here Paul says we must walk in the spirit not a lot of rules such as in Judaism. We are to fight the enemy on the hills and be in the world but not of it.

8. There is only one flock and all sheep should know it. Believers show their character as sheep by how they respond to the shepherd.

9. The Lord Jesus Christ is seen as the shepherd in five different ways in. (1 Peter 2:21-25).

- a) The suffering shepherd. (v 21)
- b) The sinless shepherd. (v 22)
- c) The submissive shepherd. (v 23)
- d) The substitutionary shepherd. (v 24)
- e) The seeking shepherd. (v 25)

10. The Shepherd as Christ appears in three successive Psalms.

- a) Psalm 22 – the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep (John 10:11). He is the Door (John 10:9).
- b) Psalm 23 – the Lord is my shepherd – the great shepherd of the sheep. (Heb 13:20).
- c) Psalm 24 – the chief shepherd appears as the Man of Glory. (1 Pet 5:4).
- d) These show the shepherd dying for His sheep, the resurrected shepherd tending and caring for His sheep and the future shepherd ruling over His sheep.

OUR DUTY AS PASTORS – FEEDING AND SHEPHERDING THE SHEEP

1Peter 5:2-4 *“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”*

1. As pastors we are all “fellow-elders”, equals before God, tried by suffering, focused and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and with a heart for service, and an expectation of glory within to drive us.

2. We are to “shepherd the flock; loving, self sacrificial service is in view here.

3. We are to feed the flock; they must not starve when they are with us.

4. They are God’s flock, not ours. We have the care and responsibility, but we answer to the Lord himself for our work with the flock he has given us.

5. We are to exercise oversight, so as to receive a good report from the Lord, and we are to be focused, as we serve Him, on His well done not anything else (Matthew 25:21-23).
 6. We are to serve in a free way, under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, not from any other "constraint". No compulsion is to drive us except the desire coming from within from love for our Lord.
 7. We are to be as keen as a volunteer, and with all the passion that this involves.
 8. Lust for money, power, authority, position, or reputation, are not to be a part of our lives at all. Such lust for power is illustrated by Diotrephes (3 John 9-10).
 9. We are to be filled with passion, ready to serve, with total zeal for the task to which we are called.
 10. Not lording it over the flock, as monarchs or dictators.
 11. Being patterns, role models that others can follow in holy and joy filled living.
 12. Being focused on winning the crown of glory, which is the eternal reward for the pastor who serves well. This involves being prepared to wear the crown of suffering in time with glory in our hearts, for they are fixed on eternal realities, where our true reward will be received.
- Lazy pastors, power or money hungry pastors, are strongly rebuked here, and are reminded that the Lord's expectation of them is serious, and the consequences of failure or success (as the Lord determines it), are eternal. The Lord is the Chief Shepherd, he is the one to whom we must give account, and it is his well done that we are to focus on.

THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer. We are commanded to allow Him to fill (or fully control) our lives (Ephesians 5:18).
2. The filling (controlling) of the Spirit can be broken by:
 - a) Grieving the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) – sin, doing something you shouldn't.
 - b) Quenching the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) – not doing something you should (like quenching a fire, allowing the flame to go out).
3. The filling (controlling) of the Spirit can be restored by confession of sin and full surrender to do the will of God (1 John 1:9)
4. The Spirit produces the very character of the Christ in the believer: (Galatians 4:19, 5:22, 23, Ephesians 3:16, 17, Philippians 1:20, 21, 2 Corinthians 3:3)
 - a) The fruit of the Spirit:
 - i) Galatians 5:22-23 – Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control.
 - ii) Romans 14:17 – Righteousness, Peace, Joy.
 - iii) Colossians 3:12-15 – Compassion, Kindness, Humility, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, Love, Peace, Thankfulness.
 - iv) 1 Thessalonians 1:3 – Faith, Love, Endurance, Hope.
 - b) Rejoicing in Christ (Philippians 3:1, 4:4).
 - c) Loving one another (John 15:12, Romans 12:10, Ephesians 5:2).
 - d) Striving for the faith (Philippians 1:27, Jude 3).
 - e) Putting away all sin (1 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 12:1).
 - f) Abstaining from all appearances of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).
 - g) Submitting to injuries (1 Corinthians 6:7).
 - h) Subduing the temper (Ephesians 4:26, James 1:19).
 - i) Shunning the wicked (2 Thessalonians 3:6).
 - j) Abounding in the works of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58 1 Thessalonians 4:1).
 - k) Showing a good example (1 Timothy 4:12, 1 Peter 2:12).
 - l) Following after that which is good (Philippians 4:8, 1 Timothy 6:11).
 - m) Perfecting holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1, 2 Timothy 3:17).
 - n) Hating defilement (Jude 23).
 - o) Overcoming the world. (1 John 5:4-5)
 - p) Adorning the gospel. (Philippians 1:27, Titus 2:10)
 - q) Forgiving injuries. (Romans 12:20)
 - r) Living peaceably with all. (Romans 12:18, Hebrews 12:14)
 - s) Visiting the afflicted. (James 1:27)
 - t) Sympathising with others. (Romans 12:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)
 - u) Honouring others. (Romans 12:10)
 - v) Submitting to authorities. (Romans 13:1-7)
 - w) Being content. (Philippians 4:11, Hebrews 13:5)

- x) Walking worthy of the Lord. (Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12)
- y) Walking in the newness of life. (Romans 6:4)
- z) Walking as children of light. (Ephesians 5:8)
- aa) Glorifies Christ in his body. (Philippians 1:20, 21)
- bb) Christ is at home in his body. (Ephesians 3:16,17)
- cc) A lifestyle which honours God in the presence of men. (2 Corinthians 3:3)

5. The filling of the Holy Spirit in every believer only occurs in two dispensations:

- a) Church age Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23
- b) Millennium – Joel 2:28, 29 (characterized by ecstasies)

HOLY SPIRIT – SINS AGAINST THE SPIRIT

1. **RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT** (Unbelievers only) (Acts 7:51, John 16:8-11) This is hardening to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit.
2. **BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT** (Unbelievers only) (Matthew 12:31) The purpose of the Holy Spirit was to reveal the person of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees rejected this by claiming He was demon possessed.
3. **LYING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT** (Believers only) (Acts 5:1-3) A sin of false motivation. – Ananias and Sapphira.
4. **GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT** (Believers only) (Ephesians 4:30) Any sin which the believer commits.
5. **QUENCHING THE HOLY SPIRIT** (Believers only) (1 Thessalonians 5:19) A believer who is not allowing the Holy Spirit to exert His full influence.
6. **UNPARDONABLE SIN** (Matthew 12:22-32)
 - a) Rejection of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour is the only sin which cannot be forgiven. This unbelief is shown in Matthew 12:24, denying the person and power of Jesus.
 - b) It is impossible for a believer to commit the unpardonable sin. (Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 44:22, 1 John 1:7)

Notes

CHAPTER 11**INTRODUCTION**

Once the Lord's move forward is clearly disclosed the enemy will quickly arrange a counter stroke. We must remember that the enemy of all truth, Satan, has no ability to see the future, nor is God's Plan disclosed to him in any detail that is not already revealed in the scriptures. He is a great bible student and knows the Word of God fully, and he hates what he reads here, but he falsely believes that he can overturn the plan of God. He must react to things once they are openly revealed for he has no advanced warnings.

Remember, Satan is a limited creature; he does not have the power of God, even though he would like believers to think he has. We see his first counter attack upon Israel here with Nahash the Ammonite. He is a satanically inspired man, and we see this by the fruit of his life. Proverbs 12:10, Galatians 5:13-26. Saul faces his first challenge here, and he deals with it totally in the Holy Spirit's power, walking alongside Samuel.

1 SAMUEL 11:1-15

11:1 Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabeshgilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee. **2** And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel. **3** And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if there be no man to save us, we will come out to thee. **4** Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept. **5** And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. **6** And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. **7** And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. **8** And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. **9** And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabeshgilead, To morrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad. **10** Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you. **11** And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together. **12** And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death. **13** And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel. **14** Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. **15** And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. Nahash is a leader of the Ammonites. He is a man who inherits the hatred of these pagan peoples against Israel. Since the days of Moses and Joshua four hundred years before there has been intermittent war between these two peoples. Numbers 21:21ff, Deuteronomy 2:9ff, Judges 11.

The people on the East Bank of the Jordan are exposed to such attacks and they feel they can do nothing other than make a covenant with Nahash, as they lack spiritual and military strength and power to resist his army. He speaks with them from a place of power and his cruelty is soon seen. He requires each man to have his right eye put out. This was normally done with a red hot spear point that destroyed the eye in its socket, but the person lived on in a state of constant humiliation, discomfort and pain. The original inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead had been wiped out because of their disobedience to the call of the Lord and so the people living there now are men of the eastern tribes that have resettled the area. Judges 21:1-15.

Verses 3 – 5. They seek permission of Nahash to ask for help over a seven day period and then promise to come out and submit to him if none stand up to assist them. It seems strange to us that he would allow them to ask for help, but such were the conventions of the ancient world that over confident men would allow their enemies such things. Nahash is foolish in his arrogance, and so are most of Satan's forces. The weakness of the enemy has always been his arrogance, and this is often reflected in his servants. He may have targeted this town because he knows its history and does not expect the other Israelites to assist them.

The messengers of Jabesh-Gilead reach Gibeah, where Saul and his men are staying in their camp. The Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament, records that these events occur one month after the meeting at Gilgal, but we have no clear way of knowing the exact time frame. When the men of Israel hear this news they weep in great grief that such a thing has occurred and that such an insult and challenge is given to the people of God by a pagan.

Saul has been quietly and humbly doing work in the fields while he awaits the call to action as king, and he hears the news as he comes in from the fields. It is another reminder that God wants His people active in practical service while they await further orders from Him. Amos 7:12-16, Matthew 15:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, 5:6-10, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. It is also a reminder that no job or task is to be beneath the servant leader of God's people.

Verses 6 – 10. Saul is immediately spiritually empowered for service against this enemy by the Holy Spirit. He has been quietly awaiting the first challenge as king and he sees that this great evil on the part of Nahash is God's open door for godly service by himself and the army. He has been working in the field with two oxen and he immediately cuts them into pieces and sends the pieces around the nation as a warning that all had better gather to defend their brethren on the East Bank of Jordan or he will take action against them, just as he has cut up his own oxen. This was a traditional way of underlining the seriousness of the evil they faced and the need for concerted and united action. Judges 19:29, 21:1-15.

There is a need for people to have a holy fear of the Lord, for the main temptation of Satan is to produce a casual attitude towards the maker of the universe and His demands upon us. God is the mighty God and we need to remind ourselves of this at times. Hebrews 12:28-29. Fear is at times the evidence of lack of faith, but holy fear is a purifying fire that burns away the nonsense that all too often distracts us from the truth of our obligations to God.

The armies of the twelve tribes all turn out and march towards the East bank. They gather at Bezek and are organised into a united army, and there are 300 "elephs" present. (This word "eleph" is translated thousands, but means "groups" of a number probably in excess of an hundred each). At this distance the numbers are hard to judge, but it will not be 300,000, as this would be larger than any single army in the ancient world, and the total population of the land would not have supported an army of this many men. Number value of the term "eleph" was guessed at in the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament in the 3rd century BC and these have entered our English translations, and so we are to be very cautious about it.

The camp at Bezek was far enough away from the town of Jabesh-Gilead for the Ammonites not to see the Israelite army gather there. The enemy have been over confident and have not sent out patrols to the river, and so have no warning that the Israelites have assembled in strength. Saul sends the messengers back to their town at this point with the message that help will arrive in strength by noon the following day. The slackness and over confidence of the enemy is seen in this action of the messenger to be able to get through o the besieged town. The elders of Jabesh-Gilead have run out of time and must inform the Ammonites of their decision by this very nightfall, and so hearing that the relief army is coming they lie to their enemies that the following day at noon they will surrender.

Once again we are confronted with the truth that the enemy of truth is not entitled to the truth. John 8:44-45. In battle against the enemy of mankind believers are to prayerfully take all actions that will ensure maximum damage to the enemy. This means at times lying directly to evil men to stop them destroying innocent lives. Is it right to lie then? The Biblical record is clear on this. It is always right and proper to lie directly to the enemy who will otherwise use the truth to destroy innocent people! Satan is simply not entitled to the truth, for we are at war with him, and the essence of warfare is deception and destruction of the enemy's plans, his power bases, and his people. Those who are not clear on such things are unready to safely lead God's people into battle against evil forces.

Verses 11 – 15. The next day, very early in the morning, Saul will lead his army in three corps towards the enemy's campsite. The enemy have relaxed their guard even further as a result of the message of the men of Jabesh-Gilead the evening before and are expecting surrender at midday.

Saul's army rises very early and moves quickly and silently, and attacks the enemy camp in what is called the "bulls head" configuration, with the central force (the head) led by himself, and the right and left corps led by his generals(the horns). In this formation it is difficult for any surprised force to escape as the attackers surge around their flanks and cut off their escape.

The army of Israel hits the enemy in the "morning watch", which was between 2am and 6 am. This is a dawn attack and catches the Ammonites unprepared and slaughters them in large numbers. The only survivors are lone men who run fast enough to escape the slaughter. Note again those of you who wish to "play fairly" with Satan and his forces; there is nothing "fair" in this attack, for it is designed to totally destroy the enemy. That is our standing orders as believers in battle against the enemy; destroy every stronghold of the Devil you can! Walk in the Spirit and destroy the enemy's hold over fallen men and women, and do it thoroughly in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are to have this battle mental attitude towards evil, and certainly we are not to expect fairness and decency from the enemy, nor are we to act in such a way towards them. If you are called to engage the forces of evil, do not expect decency, and show no mercy in your dealings with these evil people. Set out to destroy every stronghold of Satan and launch your attacks upon them suddenly, without warning, and with the desire to destroy their power bases entirely.

The people can see that Saul has the right mental attitude to confront the evils they have to deal with. He is at this point God directed and has the ruthlessness that is required when up against such people. If you are acting against evil do not act with any weakness or hesitancy. If you feel hesitant, then do not act until you have the certainty that God gives, and that you see illustrated here.

We have recently had an example of weakness on the part of good people here in my own city. A leading pornographer, who operates cleverly within the law, ran a nude parade in our main street. Godly and even some moral unbelievers were offended, and tried to stop him by weak legal manoeuvring. They failed pathetically and looked pathetic in their attempt, and every pervert in town turned up to see the nude women in the parade the pornographer put on.

God's people were defeated because they acted weakly, without a realisation of the ruthless evil that drives this evil man. The same thing happened two years later with the church's weakness in facing the Homosexual Marriage debate – referring to it as the "Marriage Equality Bill" – it passed although 78% of the population opposed it. It passed by total manipulation of the media.

If we are to act against evil we must act with far more strength than many of God's people are used to showing. That is why these stories are recorded here for us. Let us be men, and be strong in the Lord, and when we act, let the pagans beware, or let us not act at all. Deuteronomy 31:6-7, Joshua 1:6-18, 1 Corinthians 16:13, 2 Corinthians 10:4, Ephesians 6:10, 2 Timothy 2:1, Hebrews 11:34.

The Israelites are recalled to Gilgal again by Samuel after the great victory at Jabesh-Gilead. Many now see clearly that Saul is indeed the God anointed king, proven now by victory in the field, and some seek vengeance upon those Israelites who spoke against him. Saul and Samuel stop any vengeance upon these "sons of Belial" (1 Samuel 10:27), for they have turned up and fought in this battle, and their determined present obedience excuses them from their previously deserved judgement.

Obedience is what is required of God's people and even if we sin greatly we are forgiven if we confess our sins and obey the Lord thereafter. Psalm 103:10-18. The people return to Gilgal and now they formally acknowledge that Saul is their king and they rejoice over the Lord's deliverance of their enemies into their hands by the offering of sacrifices. The peace offering is especially mentioned, for the peace they enjoy physically is because the Lord has given them spiritual peace through the blood of the sacrifice.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Satan is not all knowing. He does not read minds, nor have the power that some believers give him. He is a limited creature and does not have any of God's secrets. Since the Cross and Resurrection, he is also a defeated creature, whose power centres in his ability to distract, deceive and deviate people from the truth. When the Holy Spirit directs us to do a certain action, our open discussion of it is the first thing Satan hears of it. He will react to all moves of the Holy Spirit and try to counter them, and this is why we must act with decisiveness and spiritual strength. If we move obediently we will always keep Satan off balance, but if we hesitate and delay we open the door for his counter attack in power. Let us walk with the Holy Spirit without any delay.

2. While we wait for clear orders from the Lord we are to wait in godly activity. If we are without clear orders to advance into a new project, then we are to do what is our "Daily Orders", namely Bible study, prayer, and service to others. We are to remain fit, healthy, and be always ready to obey the Lord when He orders us to move out on any task. A soldier may train a life time and be required to fight only one major battle. His challenge, and ours, is to be ready to spring into action when the call comes. Let us daily train for the battles the Lord wants fought. Let us be physically and spiritually fit for action.

3. The enemy is not to be dealt with "fairly" but ruthlessly. We are at war with Satan and all his forces and we are to deal with evil as it truly is and not be fooled by any false politeness. We are not here to shake the hand of evil but destroy their evil works. If you are a leader of God's people you must have a battlefield mental attitude and be ready to even lie directly to evil men to protect the innocent. You must be ready to do all things, so that by all means you might save some from evil.

REFLECTION UPON SATAN – OUR ADVERSARY

1. SCRIPTURE Genesis 3; Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28; Matthew 4; Revelation.
2. BIOGRAPHY

Satan is the most beautiful creature ever to be created by God. He is an angel who rebelled against God before the creation of man (Isaiah 14:12-15). Originally he was the covering angel, the personal attendant of Jesus Christ in the very throne room of God. Unlike God, Satan is a created being and as such can only be in one place at any one time. He is attended by a vast number of angels (called demons) who have given him unswerving allegiance. After the creation of man, he tempted Adam and Eve to be as gods and to know good and evil by disobeying God. Satan then became the ruler of this world (Genesis 3:1-7). He attacked the human race in many ways prior to the birth of Jesus Christ. Throughout Jesus Christ's life, Satan attacked the Lord. Since Christ's victory at the cross he attacks believers. Satan still has access into heaven where he accuses the brethren. Halfway through the tribulation period Satan is thrown out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9). This causes him to intensify his attack on the human race. During the millennium he is confined to the bottomless pit, allowing a perfect environment on the earth (Revelation 20:1-3). After a brief rebellion at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:7-10), Satan is condemned to the eternal lake of fire which was created for the devil and his angels.

3. EVALUATION

Satan is called:

- a) The destroyer (Revelation 9:11).
- b) The accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10).
- c) The adversary (1 Peter 5:8).
- d) Beelzebub, prince of devils (Matthew 12:24).
- e) The deceiver of the whole world (Revelation 12:9).
- f) The great dragon (Revelation 12:9).
- g) An enemy (Matthew 13:28,29).
- h) The wicked one (Matthew 13:19,38).
- i) The father of lies (John 8:44).
- j) The god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4).
- k) A murderer (John 8:44).
- l) The prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2).
- m) The ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30).
- n) The ancient serpent (Revelation 12:9).
- o) The tempter (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5).
- p) A blinder of minds (2 Corinthians 4:4).
- q) A roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8).

4. PRINCIPLES

- a) Believers are in Christ and therefore in a position of supremacy over Satan (Romans 8:37).
- b) Satan was defeated at the cross once and for all (Colossians 2:14,15).
- c) He can therefore only use devices and schemes, trying to convince the believer that he can still win the battle against God.
- d) Satan, through religion, tries to get man to work independently from God.
- e) A Christian out of fellowship can promote principles proposed by Satan (Matthew 4:8-10; Mark 8:33).
- f) Satan will use Scripture slightly changed, or added to, to try and confuse believers and lead them astray (Matthew 4:3-10; cf. Psalm 91:11,12).
- g) If Satan the adversary is resisted he will flee from you (James 4:7).
- h) Knowledge and application of the Scriptures is essential in understanding the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11).

SATANIC ATTACK UPON BELIEVERS

- 1. As believers we battle two enemies; the Old Sin Nature from within (Romans 7:18, 8:8, Galatians 5:16-19) and Satan without. (John 8:44, 1 John 3:8)
- 2. We must know what Satan is up to and learn his strategies so that we might be ready and alert. (2 Corinthians 2:11)
- 3. Satan's most potent attack is to install false pastor teachers within the church who teach just enough false doctrine to sidetrack foolish believers. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)
- 4. Satan attacks believer's assurance of salvation.
- 5. He also accuses believers of sin both to God and to the believer in the form of guilt. (Revelation 12:9-10)
- 6. Satan wants us to trust our feelings; God wants us to trust His Word. (Romans 8:1)
- 7. Satan lures believers away from the Word (Genesis 3:4) whilst God wants believers stabilised upon His Word. (Isaiah 26:3)
- 8. Satan hinders believers from doing the geographical and operational will of God.
- 9. Satan will do all he can to hinder the believer's growth: (2 Peter 5:18)
 - a) by getting the believer's eyes off Christ and onto self, others or circumstances
 - b) by encouraging lust for material things over spiritual growth
 - c) by encouraging mental attitude sins.
- 10. Satan is the author of sin and the founder of fear. We are not called to fear but to faith. (2 Timothy 1:7)

OUR DAILY ORDERS FOR SPIRITUAL BATTLE

The five "Daily Orders" for the battle against the adversary, to be applied in the church age, in the power of the Holy Spirit are found in 1Peter 5:8,9. They will protect us against the cunning of the "lion".

- 1.) **Be Sober!** - At all times be self controlled, not under the control of any emotion, or any other substance (drink or drugs), but only by the Holy Spirit. Romans 13:11-13. 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8.
- 2.) **Be Vigilant!** - At all times, stay awake to danger, don't relax your guard, don't get careless.
- 3.) **Resist!** - Stand up to, resist, oppose everything he stands for. Zero tolerance of evil is to be the standard for our lives. Also refer, Luke 4:3-12, Ephesians 4:27, 6:11-13, James 4:7.
- 4.) **Be steadfast** in the faith once delivered to the apostles! Be unbreakable, stand as a solid mass of soldiers resisting attack. Stand with the apostolic doctrines, and their practices. As a local church be united, stand together, tight and committed to each other.
- 5.) **Keep on knowing you are not alone!** All believers suffer pressures when they stand for their Lord.

OBEDIENCE

1. Obedience is better than offerings (1 Samuel 15:22; Proverbs 21:3; 28:9). If we are not in God's will, any "worship" we offer is unacceptable.
2. Obedience is something you have to learn. The basic training in obedience has to start in childhood. As it says in (Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16) "Honour your father and your mother." (Proverbs 4:3,4; 22:6; 29:15-17; Hebrews 5:8)
3. Teaching your child obedience is an act of love (Proverbs 3:12; 19:18; 23:13-14).
4. We have to obey those who are in authority over us (Exodus 20:12; 22:28; Leviticus 19:3; Deuteronomy 5:16; Romans 13:1-5; Ephesians 6:1-5; Colossians 3:18-22; Titus 3:1).
5. Those in authority have been put in that position by God (Romans 13:1).
6. Obedience to those in authority is obedience to God (Proverbs 24:21; Ephesians 6:7; Colossians 3:23-24; Romans 13:5).
7. Disobedience to those in authority is disobedience to God (Romans 1:30; 13:2).
8. But when we are ordered to do something that is against God's Will we have to disobey (Acts 4:19; 5:40-42).
9. The fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16) is the only commandment with a promise (Proverbs 10:17; Ephesians 6:1-3). Social life in a society is only possible when the people in it have learned to obey.
10. If this commandment is ignored, if the authority of the family is denied or not exercised, society will quickly slide into anarchy (Isaiah 3:12; Proverbs 29:21; 30:21-23; Romans 1:30).

OUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE

1. Our duty is to surrender our entire lives to God. (Romans 12:1)
2. Willingness is essential. (Judges 5:2, 8:25, Isaiah 1:19, 2 Corinthians 8:3)
3. Service in the big things requires by faithfulness in the small things.
4. Monotony and difficulties are transformed into the opportunities with the correct attitude (Matthew 6:33)
5. Everything we do should be "as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:17)
6. Service to Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men (Romans 14:18)
7. Our work should be completed. (John 4:34, 17:4, Acts 20:24, 2 Timothy 4:7)
8. The example of Christ. (Matthew 20:28, Luke 22:27, Philippians 2:7)
9. Qualities of our service:-
 - a) It is demanded. (Hebrews 12:28)
 - b) It should be immediate. (Matthew 21:28)
 - c) It is abundant. (1 Corinthians 15:58)
 - d) It is according to ability. (Matthew 25:22, Luke 12:48)
 - e) It is in co-operation with God. (2 Corinthians 6:1)
 - f) Must be exclusive (Luke 16:13)
 - g) In the power of the spirit (Romans 1:9)

- h) Undertaken in Godly fear (Hebrews 12:28)
- i) Motivated by love (Galatians 5:13)

10. It is:-

- a) Following Christ (John 12:26)
- b) For him whom all Christians serve (Colossians 3:24)
- c) Service to God (Acts 27:23).

11. It requires:-

- a) Turning from idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9)
- b) Fasting and prayer (Luke 2:37)
- c) Ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-4).

12. Benefits of Service:-

- a) It glorifies God. (Matthew 5:16, John 15:8)
- b) It enriches life. (1 Timothy 6:18-19)
- c) It gives a pattern for imitation. (Titus 2:7)
- d) It encourages others in their tasks. (Hebrews 10:24)
- e) It shows neighbourliness. (Luke 10:36-37)
- f) It lightens life's burdens. (Galatians 6:2,16)
- g) It demonstrates love. (John 21:15-17)
- h) It demonstrates faith. (James 2:17-18, 1 Peter 2:12)
- i) It is Christlike. (John 13:12-15)

Notes

CHAPTER 12**INTRODUCTION**

Samuel is a prophet of God, and a pastor of the people. As their pastor he is a preacher of the truth and he takes every opportunity to teach doctrinal truths to the people. The appointment of a king to rule over them is a turning point for their national life and so he speaks to the nation as Moses and Joshua had before, to warn them of the dangers in the years ahead with their king. They have a king now, but they are still to be dependent upon, and obedient to the Lord. If they trust in their king rather than the Lord then both they and their king will be defeated and destroyed.

It is easy to place our trust in the people we see as our great leaders, but behind them is to be spiritual authority and power, or all we have is a weak and feeble man. 2 Chronicles 32:6-8, Job 25:4, 26:1-2, 40:1-14, Psalms 89:8-14, Isaiah 40:28-31, 51:7-14. As you read these verses be encouraged in your own life to depend alone upon the Lord God who made the heavens and the earth, and no matter how hard the situation you face, relax in His arms of strength.

1 SAMUEL 12:1-25

12:1 And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. **2** And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and gray headed; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. **3** Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. **4** And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. **5** And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness. **6** And Samuel said unto the people, It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. **7** Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers. **8** When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. **9** And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. **10** And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee. **11** And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe. **12** And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king. **13** Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you. **14** If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God: **15** But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers. **16** Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. **17** Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king. **18** So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. **19** And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king. **20** And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; **21** And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. **22** For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people. **23** Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: **24** Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. **25** But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. Samuel is upset with the people at their desire for a king. There is great human sadness behind his words, for his sons have failed to be the men they could have been, and so they are unfit to follow him as judges of Israel. There is also the spiritual sadness of a prophet who can see where things will lead with the king. Samuel knows human nature, and he has been given divine insight into the future of Israel. He also knows the words of Moses in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27 – 32.

Samuel excuses himself from any sin or evil in the matter of the king's appointment. He has reluctantly anointed Saul, as he can see that this is the only way now for the nation to move forward, but he has done this with a heavy heart. He mentions his sons, and it is hard not to feel his deep sorrow that they are not "with the people" as their leaders. Samuel has a feeling of failure as a father at this point, but he knows that he can say he has walked with God until this very day and is without any blame for the evils that have unfolded and will unfold in the days to come.

Samuel is old here, but has a number of years left to minister. He wants the people to walk with God as he has through his life. Isaiah 46:3-4, 2 Timothy 4:1-8, 2 Peter 1:12-15. He is stepping aside in favour of Saul here, and will accept that he is now simply the mentor of the new leader and no longer himself the leader of the people. Numbers 17:15-23, John 3:30. He will find himself replaced actively by Saul, who will ignore more and more of his words, and he will end his life under effective house arrest. This man faces a terrible end to his life, without the blessing and revival he had prayed for, but he does see David, who he knows will bring in a better day and be a better man.

Verses 3 – 6. Samuel does what every pastor-teacher of God's people must be prepared to do; he opens himself to any attacks on the basis of dishonesty. If a pastor-teacher can be convicted of any undealt with sin, then he is disqualified from all leadership roles. Samuel notes the sins of men in power that centre in the abuse of their power and authority to take things from others. It was common in the ancient world for rulers to simply seize anything they wanted from their people and call it their right (a tax).

Samuel invites any to bring any accusations of abuse, oppression, fraud, or any other sin of dishonesty against him. He is without offence in this area, and sadly he knows that Saul and those who follow him will not be. The people loudly proclaim that he is innocent of any charges of sin against him. Saul hears all these words and is challenged by them to have the same godly standards Samuel has had. 2 Corinthians 12:10-13, 1 Thessalonians 2:5-12, 1 Timothy 3:2-11, 1 Peter 5:1-4.

Samuel specifically appoints Saul as his witness this day as well as calling the people to remember this speech. Saul is referred to as "the Lord's anointed" and he and the people are to remember that it is the Lord who has appointed him. Saul is being directly challenged to uphold the same standards as Samuel by this statement and the people answer aloud that "he is witness", noting that they will also hold Saul responsible for his behaviours before the Lord.

Samuel now begins to speak of the past mentors for the king who have passed on before him; he cites Moses and Aaron especially. Both these men served and failed and then served again. Their greatness was not that they lived without sin, but that they faced their sins and dealt with them before the Lord and still devoted themselves to service until their deaths. Nehemiah 9:9ff, Psalms 37:3-7, 77:9-20, 78:12, Isaiah 63:9-14.

Verses 7 – 9. The people are solemnly called to stand still and hear of the works of God amongst their ancestors so that they might be expectant of God working in their generation. The looking back into history is not meant to be reflective and nostalgic, but inspirational and challenging. We are meant to stand on our spiritual ancestor's shoulders, not look back to them with longing for their days. We are called to do greater works, not lesser. John 5:19-21, 14:12.

Samuel's point to the gathered people, is that all the great deeds done were done in the strength of the Lord, and within the clear plan of the Lord. Their strength and power as a people in the past had been dependent totally upon their close walk with God, and their future depended upon the same thing. The tragedy of Israel is that they kept on forgetting this lesson.

The people had cried to the Lord in Egypt and they were delivered by Moses and Aaron, but they soon forgot the Lord again and were judged by enemy attack in the land. The first great challenge coming from Sisera, Judges 2:14-15, 3:7-10, 4:1ff. Samuel then brings them to their own day when the Philistines have been their bane and their judgment for their own evil. Judges 10:7, 13:1. He mentions also the king of Moab as their enemy also, Judges 3, 11, and this provides the connection between the Canaanite oppression early in the settlement of the land and the Philistines at the end of the period.

Verses 10 – 12. The key to turning the judgment into blessing and deliverance was thorough repentance, and this meant genuine life change associated with the words of sorrow and their requests for forgiveness. It is genuine repentance that God seeks, not some "nod to God" and fake ritual. The Lord wants change in the heart and life, not the pious words of hypocritical lips. God requires we acknowledge that we have sinned against the Lord, and prove we are serious about our prayer request by genuine life change.

The specific nature of the sins being confessed has always to be identified to the Lord. The Lord demands that we "cite the case" (Greek = omologeō – 1 John 1:9) and name the specific sin we are coming forward to deal with so that we remember it and eliminate it from our life. The main sin of the Israelites continued to be their adding in of paganism alongside their worship of the one true God. They embraced the pagan household gods, the Baalim and Ashtaroth statues of the fertility cult of the Canaanites. Judges 2:13, 3:7. These rituals were both food and sex based, and were pleasant and pleasure centred and so gained great popularity amongst those who didn't want the seriousness of the truth.

This remains the danger for us all today, with many seeking pleasant and relaxed worship in error rather than serious confrontation with the truth. God calls us to worship in "Spirit and in Truth". John 4:23, 8:32-46, 14:6, 17:17-19, Galatians 4:16, Ephesians 4:15. Satan's false religions always have pleasant aspects to them, because he has always been into marketing and deception. The pleasantries were soon over in paganism then, as still today, and naked evil emerged quickly with sexual immorality, child abuse and ritual murder.

The Israelite's main concern was for deliverance, but the Lord would not move to assist them until they put away their evil religious nonsense, lest the pagan gods get the credit for the deliverance. The actions required were, confession of sin, putting away of the pagan gods, and worshipping the Lord again in spirit and in truth with all their hearts. The Lord was their king, and when they acknowledged that with genuine worship they were blessed and protected by the Lord.

Samuel reminds the people of the judges sent by the Lord in response to their prayers of confession. A new name appears here with Bedan, but this may simply be an alternative name for Jair of Gilead. Samuel includes himself as the last judge. There is no arrogance in this, for he is simply recording history and reminding the people that the nation's history has turned a corner with the appointment of Saul.

The days of the judges are over now, and the days of the kings have begun. Samuel notes that he is the hinge to the two periods. He has been a deliverer from the Philistines, but just like all the other judges, his deliverance has not been total, for the persistent sins of the Israelite people have kept their enemy stronger than them, and enabled the pagans to avoid their own final judgment.

It will only be in the days of David that the enemy will be defeated fully and finally, and the victory then will centre in the spiritual revival that occurs around the tabernacle. The peace that Solomon will enjoy later flows from the worship at the Temple, just as all blessing for believers flows from real worship. Their worship of the pagan gods leads to disasters, just as their return to the true worship opens the channels of God's blessing.

The joy of the Lord is our strength! Exodus 15:2, 2 Samuel 22:33, Nehemiah 8:10, Psalms 21:1, 28:7-8, 48:1, 62:7, Proverbs 10:29, Jeremiah 16:19, Habakkuk 3:19. Let us sing these verses in our worship and praise the Lord God who alone is our strength and shield from all dangers.

Verses 13 – 15. The words of Samuel run a parallel course to the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 27:9 – 28:15. There are always two paths for all men laid out before them. The first fork in the road of life centres around the choice of salvation, and those who select the path of God are saved eternally, and those who choose their own broad way of self centred pleasure head for eternal damnation. Matthew 7:13-14.

Having chosen God's path, the believer faces another daily fork on their road of life; the narrow way of spirituality, or the broad way of carnality. 1 Corinthians 3:1-15. If we obey the Lord we live under His power and blessing in this life, and receive rewards in eternity, but if we reject His words we face His divine discipline in this life, and judgment that involves loss of possible rewards in eternity. Luke 12:35-59, John 12:47-48, Hebrews 10:24-31.

The orders of Samuel are as clear as those of Moses; for nothing changes in the spiritual realm. Man is to have a holy and purifying fear of the Lord, and so be obedient to the Lord's commands each and every day. Titus 2:14, Hebrews 6:11-19, James 4:8, 1 Peter 1:3. There is no other way to serve the Lord in power, but through daily study of and obedience to His revealed Holy Word. The issue is respect for the Lord God of all. If you have a true perspective of who God is, then you will respect Him and stand in awe of His holy character and His almighty power.

True worship and obedience go together, and both flow naturally from a full (or even a partial) appreciation of the one with is the creator of this universe and the Saviour of mankind. Samuel urges these people and ourselves, to open our eyes to the truth about who God is and who we are as His creatures. A correct viewpoint of reality opens the door to worship and obedience; it is only satanic deception that can lead a person to ignore this overwhelming reality.

The people are reminded that history is their educator. Their fathers rebelled against the Lord God and so they were judged by many situations of divine discipline upon them. If the present generation wants to avoid the judgements that plagued their fathers, then they need to learn from history rather than repeat it. Obedience = blessing, and disobedience = judgement. It has always been that simple!

Both the king and the people are equal before the Lord in the matter of spirituality. Both need to humble themselves before the Lord and obey His commands. Arrogance is satanic in origin and based upon satanic deception, for there is nothing in mankind that we can be arrogant about. Look up to the stars little man and then bow before your creator! Of all generations of mankind, we today, who can see the images from the Hubble Space Telescope, should be on our knees before the one who hung the universe together. Psalms 8:1-5, Hebrews 2:1-10.

Verses 16 – 18. The time of this meeting is now given to us. It is the time of the wheat harvest, which occurred between May and June, and at that time it never rains in Palestine. To have a great thunder storm and heavy rain is a sign that the Lord is doing a special thing, to underline that He is indeed Lord of the entire creation. If God is in control of the weather system, then He can rule over every other detail of man's life, and that is God's and Samuel's point here. God's power is to be seen and the Lord alone is to be worshipped by these rebellious people. The people greatly feared the Lord; they stood in awe of the power of God when they saw the rain and heard the thunder.

Why did they not just look into the heavens each night and stand in awe of God? Why do men today not stand in awe of the creator of the universe? This is one of the great mysteries of human nature, that some value their own intellect and puny power ahead of the one who made them. Psalms 14:1, 53:1, Proverbs 24:7. Notice the purpose of the miracle; that it is to convince the people of their evil of unbelief, and their evil of disobedience to the one who made them. Isaiah 64:1-8, Jeremiah 18:1-10.

Verses 19 – 25. The people now quickly request Samuel to pray for them that they might live and prosper before the Lord their God. In making this request they prove that they personally lack the dynamic and real relationship with the Lord where they can relax in their own prayers. This is the challenge for all men; can we bow before the Lord ourselves in times of difficulty and pressure, or do we have to seek a “holy man” because our relationship with the Lord is not good enough?

We are to walk close to the Lord, or we will lack power and perception as we stagger through this life. We can walk like men and women of God through this world, or we can grovel in the dust of despair and dismay. 1 Corinthians 16:13. To bow before the Lord is to renew strength. We either bow to the earth in worship of the Holy God or we will grovel in the same dust in servile terror at reality when it eventually breaks through our foolishness! Isaiah 40:28-31, 45:17-25.

The people see that asking for a king had its roots in their own lack of spiritual life; they have trusted in the power of a man rather than God. They ask Samuel to pray for forgiveness for them all for this. Samuel does not excuse them, but urges them forward in obedience now to the Lord’s Word, for their obedience now can turn cursing into blessing. This is God’s pattern for us still. As we advance the evil things of the past are grown past through our obedience.

We cannot undo a decision that was wrong, but if we commit to total obedience to the Lord from the point of confession, then we will be lifted up in any circumstance we find ourselves in. God transforms all situations through our obedience to His Holy Word. By whole hearted confession of sin, worship, and service to the Lord we open the doors of blessing into the worst situations. This remains the plan of God for us all. Romans 8:26-28, 35-39.

Backsliding is the result of taking our eyes off the goal of this life, which is to bring glory to the Lord our God. To turn away from the path of the Lord is to turn into disaster, for blessing is only on the “narrow way” of the will of the Lord for us. Matthew 7:13-23.

We can have absolute security if we are on the path of the Lord for us, but off the path of God for our life there is equally absolute insecurity and danger. Romans 8:28-39, Jude 11-13. God will not forsake His people. Even when we are judged and disciplined for great evil, it is only to awaken us to reality, secure our confession and open the door to our forgiveness and restoration. Deuteronomy 31:16-18, Psalms 94:14, Isaiah 41:17, 42:16, Jeremiah 33:25-26, Hebrews 12:5-13, 13:5-6.

It is God’s sovereign choice to make us His people. We are chosen people in Christ Jesus, and as such we are under God’s special protection. We have to very deliberately walk away to be judged by Him. Remember, Judgement is God’s “strange work”; it is never His preferred choice for us. Isaiah 28:21. The Lord is literally “tapping His foot” waiting to bless us. Isaiah 30:18.

Samuel also notes that for pastors of God’s people it is a sin against God to fail to pray for the flock of God. We are all called to pray for one another and to fail consistently to do so is to have fallen into the sin of self centeredness. Samuel will demonstrate his ministry in prayer and Bible teaching to these people, for that is the duty of the pastor, and his responsibility before the Lord. Acts 12:5, Romans 1:8-10, Colossians 1:9-11, 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13, 2 Timothy 1:3-5.

The challenge for the people is to hear the words spoken, and to respond to the truths of God with respect, awe and obedience in the details of daily life. Proverbs 1:7, 3:5-8, Hebrews 12:28-29. They must remember that the blessing and curses spoken of by Moses still apply and will apply throughout all history for God’s people. If we obey we will be blessed, and if we rebel and reject the truth we will be destroyed, and no great leader can save us when the Lord is not for us. Deuteronomy 28:15, 36-37.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

All who would serve in leadership roles need to be “without blame”. This does not mean that they have not sinned, for all have, but that any sin has been dealt with thoroughly, and they cannot be accused rightfully of any sin pattern in their life now. There also are some sins that permanently disqualify believers from all leadership roles, and no leader can be accused of these. Any pattern of adultery in life, unjust violence, or financial dishonesty, permanently disqualifies a man from leadership.

2. Remember these things apply to their life as a believer, not to any previous life as a pagan. God transforms people and makes them fit to serve Him, but once on that path any patterns of sins that mean others cannot trust that person disqualify them from ever leading others. God’s leaders must have the absolute trust of the people, and anything that breaks that trust is to be dealt with immediately and finally.

3. All servants of the Lord must open their lives to scrutiny by the Lord’s people. Any pastor who is not prepared to be checked out as to his life patterns is not fit to lead God’s people. God’s standards are far higher than those of the world. Divinely appointed leadership is divinely empowered leadership, and anything less than this will not achieve the plan of God for the church or group. It is God alone who takes ordinary men like Moses and Aaron, Samuel and Saul, and makes them great men and servants of the living God. It is God alone who lifts us up and makes us great in our service also. We walk in the Holy Spirit’s power alone to be powerful servants of the Lord.

4. We are to walk the “Narrow Way” of Spirituality in this life, and resist the many daily temptations to stray into Carnality. It is always easier to walk following the lusts of our Old Sin Nature, but the Lord calls us to walk in Holy Spirit

power on the harder, narrower way, of spiritual life. It is only this harder way that opens the door to real spiritual power for us. It is only walking in the Spirit that opens the door to real spiritual production, earthly blessings, and then finally, eternal rewards. We are to serve at a higher level than our spiritual ancestors. God calls us to stand on the shoulders of those who went before, not look up to them alone. Let us be challenged on this matter.

5. God has chosen us to be His people, and as His people we are under His special protection. We get out from under the blessings of the Lord only by deliberate acts of disobedience and all such acts are foolishness to a high level. Even then we can be restored if we remain alive, and the Lord taps His foot waiting to bless us again. Let us repent in truth and confess our sins and be restored if we have drifted away due to our own old sin nature's stupidity.

REFLECTION UPON GENUINE REPENTANCE

1. Two words are translated repentance in the New Testament:-

a) Metanoia - META - to change, NOIA - the mind, which means to change one's opinion or mind about something or someone.

b) Meta Melamai - to feel sorry for - an emotional reaction because of acts undertaken.

2. Repentance in salvation is to change one's attitude toward the person and work of Christ. (Luke 13:3,5, 15:7, 10, 16:30, 31, Acts 17:30, 31, 20:21, Romans 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9)

3. Repentance is used in salvation mainly for the Jews. The Jews had seen Christ as a great teacher, a wise man, a prophet. They repented and now recognised him as the Son of God. In the case of the Gentiles, the word believe is used. (Acts 16:31) as they had no previous ideas about the person of Christ.

4. The Fruit of Meta Melamai, such as penance and sorrow does not save. E.g. Judas repented of his actions and went to eternal damnation.

5. However, Godly sorrow works repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:8-11)

6. The Holy Spirit is responsible for repentance in salvation. (1 Corinthians 2:14, John 16:8-11) It convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment.

7. The Believer is told to repent from dead works or human good.

8. When God repents it is symbolic (Genesis 6:6, Exodus 32:14, Judges 2:18, 1 Samuel 15:35, Jeremiah 15:6, Amos 7:3, 6, Hebrews 7:21)

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

1. Forgiveness is by the death of Christ. (Matthew 26:28, Revelation 1:5)

2. Divine forgiveness is to all who believe in Christ. (Acts 10:43, Acts 16:31)

3. The penalty of sin was paid by Christ on the Cross. (Hebrews 9:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21)

4. When a believer sins his fellowship with God is disrupted. God forgives these sins upon confession and cleanses from the unknown sins in the believer's life as well as known sins. (1 John 1:9).

5. Jesus Christ is our propitiation. (1 John 2:1,2)

6. In human forgiveness we are told to forgive others even as God has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). This can only be accomplished by the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23)

7. Steps towards restoration of fellowship

[a] Examine yourself for genuineness of motivation. (2 Corinthians 14:5)

[b] Act on what you see (Romans 4:7-8)

[c] Deal with any sin by confession. (1 John 1:9, Psalm 66:18)

[d] Forget the sin you have confessed. Do not proceed into a pattern of guilt. (Philippians 3:13-14, Psalm 103:10-12)

[e] Resume your active spiritual walk. Avoid areas where you might be tempted by the sin which so easily besets us. (Hebrews 12:12-13)

[f] Be reconciled to others once you have been reconciled to God. (James 5:16)

[g] Get moving and grow up. (2 Peter 2:17-18)

CHAPTER 13**INTRODUCTION**

The first Philistine crisis for Saul comes in the middle of his reign. As we will see below the text is flawed in the early verses of this chapter, for the events described here are the turning point of Saul's reign, rather than the start of his reign. He is challenged to stand in faith, even if he has very few men with him. In this chapter he faces the test of Gideon and he fails the test. It is under great pressure, but he fails to wait for the Lord's word, and offers the sacrifice that only the priest was authorised to offer. In doing this he is told that the kingdom will pass from him to another whose heart is more focused upon the Lord.

If the received text is correct here, (and I will argue, with most other commentators, that there is a missing line here in verses one and two), very shortly after the great victory over the Ammonites there is great defeat at the hands of the Philistines. It has taken apparently only two years for Saul to fall short of the Lord's standards. From the account we have before us, only two years have passed since the defeat of the Ammonites, and yet he has been unable to obtain the weapons that they needed to fight the Philistine enemy. Something is wrong here about the translation we have, or the standard interpretation of this passage.

When the Ammonites were defeated their bodies would have been stripped and the weapons they had held would have been taken by Saul for Israel's use. For the Israelite army to be without weapons only apparently two years after they had access to tens of thousands of weapons is inconceivable. We know the weapons of the Philistine were iron and those of others around them were mainly of bronze, and my suggestion will be that this is what the writer is referring to; that Israel lacked any iron weapons, for they certainly had plenty of bronze ones from the Ammonites.

There is another strange thing here. The Philistines have maintained their blockade over the land of Israel, and garrisons still exist throughout the land of Israel and yet the Lord has neither ordered Saul to deal with them, nor have they challenged the new king. There is also the fact that Jonathan is mentioned later in this chapter as a young general of one of the army groups, and yet Saul is a young man at that start of his reign, and would not have a twenty year old son at that point. These are all inexplicable things, which we will address and provide tentative answers to as we go through this chapter and the next.

1 SAMUEL 13:1-23

13:1 Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, **2** Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent. **3** And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. **4** And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal. **5** And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven. **6** When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. **7** And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. **8** And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. **9** And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. **10** And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. **11** And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; **12** Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. **13** And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. **14** But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee. **15** And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men. **16** And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. **17** And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual: **18** And another company turned the way to Bethhoron: and another company turned to the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. **19** Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears: **20** But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock. **21** Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads. **22** So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found. **23** And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. In the Hebrew way of writing the reign of a new king is introduced with his age when he begins to reign, and then the writer states how long he reigns, and then there is a summary of his life and work before the story returns to key events that are to be highlighted further. 2 Samuel 2:10, 5:4, 1 Kings 14:21, 22:42, 2 Kings 8:26.

The reference to the number of years involved in these first verses indicate that there is a problem in our received Masoretic text. It reads in effect, "Saul was one year old when he began to reign as king" and this is clearly wrong. The older Septuagint translation, and the Babylonian paraphrase record this verse as, "Saul was an innocent young man/child when he began to reign". This makes sense, ties in with the previous chapters, and puts his age at between fourteen and twenty years.

He will reign for around forty years over Israel, and his youngest son Ish-Bosheth was forty at the time of his father's death, so Saul was clearly an early adult around the time he began to reign, and was married. For Jonathan to rule over an army group he would need to be at least around twenty years of age and the impression we gain is that he was not in his sixties when he dies on Mt Gilboa. Saul dies in battle after forty years of reigning over Israel, and if he had Jonathan as an adult son at the start point, then he would be around eighty, and yet that is not the impression we get at all later in First Samuel.

We have a problem here in the text we have received and the Hebrew commentators knew that themselves even as far back as 300 BC when the Septuagint translation was made, but they didn't alter the text to make it work, they simply recognised they lacked a line here that would have made sense of it. We must just sit with this problem, for the answers given are only speculations. The explanation I give is tentative only, but I believe that the writer indicates Saul is a young man when he starts to reign, and later dies in the final battle of his reign, still only in his sixties. At that time Jonathan's son is only five years old when he dies. This is Mephibosheth, who David will show kindness to. 2 Samuel 4:4, 9:6-13.

Jonathan is around forty when he dies, and David is around thirty at the same time, when he starts to reign after the death of Jonathan. 2 Samuel 5:4. Their ages are close enough for the great friendship to form between them. This means that the story we have of Jonathan here in this chapter is one that occurs at least twenty years into the reign of Saul, around the half way point in his reign with Jonathan a great warrior around twenty years old. The writer begins the story half way through Saul's reign because this event is the turning point for Saul and gives us the spiritual perspective upon his later failures. David will enter the scene within a few years of the events recorded here at another confrontation between the Philistines and Israel.

If my suggestion above is correct, then it is not until twenty years into Saul's reign that he begins firm military action against the Philistine garrisons in the land, with Jonathan taking action against the one at Geba, close by his own capital and home town of Gibeah (1 Samuel 10:5). If this is correct, then for the first twenty years there is relative peace, and Saul builds the nation's economic strength before challenging their Philistine overlords.

Through this time he must have operated as a vassal king, and that meant that the iron implements of the Israelites require Philistine smiths to sharpen or repair each year. (Verse 19). It is by this means that the Philistine kept their military advantage, even though the Israelites have defeated the Ammonites on the East bank in that first year of Saul's kingship. It is conceivable that the Philistines would have accepted Saul as their "law maker/keeper" over Israel, and let him administer things in the spiritual and economic area, and even conduct this early campaign in the east, for they were not interested in the raids of the Arab tribes there unless they reached the coastal strip where their cities were. They may even have encouraged this as it saved them the effort. Saul's role as their vassal may have been to watch the East Bank of Jordan for them and keep them all safe from threats coming from there.

Saul quietly builds strength and training for twenty years, and keeps the small household/palace guard until the move is made for total rebellion against their Philistine overlords. This group forms the basis for his army and may have been the blocking force to stop further Philistine incursions. The other Israelite armies are "sent to their tents", which is a way of saying he kept the fighting men separated in their tribal areas until the right time to raise the complete army again. This was a good strategy as it baffled the Philistine spies none of them knowing exactly how many men the Israelites could muster when the final show down came between them.

Saul is confident that he has the right time to rebel and that he has the men but he is wrong. Saul waits until Jonathan is a man, and then without warning takes out a minor Philistine garrison at Geba (this was likely their main spy base that overlooks and possibly administers Saul's home town at Gibeah), and then prepares for total war with their previous overlords. At no point does the writer mention that Samuel gave him direction to do this at this time. He has not sought the Lord's face before he acts, and expects God to support his plan, rather than seeking God's plan for his life first.

Verses 3 – 7. The move against the enemy is made and the forward garrison of the enemy at Geba is destroyed. The Philistines know that this means war and call up all their combined army from their five cities, and Saul blows the shofar (Ram's horn trumpet call to war) throughout the land to gather all the army levies from the tribes to stand together now and take on their enemy. Saul withdraws from Michmash (which is close to Beth-el) and calls the Israelites to the Jordan valley gathering place of Gilgal where his kingship had previously been affirmed, and the Philistines move their professional army to Michmash. Their army is significant, with possibly thirty units (Hebrew here is "elephs" = translated "thousands") of chariots, and six units of cavalry, and too many infantry to number.

The two camps are over ten miles apart and Saul's is apparently unknown to the Philistines. The morale of the Israelite people is, we discover here, not very good at all. The Philistines have been their overlords for a long time now and they do not believe they can defeat them, and they clearly feel that Saul and Jonathan may have stepped too far over the line. There is neither spiritual nor military strength to raise the spirits of the people, and Saul will fail in the leadership and motivation areas. The populations in the undefended cities hide in the bushes and forests and many flee over Jordan and hide in the eastern lands until the threat passes. Israel is not a mighty nation, nor is their faith strong enough to believe that they can defeat these pagan professional soldiers.

Verses 8 – 15. Samuel had told him to wait for seven days in Gilgal after his anointing. 1 Samuel 10:8. This instruction didn't mean that possibly as many as twenty years later Samuel would still delay for seven days, and always turn up when needed in that time frame. Saul falls into the error of thinking that Samuel will act in accordance with a set formula and this is not the case. Samuel is under God's orders and Saul is under the orders of both Samuel and the Lord, but he has seven days fixed in his mind. When we "wait upon the Lord" we are to relax and wait, for the Lord may "delay" as we feel it for many years, but at the right time for God He reveals the plan and we are then to spring to obedient action.

His first error is to attack the Philistines without Samuel's clear direction and approval, and his second is to falsely expect Samuel to operate in a set manner. A wrong interpretation of how God acts opens a person to despair when their false formula fails. We must learn faith in the sovereign timing of the Lord, and that means we focus upon Him, not depend upon our interpretation of how we think or expect God will act. Many believers have their faith destroyed because of false hope/expectation based upon a wrong interpretation of a passage of God's Word, or the words of an untested false prophet. Deuteronomy 18:10-22. Let us be careful in these things and keep our eyes upon our Lord, not upon our viewpoint of a certain text or doctrine.

Saul believes that Samuel will arrive in seven days and clearly tells the people that. He has got this wrong, and so when Samuel doesn't show up the frightened people, who control their terror for seven days, panic totally on day eight. A wrong interpretation of a doctrine or prophetic word will destroy faith very quickly. We must be very careful about our teaching of the Word of the Lord and get the details right, and if we are unclear on something we are bound to say that openly, lest people get false hope in something that is neither biblical nor true. The people have trusted in a twenty year old promise that was fulfilled then and does not apply in this situation, and so they lose heart when it is seen to be wrong.

Saul is rapidly losing his army and the enemy are only ten to twenty kilometres away and their cavalry screen may be in the area of the Jordan valley at times seeking where Saul is hiding. He is fearful and does not do what is required in this situation. He is supposed to call the priests and have the priests offer sacrifices, and then read aloud the Mosaic Law while they wait, and he will then be instructed to read Deuteronomy 20 aloud, and prepare his army for their first real war against a disciplined army. While we await orders, we are to await them actively, with our hearts and heads stabilised upon the foundation of the doctrines of God's Holy Word, and our bodies actively staying fit and well.

As things always work out; just as Saul finishes the disobedient sacrifices he was not meant to make, Samuel arrives. Samuel is shocked and confronts Saul with his evil. He has walked with God for possibly twenty years now and yet he has done this great evil. It is great evil because he has taken upon himself the role of the priesthood and he is of the tribe of Benjamin. A sacrifice of thanksgiving in a battle field may be justified, but a definite seeking of the Lord's will was to be done by Levites only, and by the Levites of the priestly families. The tabernacle is either not functioning at this point, or the priests there were unable to come to assist him, but he knew Samuel had been called and from the start of the gathering his task was to ready the soldiers for battle in every way, not worry about the sacrifices that were needed.

Each of us is to focus upon our own calling and be obedient therein, not ever look to the tasking of others. John 21:20-22. If we are called to be single we are not to seek marriage, and if called to be deacons or administrators, then we are not to seek the pastorate. The greater the role given the more the Lord expects of us, but we are to focus upon our role before the Lord and not interfere with or desire the roles of others. Matthew 23:8-12, Luke 12:38-40, 48, 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, James 3:1.

Saul's explanation is logical and he convinced himself, through his fears and the loss of manpower, that his course was the reasonable one. It was indeed reasonable, as men reason, but not as we are called to reason. We are called to think as men and women of faith, and see as God sees rather than as men see. Isaiah 55:7-9. Saul is wrong about the "days appointed" for Samuel to appear. He was wrong about starting this war without Samuel's opinion and God's clear direction. He was wrong about the offering of sacrifices that only the priesthood was to offer.

He was wrong in not reading the words of Moses and strengthening his men in doctrine rather than have them depend upon the arrival of Samuel. It was not in a man that their salvation rested, but in the work and plan of God. The enemy that he fears will be dealt with by the Lord, but so will he be.

Saul tries to put a good spin upon his prayers to the Lord, but there was no spiritual justification for this action in offering sacrifices that the priests alone were called to do. He could have sent for priests to any of the Levitical cities if he wanted prayers offered; some were close by to his camp site. The truth was, he was fearful and he believed his position as king gave him the right to ignore the clear teaching of the Word of God. No role in the church today excuses us from the penalty associated with ignoring the Word of God, or disobedience. All believers stand equally before the holy demands of their righteous God.

It is disobedience alone that Samuel emphasises to Saul in his response in verse 13. All explanations of disobedience are irrelevant; only confession and repentance are correct responses. Saul is told quite directly that he has "heart trouble"; his heart is not correctly oriented towards the Lord. The Lord has given him many years to draw closer to him. This is why the time period covered by these first verses of chapter thirteen is so critical to understand. These words of judgment would make no sense if Saul had only been serving for two years, but after twenty years we can understand Samuel's harsh words and the Lord's full and final judgment.

Saul will have nearly another twenty years of service before he is unhinged, but within a few years of these events young David will enter his battle camp and as a young teenager will be anointed by Samuel to replace Saul. Even then Saul will have at least fifteen years until he and his sons die upon Mt Gilboa. David will have at least fifteen years of hard apprenticeship in what it is to be a king as he serves and alternately flees from Saul.

Having given judgment Samuel leaves and heads for Gibeah, Saul's home town, and challenges Saul to join him there, within a few miles of the garrison that overlooks the town, and within striking distance of the vast Philistine army at Michmash. Saul numbers the few remaining men and he has 600 left. He applies faith now and joins Samuel in a hopeless situation, where totally outnumbered he is to await his fate, and God's plan for him.

Verses 16 – 18. The enemy camp is fixed, as they await the discovery of where the Israelites are hiding. They are not idle as Saul has been, and when their cavalry report no sign of Saul and the Israelite armies they send out three large raiding parties along three roads to attack, destroy, capture slaves and pillage any Israelite settlement they find unguarded along the roads. They hope to flush out the Israelite army from where it is skulking away when they see the smoke rising from their devastated lands.

Verses 19 – 23. For the last twenty years there has been peace of sorts in the land, but only because the enemy has not allowed the Israelites to make any weapons. It has been the peace of a conquered people under the heel of their oppressors. What weapons they captured from the Ammonites are all they have, and these weapons are no real match for the Philistines, and even their farm equipment is dependent upon Philistine smiths to repair. They have files to sharpen tools but nothing else is allowed them.

The men of Israel do not have any iron weapons to stand in ranks against the Philistines. This accounts for their fear, for as they contemplated battle they did so with farm implements in their hands rather than proper swords, spears and bows and supplies of arrows. Only Saul and Jonathan owned and wielded proper iron swords and held proper iron tipped spears. At this point the Philistines, having sent off their cavalry to harass and burn the Israelite towns and settlements, move their infantry and chariot army into the pass by Michmash to secure their eventual withdrawal. The situation looks hopeless, but the small army is now in the right place, and they have the prophet of God there to guide and direct them, and they are relaxed in the will of the Lord now.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God seeks the service of prepared men and women. This means that while we await specific orders we are to wait prayerfully and with daily feeding upon the Lord's Word. If we build spiritual strength and power while we wait for orders we prepare ourselves for great things. If we just sit around and wait we will become lazy and be unready for the orders when they come. God seeks the soldier's mentality in us all. This means we stay fit, healthy, physically as strong as we can be, and spiritually active in our faith. By this means we position ourselves in the place where great things can happen when orders come. We must not be like the frightened rabbits that Saul gathers for this first really great test twenty years into his reign. Ephesians 6:10-18, 2 Timothy 2:1-10.

2. Beware of a false theology that sets you up for failure, because you have squeezed God into the box of your own interpretations. When we fix our minds upon a false viewpoint we rest in our interpretation and have certain expectations. When they fail we then blame God rather than our own false viewpoint. This has happened to many within those of the Pentecostal churches in the area of divine healing. The people expect God to heal from disease every time they pray for it, and when they don't see healing but death, they cannot handle it at all. God's will is not that we recover from disease quickly every time! God's will is that we recover at times, but that one disease takes us into His presence and that this last process of dying is recognised as such and we don't weep and wail and keep asking for healing. The faith of many is destroyed by these things. It is sinful error and to be dealt with by pastors who are true to God's Word. 1 Timothy 1:18-20, 2 Timothy 2:15-18.

3. God delights in dealing with us in situations that require faith alone. If we find ourselves in the hopeless places of this world, then we are to relax and trust the Lord and seek His provision in the midst of despair. Isaiah 61:3, 1 Peter 5:5-9. God will deliver us from all situations that He has led us into. If we find ourselves in deep despair we are to relax deeply into the hands and arms of God and seek His direction and deliverance. Our God will strengthen and deliver us on the path He has called us to walk. Let us ensure only that we are where we ought to be, and then rest in His direction and powerful arms.

CHAPTER 14**INTRODUCTION**

One of the biggest dangers when we have failed the Lord in some way is that we emotionally react to our failure, and in recovery phase, act on the basis of our emotion rather than the basis of Bible doctrine and Holy Spirit controlled reason. The first indication of Saul's emotional instability comes to light in this chapter. If my estimation of the timing of the events recorded here is correct, it may also help to psychologically explain why Saul goes overboard in this first great test since the Ammonite invasion at his anointing.

He has been waiting for action for twenty years, accepting Philistine domination and all that this meant, and has had to keep a low profile in the land. He has been the "invisible king" for twenty years. He may even have been accused by some of being a coward or traitor with the Philistines. He has failed to deliver his people from their enemies, but he has enabled them to build economic prosperity, and build their population numbers back up. He has plenty of men to call on to be soldiers, but they are underequipped when compared to their enemies, and they do not at this point have the mental attitude of soldiers. When he sent Israel to its tents after the Ammonite campaign he probably expected them to take their captured weapons and train daily with them, ready for the eventual call up to fight the Philistines.

Saul is searching for a dramatic and powerful victory to re-assert his kingship and have the people follow him in power to destroy their enemies. He has waited for nearly twenty years and during that time the men have stopped training, and even ceased to feel and behave as soldiers, and the morale of all has dropped to zero.

Saul is desperate for action that will provide the opportunity to rebuild morale and establish the kingdom in power. The problem with desperation is that we operate on what we describe as "hunches", and all they are is emotional feelings; they are not the leading of the Holy Spirit. When we operate in emotional enthusiasm we operate outside the filling of the Holy Spirit, for He works in accordance with God's Plan, not our enthusiasm or emotional feelings. Saul starts to unravel at the very time he is asked to act dynamically for God. He will have great victory here and again later in his reign, but the seeds are sown here of the madness that will unhinge him later.

When the chance came to attack the Philistines he seized it, and this appears to have been done without consultation and direction from Samuel and the Lord. He is in a situation that he expected would lead to dramatic victory, but it has led to a dramatic test of faith. His second desperate act is another one that betrays his spirit of fear and desperation. He failed to wait for Samuel, offered sacrifices in violation of the Mosaic Law, and he has been told he will lose the kingdom eventually as a result of this. Psychologically this plays on his mind, for he now knows he cannot hold the kingdom forever, and that he will not pass it on to his sons.

He then appears to repent of these errors of judgment, and he follows up the rebuke of Samuel by obediently following him back to Gibeah. So far, so good! At that point he appears to be operating in faith, and prepares to launch his attack upon the vastly superior enemy. He launches the main attack only when he has clear words from God regarding this being the right time to attack.

He then sadly does a third really dumb thing! He takes a solemn oath that anyone who eats before the last enemy are dead is cursed, and is to be executed. This was unnecessary and burdensome, and narcissistic, but it was a solemn oath, and according to the Mosaic Law, it was binding. Casual oaths were not to be taken, but once taken, they were to be fulfilled. Numbers 30, Deuteronomy 23:21-23, Judges 11:30-40. God did not want His servants uttering hasty vows and oaths; they were not to be emotional in their faith but reasonable, prayerful, and thoughtful.

As we enter this chapter we enter the time of "reaping" for Saul's decision to launch his premature assault upon the Philistines. Luke 14:25-32. This is the turning point for Saul in his life and work. Let us see the heart and mind of this truly great man as he faces the psychological pressures of the unfolding consequences of his failure to consult Samuel after twenty years of waiting for action. Before you judge this man too harshly, pause and reflect upon the possible state of your own mental stability after enduring twenty years of oppression by a foreign power, and yet having received the word of God that made you king and deliverer for your people.

He has no right to expect God to "bail him out" of this, any more than we have any right to think this way when we overstep the plan, but God, in His mighty grace and power, will deliver the Israelites, and do so through Saul. Saul himself will be blessed and will have stability in his home, morality in his marriage, and yet he will mentally unravel, for he finds it too hard to accept that he is to be replaced by another, and that his sons will not sit upon the throne.

He has faced the test of Gideon and initially failed, but he will recover from that and see many victories. His last great test is that of John the Baptist; he must accept his replacement. John 3:30. He will fail to do this and persecute his replacement, David, but he will still be used of the Lord for another twenty years. We have much to learn about the GRACE of God, and also His DIVINE DISCIPLINE.

1 SAMUEL 14:1-26

14:1 Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father. 2 And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron: and the people that were with him were about six hundred men; 3 And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone. 4 And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5 The forefront of the one was situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah. 6 And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few. 7 And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart. 8 Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them. 9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. 10 But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us. 11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves. 12 And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armour bearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armour bearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel. 13 And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his Armour bearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armour bearer slew after him. 14 And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armour bearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plough. 15 And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling. 16 And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another. 17 Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armour bearer were not there. 18 And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel. 19 And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that was in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand. 20 And Saul and all the people that were with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture. 21 Moreover the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan. 22 Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle. 23 So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Bethaven. 24 And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food. 25 And all they of the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground. 26 And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. Impulsiveness is a character trait of this family, but Jonathan is a man of God and is thinking as a soldier. The need for reconnaissance and spying on the enemy is paramount in warfare and Saul is not thinking as a general here, for he is too scared to move against such a formidable army with such a small army. He has forgotten Gideon and his 300 men. Judges 6-7.

Jonathan realises the most important factor in building morale is to keep an “offensive mentality”, and by moving forward to spy out the enemy’s camp he is acting in a way to build his strength and confidence. He is also preparing for victory by gathering information, and seeking opportunities to defeat the enemy. While we wait for orders, as we have seen above, we are to wait actively, and by prayer and Bible study to be pressing on any open doors to see what the Lord wants us to do, and be ever ready to do it.

The writer records exactly where Saul was camped, and it was as far away from the Philistines as he can be and still be in the general area of Gibeah. This reference to a pomegranate tree at Rimon tells us that it was still there as the writer records this, and that tells us that the story is recorded probably within a hundred years of the action described here, as the tree does not live hundreds of years. Judges 20:45.

He is there with 600 men, and most importantly he has the key survivor of the priesthood with him now. The main man present is now named. The high priest at the time is Ahiah, who is the son of Ahitub, the son of Phinehas, and the great-grand-son of Eli. 1 Samuel 4:19-22. This High Priest is described as “the Lord’s priest in Shiloh”, which tells us that he is still living in the area, and that he could have been called earlier to offer sacrifices at the camp in Gilgal. 1 Samuel 13:7-14. Shiloh is only a few miles from Gilgal; a round trip of less than a day. The earlier reference to the hiding of the ark indicates that regular sacrifice there has been stopped at Shiloh for a number of years now, but the priests are still active. 1 Samuel 7:1-2.

Verses 4 – 5. The exact place Jonathan crossed over from Gibeah towards the enemy camp at Michmash is described in minute detail. Once again we have the evidence of an eye witness being spoken to early on and his story recorded, and this can only be the armour bearer. The two great rocks that they climb between to reach the camp are called by name, Bozez, and Seneh. Bozez means the “shining one”, and indicates it shone in the light due to the nature of the rock within it. Seneh means “a craggy rock”, indicating its sharp and rough appearance. Various biblical travellers have believed they have identified these two rocky hills.

It was a difficult climb between these two hills of solid rock and the Philistines clearly do not expect anyone to achieve this climb and so are all but unguarded on that side of their camp, believing the rocky hills are their walls of defence. Over confidence is always the sign of satanic theology and it is nearly always fatal to those who trust in man’s power rather than walk with God.

Verses 6 - 10. This section of the story tells us that Jonathan has been prayerful in all he does this day. Why did he not tell his father that he was going to do this? Later events show that Saul was very timid and would not have approved any advanced armed reconnaissance and certainly not any trial of arms against the Philistines. Jonathan is taking a terrible risk here, for if he loses the skirmish, then the enemy have the crown prince as their captive, or they have his head on a stake, and the morale of Israel will hit rock bottom. He is taking the right “risk” here however, because he is doing things prayerfully.

Notice the way Jonathan describes the plan to the armour bearer, and notice this younger man’s answer. This answer here indicates to me that he is the source of this story and the writer has either spoken to him or one who heard this story from him. Jonathan’s statement in verse six is the comment that sums up Jonathan’s faith in the character and power of God. He understands what his father does not understand; God does not need large armies to gain victory, He simply needs obedient men who trust in God rather than their numbers or human assets.

One obedient man with the power of the Lord is a majority in every battle. Deuteronomy 32:30, Judges 7:2-7, 2 Chronicles 14:11, Psalms 115:1-9, Jeremiah 9:23-24, Zechariah 4:6. Read each of these great verses, for they are the promises to claim throughout history, and they will be the source of strength for all the armies that will resist the evils of the Great Tribulation period.

The armour bearer is a lot younger than Jonathan, possibly only a lad of fourteen. His job was not to fight, but to carry additional weaponry and pass them to Jonathan when needed, much like a golf caddy! This young man however speaks like a warrior, and he is ready to stand with Jonathan in any situation Jonathan believes is right, and he is ready to fight with Jonathan till the end. This is evidence of inspirational leadership on Jonathan’s part. God’s leaders call their people to “follow” them. Leadership means putting yourself in dangers way and inviting all who trust the Lord to join you on the battlefield of the Lord’s choosing. Philippians 3:13-17.

Jonathan is thinking as Gideon does, providing two options for the Lord to answer their challenge to the Philistine guards of the camp. In Jonathan’s eyes these men are just evil “uncircumcised” pagans, and are already judged by God. He doesn’t see them as great warriors, just weak pagans. Jonathan sees things God’s way rather than man’s way. If the Philistines show over-confidence and invite the two men over to engage them in combat, then they will take this as an invitation from God to go and slay these men. Jonathan seeks God’s way alone, and seeks the Lord’s glory alone. In this manner he places himself in the most powerful place for the Lord to bless his endeavours.

Verses 11 – 15. The two men are still well down the hill from the watch post of the Philistine army on the top of the hills. The Philistines are not alert to danger from their direction and the two men have to openly discover themselves to be seen by their enemies. They probably have to yell aloud to these pagans, who then get up, get dressed in their armour and address them.

Their first words are words of mockery and indicate that they believe that all the Israelites are good at is hiding in holes in the ground. They have all the arrogance that indicates they will not be ready to face a real warrior like Jonathan. They play with the two young men they see below them, inviting them to “show them something” if they come up to them. This is the signal for Jonathan that the Lord has indeed delivered them into his hands. He climbs up the steep slope, having to throw their shields over their backs to climb up on their hands and feet. They are vulnerable at this point and any smart soldier at the top would have dropped a large rock on such attackers, but the Philistines are over-confident!

The second mistake the Philistines make is to allow Jonathan and his armour bearer to reach the area at the top of the hill where there is a flat area, perfect for open fighting, about half an acre in area (about 2000 square metres). Jonathan attacks the small garrison and kills all twenty of them, cutting them to the ground with single blows, which his young armour bearer follows up with a fatal thrust in each case. By working together and wounding then killing these men the entire garrison is dead before they realise what is happening to them and can call for reinforcements. There is a very public display of this victory in some way we are not told of here.

The enemy quickly hear of the defeat of their men. It may be that they saw the action from their camp below and watched in horror as one after another of their heavily armoured men falls before this single Israelite and his boy helper. Terror grips all their forces as they see this, and then the Lord sets His seal upon Jonathan’s action by sending an earthquake at exactly this moment. To these pagan peoples the shaking of the earth spoke of the coming fall of a kingdom, and they

all believed that, given what they have just witnessed, it must be their own kingdom that is to fall. To the believers in the camp of Israel the earthquake is simply God demonstrating His awesome power.

Verses 16 – 21. Saul has set his guards to watch the Philistines movements and they quickly report that there is panic in the Philistine camp after the earthquake, and they see that some action or other is being fought upon the high hill overlooking the enemy camp. They see that the Philistines have also started to kill one another in their blind panic. Saul quickly ascertains who it is on that hill. Only Jonathan and his armour bearer are missing from the army muster.

Saul quickly then calls the High Priest forward and asks for the ark to be brought so that the High Priest might give him the orders to attack or stand still. Saul is nervous now of any action at all. The ark has been in hiding for over twenty years but it is back amongst the people here. Saul is nervous of joining the error of the sons of Eli in losing the ark in an ill judged battle. 1 Samuel 4:5-11. Saul knows the ark is not a good luck charm and that the Philistines will not believe its presence will protect the people any more than it did years before. Saul seeks the Lord's words and asks for specific orders that he might lead the army in a godly manner. So far so good!

As Saul is inquiring of the High Priest the noise coming from the Philistine camp has grown to a sound of total chaos and disorder. At this vital point the priest has not brought an answer, and rather than waiting any longer, Saul gives the order to the priest to "withdraw his hands"; that is, he says in effect, "stop praying, I have the answer from the sounds I hear". He is convinced that the Lord has given them the victory, and he now calls his men to be ready to attack. In this case he is correct, but to start and pray and not wait for the answer to come clearly is simply another indication of Saul's instability and emotionality.

When they arrive at the scene of the noisy chaos they see that every Philistine is fighting his neighbour and a great slaughter is going on. The pagans are so busy in the slaughter of each other that they do not notice the Israelite's small army arrive, but the Israelites who were there with the enemy as their servants now join the Israelites. Now we are not told specifically here, but as later David served as a mercenary for the Philistines, so the Israelites mentioned here may also have been mercenary soldiers with the Philistines, ready to fight their own people. At this point however, whatever their previous position, they join their brethren and fight and kill the common enemy.

Verses 22 – 26. As the noise of the battle intensifies and the news of what is happening spreads, all the Israelites who had hidden themselves within the mountains of Ephraim now re-emerge and join in the slaughter of the enemy. All the local Israelite men are turned from cowards to heroes as they have felt the earthquake and then see their enemy in chaos, and they grab any implement to kill a man with and head for the battle field. Once they have killed their first Philistine, or come across their first body they will have the armour and the weapons they will need to fight further. God will provide them with good weapons, just as He did the Israelites in the desert under Moses, Exodus 14:27ff.

The writer is quick to identify that it was the Lord who saved Israel that day, not the greatness of Saul or Jonathan, for the earthquake turned the skirmish of Jonathan into a sign from heaven, and the Lord brought the confusion into the camp of the enemy so that they killed each other. The battle surged back and forth, but soon it was flowing in only one direction, towards the coast. The slaughter went from the area around Michmash right until Bethaven.

It is only when the account of the victory is given that the writer records the last act of foolishness of Saul in ordering no-one to eat until the last Philistine was dead. To take a quick meal as you fight keeps you moving forward with energy and 100% concentration. It is standard military practise to provide "action Messing"; that is, meals at all times possible for men in the field so that they can keep actively moving forward. Saul's order means the men are exhausted and unable to aggressively pursue their enemy through their debilitating thirst and hunger. A great opportunity is missed to totally destroy their enemy.

This enemy army will rebuild and will be the one that eventually kills Saul. His sin here will surely find him out! Numbers 32:23. Notice Saul's words as they are recorded in verse 24. He speaks as if he seeks "revenge" upon the Philistines, and this gives us the next clue to his character and his role as king through these last twenty silent years. He has clearly been humiliated by the Philistine overlords year after long year until this point, and now all his anger and desire to revenge himself upon them bursts out in this rash oath. This is another example of the sort of self centred, even narcissistic, and emotional thinking that is Saul's nature. Such self centred motivations are unworthy of a great commander.

Leadership calls for calm and cool reasoning under the worst pressures. It certainly calls for extreme caution wherever you feel strongly about a person or group lest you make the wrong decision for personal reasons rather than the proper religious or political ones. Whatever Saul feels is irrelevant to the battle; his job here before the Lord is to wipe this army out to the last man and ensure the country is free of them, not work out any revenge fantasy he has upon them.

The writer now records the story that involves Jonathan once again. The army comes upon a wooded area and a wild bee hive has fallen from a tree and burst open on the ground. Honey is the right thing to take in such a situation, as it quickly enters the blood stream as available sugar and gives energy to tired muscles to push on further. No-one touches the honey though through fear of the breaking of the oath of Saul.

The army has respect for their commander, even when he has made a foolish oath, and this tells us that he now has their total allegiance again as a people. Saul is respected and his words are feared. This man has built a reputation, even though he has been under Philistine domination for twenty years. It tells us that he has been a man of great strength and

still is a mighty man of valour in his people's eyes. His deep psychological weakness is however just about to be revealed.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Some ministries are here to last for a long time, even to several generations, but others last one generation and then they are, in the Plan of God, to be replaced by others. Our challenge is to serve the Lord irrespective of where things go after we have finished our particular race upon the earth. When the Lord called Saul, he could have been king forever, and have his sons follow him, but his failure to trust the Lord alone undoes him. He was a far more moral and family centred man initially than David or Solomon will be, and from the standards of men he was a great man, but he failed to trust the Lord wholeheartedly in matters of timing and faith.

David and Solomon will sin in the moral areas far more obviously than this man, and yet they are blessed far more, and David's line goes forever. They were greater because they learned the lesson of faith and also that of true repentance. Let us learn from Saul, and learn total dependence upon the power and timing of the Lord for all the things we do. Let us deal with any self centeredness before its resultant behaviour and thinking patterns drive us mad.

2. Jonathan mentors to us leadership, courage, and faith. He has his mind stabilised upon the promises of God's Word and the reality of the stability, grace, and power of the holy Character of God. He knows that the Lord is going to destroy the enemy and he seeks out the right place to stand to ensure he is a part of this process of bringing glory to the Lord. Let us position ourselves in such a place of power in our own path through this life.

3. Beware of hasty oaths and emotional, self centred thinking. God calls us to calmness of mind as we lead His people forward. We are to be obedient to the Lord's Word only and follow the Holy Spirit's leading in all things. What we say is to be what we mean, and we are to make no hasty promises we cannot keep, and make no foolish oaths from emotional fervour. We are to serve the Lord without concern for self centred matters, and we are to see our property and our talents and our time as the Lord's and freely give them to His service.

The Lord calls us to be obedient people, and to be people whose word can be trusted. Whole hearted service is the call of the Lord upon us. Let us also see all our goods and time as the Lord's and freely give of ourselves and our substance, for it is the Lord's to call upon. When we pour ourselves out to the Lord we lose nothing, but when we hold back our selves and our goods we lose everything. Let us remember, that if we rob God of our offerings we will find we lose more and more, and our pockets will grow holes in them. Proverbs 3:9-10, Malachi 1:11-13, 2:17-18, 3:6-10.

Notes

1 SAMUEL 14:27-52

27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened. 28 Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day. And the people were faint. 29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey. 30 How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines? 31 And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint. 32 And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people did eat them with the blood. 33 Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day. 34 And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay them here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew them there. 35 And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD. 36 And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God. 37 And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day. 38 And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day. 39 For, as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But there was not a man among all the people that answered him. 40 Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee. 41 Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. 42 And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken. 43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die. 44 And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan. 45 And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. 46 Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place. 47 So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. 48 And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them. 49 Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchishua: and the names of his two daughters were these; the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal: 50 And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. 51 And Kish was the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel. 52 And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 27 – 30. Jonathan didn't hear the oath made, nor did he hear of it through the battle. He has joined up with groups of Israelite warriors and is leading them, but they do not tell him of the oath, for he is the crown prince and no ordinary man would advise a prince unless asked, or an event provoked them to speak.

Jonathan sees the honey and dips the tip of his spear in the honey and then takes from it and eats some and immediately he experiences the enlightening of his eyes, he feels bright, refreshed and ready to pursue the enemy again. Once he has done this one of the men with him tells him of the oath his father had made without his knowledge. Once again the writer notes that the army soldiers are so tired through lack of food that they can barely stand up.

Jonathan then speaks his mind, as men are apt to do in such situations. He notes how many Philistines have got away when had the men eaten as they fought there might have been a greater slaughter. He in effect says his father was wrong, and this was in that day, a word of treason. All who hear his words know that they are treasonable, but they were also true. Jonathan is twice the man his father is, but he is only crown prince, not the king, and the king has absolute power. The people hold their peace, but they know that Saul has made a bad call and they fear what he will do to his son if or when this act comes to light.

Verses 31 – 35. Once again the writer records how "faint" the people were. He uses this word again to underline the complete exhaustion and inability to run and fight that debilitated the Israelite army. They are so famished that when the fast was broken by the final defeat of the Philistine army they broke their fast by slaying and eating meat raw, or semi-cooked (Barbequed), with the blood still within the meat. This was forbidden by the Mosaic Law. Leviticus 17:10-14.

The people close to the king tell him what his oath has done, but he still doesn't take responsibility for setting up this situation by his hasty oath. He seeks the one who began the disobedient eating, and who thereby, under his self centred

way of thinking, needed to be punished by execution. He believes the first person who broke the oath by eating has let loose this sinful devouring of flesh with the blood still within it, but it is his own order that set this sinful chain of events.

Saul immediately takes the right physical action to deal with the sin of eating meat with the blood still within it. He gets his men to roll a great rock close to him where the animals that have been captured can be slaughtered properly by the priests and then given out for cooking and eating. This man has great physical stamina, and he still hasn't eaten anything himself. He has great strength, but he expects this same strength of others and few can match him. Saul is indeed a mighty man, but he judges others by himself and makes no allowances for those he leads, that they are not like him.

He sends out messengers to call all the men to him that they might not sin against the Lord. This comes from a spiritual concern for his people, but his hasty and emotional actions have created the spiritual crisis. He then builds an altar to the Lord, and the writer notes that this was the first one he built "unto the Lord", yet we know he offered sacrifices twice at Gilgal. 1 Samuel 11:15, 13:8-12. What does the writer mean by this? This was the first altar that Saul built himself to the Lord, and had the priests offer sacrifices upon it. It was the first genuinely spiritual sacrificial altar he had built. The first one Samuel built, and the second Saul built in sinfulness.

Now another question comes to light here; where is Samuel in all these things? He does not apparently take a leading part in these things according to the writer, who has referred to the priests alone. My belief is that Samuel is here, and is with the priesthood, as a prophet and priest himself, but he stands back and lets this particular drama unfold. He allows Saul to make his mistakes and hopefully learn from them. This is one of the best ways to train the next generation, and one of the hardest things to do by the older generation.

Verses 36 – 39. Saul has lost his opportunity to deal with the Philistines now, for once he has re-gathered his forces, slain the animals properly, and then fed the troops, the enemy is well away. His call to then pursue the enemy is either political posturing, or simple ignorance of the facts. Saul's order to not eat until the battle was won has cost him the total victory that God delivered to him on a plate! This is a vital spiritual principle for us all to learn. Our works add nothing to the work of God, and when we get emotional and act on the basis of our desires we will fall from the path of God and have an incomplete victory. We must not ever add to the Plan of God, for all you can add to perfection is imperfection; all you can add to victory is defeat.

Saul's plan for a night attack is pure fantasy, for by this time the enemy are within their strong city walls and there is no chance of any surprise attacks upon stragglers. The city walls of the Philistines will be manned with every available man that they have. The people's answer to Saul indicates deference to him, but also a complete disbelief in the possibility of any success in such a march. The high priest then interrupts and asks Saul to "draw near to God" before doing anything else rashly. It is polite but forceful, and it stops him leading his army into potentially a Philistine trap. The opportunity to destroy their enemy is well gone now.

Saul now turns from his previous plan and asks the High Priest, and therefore the Lord, directly the question as to whether he should pursue after the Philistines. The Lord did not answer that day at all. Once again we can see that the Lord's test for Saul is delay, and the building of his faith to wait and hear the Lord when His time comes to speak and direct. The Lord wants Saul to **wait upon the Lord!** The Lord still seeks for us to do the same! Psalms 25:3-5, 27:14, 37:7-9, 62:5, 130:5, Proverbs 20:22, Isaiah 8:17, Micah 7:7, Habakkuk 2:3, Romans 8:24-28.

Great sin has been committed in the eating of the blood of animals, but the sin is Saul's, and he has not come forward to deal with his hasty oath. This man finds it impossible to admit his own failings and deal with his self centeredness. It is this insight into his weakness that explains his later behaviours towards David. The Lord will test him further in the casting of lots over who is guilty of the sin. He hastily promises to kill even his own son if he is found guilty, but he does not promise to hand himself over to death if he is guilty. The people by now all know the truth, and no-one answers a word, for all know that the father was guilty not the son, but that it was Jonathan who ate the honey.

Verses 40 – 44. The people are being very careful about what they say and how they deal with this king, for they all are starting to see and feel the hint of madness that is behind this man's façade of normalcy. They all say aloud, "Do whatever you believe to be right". Notice the echo to the words of the writer of Judges, when he said, "And every man did that which was right in his own eyes". Judges 21:25.

The first lot is cast, and Saul and Jonathan are taken, and then the second lot is cast and Jonathan is disclosed as the one who broke the oath. Why does the Lord allow this to occur, and why does He not convict Saul directly by letting the lot fall to him? It is Saul's attitude to his own sin that is in view here and the Lord is giving him every opportunity to deal with this before the people and restore his own sanity and gain the lasting respect of the people, but he still resists the reality of his own bad choices and actions. His is very like our selves, is he not? We often find it hard to see a sin in ourselves that we can spot a mile away in others. Matthew 7:3-5, 13-23.

Saul's sin was subtle and he missed this mental attitude of self centeredness as the root of all the evil that will flow in the years that follow this incident. Jonathan now knows about the oath of his father and he confesses his actions fully, and then puts the question directly to his father, "for such a thing as this must I die?" Saul is unmoved by his own son's words and does not reflect upon his being the one who brought the victory to Israel.

Saul is fixed in his thinking, and inflexible in his logic. He cannot see anything other than his own thought process, and this also is a sign of the personality disorder that will afflict him more fully later, and drive him mad. Mentally he has

normal function, but he shows the signs of Narcissistic Personality Disorder developing, with Obsessive traits. These are things that are fed by behaviours over time, and Saul is able to do something about these things, but only if he accepts the instruction and correction of the Lord, through the priests and Samuel. He will fail to hear the warnings over time, and his personality will become more self centred as he ages.

The only alternative to self centeredness is to become God centred. Psychology kids itself at times that it has the “magic bullet” to cure Narcissism, but it has not. Only Holy Spirit empowered and God-Centred actions over time, will wear away the bad habits of self centeredness, and eliminate the self destructive thinking patterns that are so destructive of relationships and ministries.

Every Tele-evangelist who has fallen into disgrace over recent years has fallen in this area of mental malfunction, as did great men like King Henry VIII of Britain. They are not mentally ill, just disordered in their thinking, and they do not deserve our sympathy, for their choices make them this way. It is for this reason that we all need to be personally vigilant of these same sins that plagued and destroyed them, lest they destroy us. These sins have destroyed all who stray into this way from the beginning of time. Pride goes before every fall, and arrogance before the madness of Saul.

The more power and influence we have the more careful we need to be that we do not start thinking we are the centre of the universe. God must be our centre or we are in danger of following Saul to destruction. There is only one celebrity upon this briefly existing planet and he is the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are his servants. Powerful servants of the Lord are obedient ones, not those who think they are somebody!

Verses 45 – 46. The people speak up and save Jonathan's life, for Saul will not be stopped from killing his own son. He is so fixed in his thinking pattern that he cannot see any way out of the oath he has taken, when he has the High Priest beside him and can ask for forgiveness and offer the sacrifices prescribed. This is a sign of what is now called an Obsessive and Compulsive thinking pattern and it is dangerous in leadership, as it is inflexible, unless educated and ruled over by the Holy Spirit. At the risk of their own lives the people speak up and save the life of Jonathan. It is only their urgent, and even treasonous, appeals that save Jonathan.

Saul has pushed his people to the very point of open rebellion and still he doesn't see what his self centred thinking has done. They state that Jonathan has “wrestled with God” as did their ancestor Jacob, and he has delivered Israel and they will not let a hair of his head be harmed. They in effect threaten their king with death if he tries to kill his son. Saul is defeated in what should have been his hour of triumph and rejoicing. All the people are deflated by these events, and the Philistines who have escaped the battlefield all return to their cities safely ready to fight again and again against Israel.

Verses 47 – 52. Saul has been king for some considerable time, but the Philistines have stopped him exercising kingship through these years of oppression. After this great victory however, he takes charge fully, and systematically fights all the enemies of Israel who have persecuted them for four hundred years. He takes on all comers and beats them in the power of God. He fights against Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zobah, and against the Philistines again and again. They are always seeking the destruction of Israel and he is never free of their threats. Whoever he attacked he “vexed them”; in other words, he beat them, and did so thoroughly.

God was with Saul in his fighting, for he fought to protect Israel from their evil enemies, but due to this first series of blunders on Saul's part, the Philistines are not ever defeated thoroughly. Saul also took note of all strong and able men and added them to his guards so that the best soldiers were rewarded with positions in the army. He rewarded and praised excellence. This underlines his strength as a leader, just as the other things we have seen point out his weaknesses.

He even took on the Arab armies of the Amalekites and defeated them, (covered in the next chapter) and this was no easy task, given that they fought on horseback or from camels, and Israel was predominantly an infantry force. We are now given the names of the sons of Saul, and the two daughters. His first son we know, Jonathan, and his second is called Ishui, (meaning – balanced/level one), and his third Melchishua (king of wealth). The youngest son (Ish-Bosheth) is not born at this time. The two girls are Merab (meaning “increase”), and Michal (meaning “riverlet”).

None of the names indicate any spiritual aspects to Saul's life through this time, but are names that speak of something in the child or the circumstances of their birth that gave them their names. The family of Saul is a normal and happy family, and he is initially faithful to one wife, Ahinoam. We are also introduced to Abner the captain of his host and his uncle. This man will be the mighty warrior who for over twenty years will train and lead the army to victory after victory. There was constant warfare with the Philistines and he would live another twenty years to regret letting that first great, combined, Philistine army escape.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We must be doubly careful of foolishness when we lead others, for they will follow our example. We must walk carefully before the Lord and before men, and act upon doctrine alone, not ever our own thoughts or emotions. All desires need to be corrected by God's Holy Word.

2. Wait upon the Lord for all direction, and if there is no peace you must not advance down the path ahead of you. Hesitancy is not sinful if you are waiting upon the Lord's firm direction. The Lord will give you guidance, seek it with all your heart believer.

3. Self centeredness is a great evil, if unchecked by logic and doctrine, and unless we face this within ourselves we will be destroyed by it over time. Narcissism is the heart of Satan, and whenever we stray down his paths we move close to disaster. Our lives are to centre around worship and service to the Lord our God. The Word of God is to be the anchor of our soul, and the glory of the Lord to be our aim in all our work. Our lives are to centre in the Lord, and we are to be always praising God for our dependency upon His power, guidance and plan. In Him alone are we strong and stable.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

1. True Christian character is Christ like ness. Ephesians 4:13.

2. True Christian character is produced by dealing with sin regularly. 1 John 1:5-10.

3. True Christian character is produced by feeding on God's Word and applying it in life in the power and filling of the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 4:1-2.

4. It is in tune with the will of God for the life, by being responsive to the Holy Spirit in all the daily details of life. Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

5. Character is formed by the power of God working on an obedient, yielded life. Romans 12:1-2.

6. Character radiates God's power and presence through the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23, Colossians 1:11.

THE CELEBRITYSHIP OF CHRIST

1. The Lord, as the God-Man sat down in the place of victory and honour by the Father in heaven. This was the way, in the ancient world, that you expressed the complete victory and acceptance of an heir of the father. Hebrews 1:3. As the creator he was always the King of kings and Lord of lords, but now as the Saviour of the creation he is its King and Lord, recognised by the Father.

2. There is only one celebrity in the whole of human history; that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone sits down with the Godhead in heaven. We honour him, because he is the unique person of the universe and eternity beyond it. Matthew 6:28-34, James 1:10-11.

3. In the Lord's service there are only servants, not celebrities. John 12:26, 13:4-17.

4. We are called to live in his light, rather than try to turn the light of any fame that man can give upon ourselves. John 8:12, 12:35-46.

CHAPTER 15**INTRODUCTION**

The battles against the Amalekites were severe and “unto death”, and in Samuel’s words at the end of this chapter we get a glimpse of the first twenty years of Saul’s kingship and the great carnage that these raiders caused to the Israelites on both sides of the Jordan. They were ruthless killers of women and children and showed no mercy to the Israelites.

They lived in the southern areas of the land given to Judah, and in the Arabian tablelands beyond Ammon, Moab and Edom. They had fought the Israelites from the beginning. Numbers 14:45, Judges 6:3-6, 10:10-14. Gideon had great victory over these peoples. Judges 7:12ff. They were opportunists and attacked when they saw that Israel was weak. Their evils through the early years of Saul’s reign must have been great indeed. The Lord places them under a solemn judgment; all are to be exterminated, and even their cattle and sheep are to be slaughtered.

Nothing or no-one is to be taken from these cursed people; all was to be destroyed. Saul finds such orders difficult, and it is not because he is sympathetic to these people, but he believes he can change and ignore certain aspects of the words of God, because he is the king, and he is special. This is the heart of narcissism; it is the belief that you can get away with disobedience because you are in some way a special person who is above the rules for more “ordinary” people.

Saul learns that God does not play favourites, and that all of us are to be obedient, and that obedience is better than sacrifices and giving of any sort. We can write over this chapter the following verses from this chapter as our texts for the life of Saul - “22. To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry”.

1 SAMUEL 15:1-35

15:1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. **2** Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. **3** Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. **4** And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. **5** And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. **6** And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. **7** And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Edom. **8** And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. **9** But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly. **10** Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, **11** It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night. **12** And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. **13** And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. **14** And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? **15** And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. **16** Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. **17** And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? **18** And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. **19** Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? **20** And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. **21** But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. **22** And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. **23** For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king. **24** And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. **25** Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD. **26** And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. **27** And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. **28** And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou. **29** And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent. **30** Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray

thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God. 31 So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD. 32 Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. 33 And Samuel said, As the sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal. 34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. 35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. Every order given to a servant of the Lord is a test to see whether we will be obedient, or whether we will act as if we know better than God. The Lord seeks for His servants to hear His whisper and be quickly and fully obedient to every word we hear.

As a result of his disobedience in offering sacrifices at Gilgal, Saul has already been told that his kingdom will not last and be passed on to his son, but because of his disobedience in this campaign against the Amalekites, he is told that he is rejected by the Lord as the true king, and that another is already now selected. None of us had ever think that we are indispensable to the plan of God, for the Lord has our replacement ready, and another can reap our reward if we disobey and fall into satanic paths. Matthew 3:7-12, 1 Corinthians 9:27. Sadly Saul will be a “castaway” who loses his eternal reward due to his persistent disobedience through personal pride and arrogance.

Saul is without excuse for his foolishness, for the words of the Lord are clear and concise. There is no room for any misunderstanding. He is to eliminate the Amalekites completely and destroy everything that they owned. Nothing is to be left of these evil people. They were the first pagan people to oppose Israel and are placed under a solemn curse for this, but they clearly have continued their evil ways in more recent years. Exodus 17:8-16.

Saul gathers his army and organises it for the campaign. It numbers 200 units - “elephs” (translated thousands, but may be anywhere from 5 upwards) - from Israel, and ten units - “elephs” from Judah. The distinction between the two indicates a time of writing that is after the ascension of the house of David, from the tribe of Judah. It clearly indicates that Judah did not provide proportionally the numbers they should have for this campaign. They were the largest tribe except for Ephraim, and they were threatened by the southern Amalekites more than the others, and yet they provide less than their share of men. It is a foretaste of the divisions that will emerge over time in the life of David and after Solomon’s death.

Verses 5 – 8. The Kenites had been with the children of Israel during the Exodus. Numbers 10:29-32, 24:21, Judges 1:16, 4:11-21. They preferred a nomadic life style and moved freely and safely amongst all the peoples of the area. Saul wishes them no harm and warns them of the coming attack, and as they are Arabic peoples and easily confused with the Amalekites, he gets them to leave the area of operations before battle commences.

The battlefield area covers the land from Havilah to Shur, by the borders of Edom. The actual site of the city of these people and the exact locations of the two points of reference for the battle are now unknown, although the two place names were used by Moses to describe the dwelling place of Ishmaelites and appears to cover the land from the river of Egypt across to the ascent of Akkribim on the borders of Edom. Genesis 25:18. Saul has a great victory, but keeps Agag their king alive.

Verses 9 – 11. It is a dumb thing to disobey the Lord, as if He will not notice, and it is foolishness to try to fool the genuine prophet of the Lord as if he will not see what is going on. Saul’s motivation in saving the best things for himself and the people is made very clear in these verses. He would not destroy the good things amongst the Amalekites but desired to keep them for himself. His motivation was again selfish and he believed he could get away with it. He kept Agag alive, as other kings did, to serve as his servant or be his “prize prisoner”. He feels he “deserves” to enjoy the fruits of victory after so many years a vassal of the Philistines – but “entitlement” indicates narcissism, and that is satanic.

Once again it was to make him look good and as evidence to all who visited him that he had defeated the Amalekites, for he held their king. Had he been totally obedient there would be no Amalekites, and nothing to prove his great victory except empty space to the south of Judah. This was God’s plan and His purpose, but Saul wanted more. In the service of the Lord there is no need for the praise of man, for the Lord’s “well done” is sufficient, but Saul sought the praise of men, and he wanted all to know that he was the great king who destroyed kingdoms, and he wanted the human kingly evidence in his court to prove it.

It is a foolish thing to try to hide anything from God. The Lord speaks directly to Samuel and tells him what Saul has done. Samuel is in deep grief for Saul and mourns and weeps over him. It is a normal thing for a pastor to cry over his people when they fall short of the things he has taught them, for he feels deeply their loss of rewards and blessings. Samuel is a true prophet and seer, and so he “sees” the future and feels the sadness of what will happen to Saul and his house. Deuteronomy 13:1-11, 18:9-22.

Many today desire the office and gifting of prophet, but they misunderstand the true biblical gift. The prophet rarely brought good news, for that was clearly taught in the scriptures; he or she brought warning and judgment. The burden of

the prophet is the burden of seeing what will happen and then seeing the disobedience of the people and the terrible consequences of it. The true prophets of God weep more than they laugh.

Verses 12 – 15. The writer gives us lots of clues to the mental attitude of Saul here, and so read these verses carefully and pick the clues up. Notice in verse twelve that he states that Saul's first act is to set up a memorial to himself and his great victory close to the village of Carmel by the city of Hebron. Joshua 15:54-55. This may be to shame the men of Judah who did not fully support him, but it is a self centred action, and then having done this, he heads down to Gilgal again, the place where he had been made king, to offer the sacrifices.

He keeps returning to the place of his anointing, to anchor his monarchy in the past, when in the present he is disobedient. He doesn't head for Shiloh, nor for Gibeah, nor Ramah, where Samuel may be found, but for Gilgal, so that when sacrifices are made, they are made on the spot where he was anointed king. We cannot live in the reflected glory of yesterday's blessing, but must move forward to bring new glory to the Lord through our obedience to Him and His Word. There is a danger in testimony meetings in this very area, that people keep looking backward rather than focusing forwards.

Samuel confronts Saul with the reality of his disobedience in what might initially appear to be a humorous way, but is actually a harsh condemnation of this man's great evil in thinking he could ignore the clear command of God. Samuel can hear the sounds of the sheep and the oxen and see the carts laden with the "good things" of the plunder of the city of the Amalekites. He challenges Saul, and notice again his answer. He blames the people with him for keeping the best things, and then he quickly states that they have done this to sacrifice these things to the Lord. He then adds the last piece of lying foolishness to his defence; that he has obeyed in all other things.

We can easily mock Saul here and not apply this to ourselves, for we are used to giving ourselves a 60% pass mark in spiritual matters. In the service of the Lord 100% is a pass mark, and all else is disobedience. Let us be very scared of falling short of the standard of the glory of the Lord. Hebrews 3:12 – 4:5, 10:31, 12:28-29. Beware of who you resemble, for if it is Saul in any way there is sin to be confessed before the Lord judges you as he judged Saul.

Verses 16 – 19. Samuel tells the king bluntly what the Lord has said to him this last night. Saul in his arrogance says, "speak on". He has no idea of the gravity of what he has done, nor of the effect of it upon his house and himself. In verse seventeen Samuel gets to the heart of the issue for Saul; when he was "little" in his own sight he was made king, but now he thinks he is something and somebody and in his arrogant self-centeredness he has thought he could lie to God. We are all "little" in God's sight and when we forget this we fall into the gross sins and evils associated with narcissism.

The Lord sent him on a "journey" through life to learn to trust him alone, but Saul became more and more impressed with his own power and majesty. As he grew in arrogance, so he shrank in spirituality. He literally "flew" at the spoil; he lusted after the good things of the Amalekites and he gave way to his lust rather than obey the Lord alone. The same thing occurred in the life of Henry the Eighth of Britain. In his youth he was everything that a noble believer ought to have been, even writing good theology, but power corrupted him and he died a debauched and evil old man with significant innocent blood on his hands. Habakkuk 2:9-13, 2 Timothy 4:10.

Verses 20 – 23. Saul again covers his disobedience by bald faced lying. Samuel confronts him again and again with truth, but this man does not fully and completely confess his sins, nor repent of his self centeredness. He holds his self chosen course, and is told the cost of this path; God has now rejected him as king and a replacement is in the wings. He is to be replaced as king by another.

The great principle of doctrine in verses 22-23 is spelt out clearly to Saul, and to us all today, and it is a principle that applies for all time. Exodus 19:5-6, Jeremiah 7:21-29, 11:4-8, Ezekiel 2:3-8, Hosea 6:6, Matthew 5:21-24. Our task as the pastors of the Lord's people is to speak truth at all times to the Lord's people, in order that they might repent of evil and follow after the Lord alone and serve Him in spirit and in truth.

Verses 24 – 29. Only when the final judgment is passed upon him does Saul repent and confess his sin, but it is too late to be lifted up and restored permanently as king. He has lost his role and will be replaced. There is a time for repentance and there is a time when opportunity to be restored is lost. Forgiveness can still be granted but the "Sin Unto Death" is already decreed over that person. Saul is sorry he has been caught out, and this is not genuine repentance, for his behaviour will not change over time.

The Lord requires life change over time from us. We ought not to be confessing the same sins we were ten years ago, for that shows lack of spiritual growth. Being sorry we are caught is not godly sorrow. 2 Corinthians 7:10. Saul is caught and he confesses, but he does not bear the true "fruit of repentance", and so he will not have the judgment lifted from him. Matthew 7:13-19, Romans 6:21-22, Galatians 5:22ff, Colossians 1:3-8, Hebrews 12:11, James 3:18.

Notice Saul's words again; he blames the people, yet he is their king and is there to give the orders. Samuel has also been told by the Lord that it was Saul who led the lusting after the goods of the Amalekites so he is a fool to keep on blaming the people. He asks Samuel to stay with him lest the people identify that there is a problem with his rulership and spot that he is judged.

Saul fears being replaced, yet he has been told directly he will be. He is doing everything to maintain the façade of rulership, yet he is to be eliminated. When he has been told this ought he not to be totally repentant? Human nature is a strange thing in such circumstances, and we see the worst of the narcissistic character with Saul. Samuel makes it clear that he will not play any more games with Saul and make the people believe God is with him by being alongside him. He has rejected the Word of God and so Samuel is rejecting him just as God has.

As Samuel turns to leave Saul, the king panics and makes a grab for Samuel's garment. Now this was all done in a very public place, with all the court gathered around. Many hear and see these events. As he grabs Samuel's garment it tears away in his hands. It may be that Samuel's garment is old, for he is an old man and may be wearing an old garment as older people often do. It may also be a reference however to the violence of Saul in grabbing the old Prophet and trying to stop him walking away in such a public manner. The result of his actions is to even more thoroughly underline his loss of the kingdom to God's replacement.

Saul is told that a "neighbour" will take his kingdom (Judah was the neighbour of Benjamin) and he is told that further prayer is of no use for the Lord will not change His mind; the plan is fixed and Saul is replaced from this day. He has at least another sixteen years to rule, but he does so on borrowed time now, for he is judged and only warming the seat for David from this day onwards. As noted above, he faces the challenge that John the Baptist faced and he fails it, for he will not proclaim David as king in his place. Had he done so he would have had an honourable retirement and Jonathan and David's friendship could have truly blossomed and borne good fruit for the nation. Sadly all this will be lost.

Verses 30 – 35. Saul is desperate now, because the public nature of these events will make him unable to govern at all. Samuel relents and accompanies him back to the front of the people. Samuel loved this man and his sadness at these events is great. Notice however the reference of Saul to "the Lord your God". Why does Saul not refer to the Lord as "his" God? Is this a reflection of his rejection of the Lord, or at very least his being upset with the Lord's judgment of him? It is certainly a sign that Saul is in carnality and has no spiritual relationship with God at this point, although he will get back into fellowship and worship after Agag's execution. This is a carnal believer and although he will be in heaven, he dies the sin unto death, and from this time on he is more a test than a blessing to his people.

Samuel calls forth Agag the king of the Amalekites and he comes out slyly. He believes that he has got alongside Saul and will be in his court as "exhibit A" but he will be alive and can plot his revenge from there. Samuel has other ideas and even though he is an old man by this time, well into his eighties, he takes a sword and cuts Agag into pieces in front of the crowd. Samuel's words in verse 33 tell us that many people have been murdered directly by this man and many more under his orders. Evil is to be eliminated and Samuel does not waste time in talking with Agag.

There is a time for sympathy and forgiveness, but that is never towards those who are persistent in their following of evil. To show mercy to those who have shown none is to open the door to more evil later. Remember, at the Lord's Second Advent he will "hew all the Agags". Every person who rejects the plan of God for their lives will be eliminated from this earth. Revelation 19-20.

Samuel leads corporate worship once the enemy is dead, and even Saul worships the Lord. Through confession we are restored to fellowship, and it would appear that Saul has now dealt with his sin enough to worship properly, but sadly this will not last. This man will spend more time out of fellowship with the Lord than in it and create great trouble for his people over the next years. The spiritual barometer for the reign of Saul is the impact of the Philistines, and they will be increasingly troublesome until David defeats them finally and brings them into his kingdom.

After this meeting at Gilgal Samuel goes up to his house in Ramah and Saul returns to his palace that he has built in Gibeah in Benjamin (although now called "Gibeah of Saul"). Samuel will meet with Saul again in Ramah several years later, 1 Samuel 19:22ff, and he will never stop mourning for what this king could have been had he served God in spirit and in truth.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God seeks our total obedience, not our gifts and verbal praise. It is not our fine words, but our godly deeds that set us apart as the servants of the Lord. We are challenged by the actions of Saul to face forward in obedient daily service to the glory of God, and not be side tracked by any personal or ego centred nonsense. Let us not live in nostalgia for what God did with us, but be prayerfully focused forward that the Lord may do better things with us yet. We are to value obedience higher than any gift we bring to the Lord.
2. We are all "little" in God's sight and when we forget this we open ourselves to evil of all sorts. When arrogance gets hold of our soul we will fall further and further into lust driven behaviours, and there is no end to where we can go. Let us set our hearts against anything that leads us away from the centrality of the Lord and His Word in our life, and let us look up to the stars every night and remember that we are dust!
3. There is a time frame for repentance to restore us to full action within the plan of God for our life. If we delay dealing with sin we can miss the best the Lord has for us, and miss out on eternal rewards. There is also to be a limit set by wise men and women on forgiveness. Glib words of confession and repentance do not mean that the person saying these things is truly repentant. Only those who have fruit of repentance are to be forgiven and restored to fellowship. Hasty forgiveness without the fruit of godliness in the life may open the innocent to great evil from bad men. We are to be wise in these matters and be ready to "hew the Agag's" of this world, and accept the Saul's who have become the Pauls.