



# PT Butler

## Bible Study Notebooks

### Study of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

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# 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel

## Introduction

The events in First Samuel are real history about people and events many hundreds of years ago. Samuel was born about 1100 B.C. The two books named after him cover about 130 years of the history of God's covenant people in the Old Testament, from the birth of Samuel to the beginning of Solomon's reign. Except for the places and customs the history is as up-to-date as your morning newspaper. 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel records the personal tragedies, personal victories, inter-relationships, sadness, joys, hopes and fears of a people called by God to serve as an instrument in his redemptive plan for all mankind.

There is probably more tragedy in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel than anything. It begins with the tragedy of Eli's house and ends with the tragedy of Saul's house. Its overall place in the scheme of God's revelation is apparently to show the tragic consequences of man's attempt to "have a king like the nations." Man in rebellion against the rule of God is a tragedy just waiting to happen.

Life today without God is as tragic as it was those thousands of years ago. A modern, unbelieving philosopher said, "Life is never more absurd than at the grave." He meant that if all there is to look forward to as the outcome of life is death and a hole in the ground, life is not worth living—it is absurd, tragic. Even the apostle Paul said that without the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the factual, historical hope it plants in the soul of man, human life would be lived on the level of an animal (1 Cor. 15:32-34). If the program of God's redemption ended with Samuel's records that also would be absurd. If we had no further revelation than Samuel's about life we would be left with despair. In this book even the best of men fall!

But, praise God, out of David, according to the flesh, was born One who conquered life in the flesh, condemned sin in the flesh, and offers by grace his merit to all who will accept it by faith. Jesus of Nazareth, crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords, gained the ultimate victory over death and shows that life in faith and obedience to God in this world is the way to eternal blessedness. Life redeemed by God is not tragedy, but triumph!

Jewish tradition held that Samuel wrote these books but clearly, since Samuel's death is recorded in 1 Sam. 25:1, (also 1 Sam. 28:3), he could not have written all recorded in the books. Apparently Samuel wrote the part of 1 Samuel from its beginning until the account of his death. Obviously he couldn't have written history after his death. Most scholars think Nathan the prophet wrote the rest of the two books.

The purpose of the two books is to record the progress of the children of Israel under the Divine guidance of God to a state of settled prosperity and union in the Promised Land. **The sovereignty of God is pre-eminent!**

Samuel was a priest, judge and prophet. Moses founded the nation; Samuel reorganized and developed it so it could fulfill its Messianic destiny. During the reign of the judges (Joshua to Samuel) the priests and Levites had become powerless and apathetic;

the judges (Sampson, and the others), were brave but had no administrative or unifying capacities. In Eli's time the priesthood, led by his sons, had become decadent; the pagan nations surrounding Israel had regained their strangle-hold upon her (see 1 Sam. 4:1ff). God raised up Samuel at this time of crisis to raise the nation to new life. **The basis of Samuel's rebuilding was the restoration of the moral and religious life of the people.** Without that "restoration" the nation would have fallen into the ways of her heathen neighbors around her.

Samuel was a teacher (1 Sam. 12:23). He believed that teaching was the solution to the problems of God's people. Samuel had a "school of the prophets" (1 Sam. 10:5; 19:18-20). Later prophets carried on these schools (2 Kings 4:38). The word ***Naioth*** means, in Hebrew, "student's lodgings" (1 Sam. 19:18-19). Samuel's students were not taught to predict the future (you can't *teach* that)—predicting the future comes by divine revelation. But the word prophesy or prophet is used in the case of the schools in the sense of *preach, teach, or sing*—see 1 Chron. 25:1-3 where a musical service is called "prophecy".

Samuel's other great contribution was as "king-maker," or architect of the monarchy. He both anointed kings and wrote the Constitution of the monarchy (1 Sam. 10:25—Samuel's "book" of the rights and duties of the kingship). The nation that Samuel endeavored to establish was one under a king who would act in obedience to the written law of God as declared by both priest and prophet. Samuel wanted to institute an active and powerful monarchy, but one controlled by God's word from becoming a dictatorship.

Samuel detested the idea of despotic power used arbitrarily and unchecked by the will of God (1 Sam. 8:11-18). Saul, with his body-guard of 3000 men had both the will and the means of making himself absolute dictator. The only monarchial form of government under which the individual could exercise the freedom of moral choice and thus produce national moral advancement was to have a king under whom Israel would be free to work out its own destiny. Such a king would be one who would rule in submission to the same law as that which governed the people. Saul quickly proved to be **not** that king!

David, in spite of his terrible personal crimes, never set himself above the law (due to Samuel's training of him from his youth). God was always in David's eyes greater than himself. God's law, sometimes violated through lust, was nevertheless to be bowed before as supreme. There seems to be no record that David ever intentionally oppressed his subjects. The idea of law was always a ruling law in the mind and heart of David. Although his fierce passions brought upon him deep and terrible personal strain and anguish, he was penitent and compassionate and had a servant's heart. He was "a man after God's own heart," and typified the "Anointed One of God," Jesus Christ, King of Kings.

Thus Samuel's lot was to sketch out the three main lines of thought and action which converge in Christ—PRIEST, PROPHET AND KING !

## 1 SAMUEL 1:1---2:36

*Elkanah* means, in Hebrew, “God has purchased.” He was a descendant of Kohath who was of the tribe of Levi. Levi’s descendants had no inheritance in the Promised Land except the cities assigned them by the other tribes. Elkanah lived in the land assigned to the tribe of Ephraim. All priests were Levites but not all Levites could be priests. Samuel was a priest by birthright and he exercised the duties of a priest (2:11, etc.). Samuel’s father, Elkanah, was a righteous and godly man. He went regularly to the tabernacle to sacrifice and worship. He loved his barren wife, Hannah (*Hannah*, means, “bestowed.”), and tried to comfort her in her barrenness. Elkanah was a polygamist (he had more than one wife). Samuel’s mother, Hannah, was a godly woman—she: (a) was patient under extreme provocation by Peninnah, Elkanah’s other wife (the evils of polygamy are clearly seen in this situation); (b) was a woman of prayer, thus showing her dependence upon God; (c) was a woman of liberality; she gave vows and sacrifices; (d) was a woman of honesty and obedience; she kept her word and fulfilled her vow to give Samuel to the Lord; (e) was a worshipful woman; her prayer (2:1-10) is comparable Mary’s *Magnificat* in the Gospel of Luke; (f) was faithful in her attendance at the tabernacle.. The word *Ramah* means “hill” and *Ramathaim* means “double hill.” *Zophim* is plural of *Zuph*, an ancestor of Samuel’s who gave his name to the ancestral home. When Elkanah sacrificed at the tabernacle at Shiloh, he would distribute the portions of the sacrifice to Peninnah his wife and her sons and daughters. Although Hannah had no children Elkanah still gave her a portion because he loved her, in fact he gave her more than the usual portion. *Shiloh* was in the hill country of Ephraim (nearly atop the “spine” of the mountain range that runs north and south through Palestine). Shiloh would be 20 miles directly north of Jerusalem (Jebus in Samuel’s day) in the territory that would later be called Samaria in NT times. Shiloh had been the site of Israel’s center of worship from the time of Joshua. Joshua located the tabernacle there. It was an ideal location because it was central to the territory occupied by the twelve tribes. The name “Samuel” in Hebrew is *shemuel*, from *shema* (hear or obey) and *El* (Lord) thus means “The Lord is heard (or obeyed).”

Polygamy was never intended by God. Man is the author of polygamy (Gen. 4:23). God knew it would not work with human beings because human beings live in a moral structure with meaningful interpersonal relations. Man is the only creature that can have **marriage** instead of **mating**, because marriage involves commitment for the future and the confidence of permanence. The exclusive sexual relation between one man and one woman (husband and wife) points to the exclusive commitment of total responsibility for each other. Sexual intercourse is an act of the whole self, a personal encounter. Polygamy is a failure morally, socially, economically and historically. It does not work! It destroys! Peninnah provoked Hannah at every opportunity (1:6). One is reminded of Abraham and Sarah and Hagar. **Barrenness** for the Israelite was a catastrophe. Children were considered as one of the highest blessings and a form of wealth. The Psalmist has said, “Fatherhood itself is the Lord’s gift, the fruitful womb is a reward that comes from him” (see also Psa. 126-127). **Barrenness** was considered a shame (Lk. 1:25). Later Jewish rabbinical tradition said, “...a childless man should be thought of as dead” (see also Deut. 7:14, etc.). Women were created physiologically and psychologically to be mothers. Children are a blessing to their very nature. Culturally, a society like the Israelite, rural,

agricultural and dependent upon children for support in old age, demanded large families. Hannah was taking her **barrenness** seriously. Elkanah's tender attempt to console her (1:8) probably only intensified her sorrow for it was for her husband's sake she mainly wanted to bear a child.

The Israelites were commanded in the law to "eat before the Lord" (Deut. 12:7) as an expression of worship. They were forbidden to eat that which was tithed to the Lord in their own towns and houses—i.e., they were required to worship the Lord at a particular place, the tabernacle (Deut. 12:18). The three great annual feasts the people were to eat in the presence of God—and God's presence was at the tabernacle. The tabernacle is called the "temple" because it was now set up permanently at Shiloh. Archaeological excavations at Shiloh indicate that there were some rather permanent walls erected around the court of the tabernacle. Hannah is described (1:10) as *mara nephesh*, "bitter of soul." *Mara* is the same word Naomi used to nickname herself (Ruth 1:20). Hannah is also said, in the Hebrew text (1:10), to have **wept weepingly**, or wept greatly—with much sobbing. Hannah says of herself (1:15) that she is "hard of spirit" or *geshath rauch*, which probably means "heavy spirited" or "depressed, heavy hearted." Look at the characterization of Hannah's praying: (a) continually 1:12; (b) silently with her lips moving but no sound 1:13; (c) pouring out her soul 1:15; (d) made a vow 1:11; (e) considered herself the maidservant of the Lord 1:11. Apparently she was praying with great emotional **expression** registering on her countenance and perhaps bodily movement. Eli concluded she was drunken. Apparently Eli was so accustomed to seeing the wickedness around him that he assumed Hannah was drunken. His own sons demonstrated utter contempt for holiness of life as well as for the holy place of God. They blatantly practiced greed and fornication at the gates of the tabernacle itself (2 :12-17; 2:22-24). Eli was not accustomed to seeing women in such deep prayer. Hannah convinced Eli of her holy intentions. Eli was given a revelation from God that her prayer would be answered—she would have a son. She then joined in the religious festivities, rejoicing that God had mercifully blessed her. Hannah weaned Samuel before she gave him to the Lord's service forever. The Israelites took much longer to wean children than we do today. In 2 Maccabees 7:27, 3 years are mentioned as a weaning period. Samuel was kept by his mother until he was able to take care of himself with very little help. Eli, an old man, would not want a baby on his hands. God kept his word to Hannah, and Hannah kept her word to God. She gave her firstborn son to God's service forever. It would not have been an easy thing for Hannah to do! The translation "lent" is unfortunate. Hannah in these two verses (1:27-28) uses the same Hebrew verb four times, through in different conjugations and the same sense should be translated all the way through. It is the word which means, "ask, demand, require, request." It really could be paraphrased, "Jehovah has given me my asking, now I give Jehovah his asking—as long as he lives he shall be the Lord's asking." Elkanah and Hannah went home to Ramah and left the lad Samuel to minister at the tabernacle. No doubt they saw their son again since he was a kind of "circuit-riding-judge" traveling between Gilgal, Mizpeh and Bethel, a triangular route with Ramah in the center.

Eli's sons, Phineas and Hophni, were called in Hebrew, *belial*, which means, "worthless, base, reckless, wicked, lawless." It is used in 2 Cor. 6:15 as a synonym for "a son of the devil". Jewish apocryphal writings use the term as a synonym for the devil himself. No mention is made of the number of teeth in the flesh-hooks when they were first invented (Ex. 38:3). Perhaps these sons of Eli invented a flesh-hook with three teeth so

they could grab more meat from the boiling pot. It was customary for the priests to strike the flesh-hook in the caldron and all that the hook brought up was for the priest. Another expression of their contempt for God's word was their demand that they be given "raw meat." They rejected boiled meat and probably wanted to take the meat and prepare it in a more exotic, tasteful way. THE POINT IS THEY SCORNEDED AND REJECTED GOD'S WORD! Like Uzzah, they couldn't believe the Lord could be so "intolerant." **What seems insignificant, and at times even more tasteful and sensible to man, is an abomination to God simply because he has willed it to be otherwise.** God does not always make his ways reasonable to human experience. They conspired to **force** other Israelites to commit the same sin they were committing.

Apparently there were some people of Israel who stood up against the demands of these two sons of Eli (2:16). These reprobate sons of Eli threatened force upon the people of God if they refused to become accomplices to their contemptuous rebellion against God's law! Their sin was very great in the sight of the Lord. They not only treated the Lord's offering with contempt, they would force others to do so! And verse 2:17 says other people treated the offering of the Lord with contempt as a consequence of Eli's sons' behavior. They not only sinned themselves, but caused others to sin! THAT'S THE WAY SIN GOES! IT IS NEVER JUST HURTFUL TO THE SINNER ALONE!

Women serving at the tabernacle goes all the way back to Moses (Ex. 38:8). Women (Judges 11:40) who went to celebrate the daughter of Jephthah may have been some of these women. Anna the prophetess who went to the temple day and night (Luke 2:36-38) may have been one of them. The Hebrew word *hatzove'oth* "assembled" or "served" means literally, "arranged in bands," and shows that these women had regular duties assigned to them. The frequent sacrifices and meals at the tabernacle would require many hands (including those of some women). **Eli's rebuke to his sons was weak! They were words only, with no punitive action.** The case must have been that Eli did not chasten his sons early in their lives (3:13) and now that they are grown and he is old, it is too late! How sad those words to many a parent in every age—"Too late!" In a case of wrong done between man and man, God as the supreme Arbitrator settles the dispute in his law; but where the two parties are God and man, what third power is there that can interfere? The ancient Job cried out for an "umpire" (RSV, Job 9:25-35) that God might "lay his hand upon both." Job's prayer was answered in Jesus Christ, our Intercessor. It cannot do for man to plead the case for another man before the Almighty, Perfectly Just, and Righteous God. No man is **worthy** there is One now who is man's Advocate (1 John 2:1)—HE IS WORTHY! Those living under the Old Covenant did not have the hope of the Christian in the matter of an Advocate before God—they could expect only certain fearful judgment.

There came "a man of God" who predicted God's judgment against Eli's wicked sons. God has many men in his service whose names never get mentioned! This is one! He courageously fulfilled his ministry without receiving any recognition. The "man of God" reminds Eli of the high calling, thus high responsibility, of the priesthood. Jesus said, "to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required!" Eli was accused of "kicking" (Hebrew *thive'atu*) at God's offering. Eli is accused of honoring his sons above Jehovah. Eli was the high priest and he was responsible for the conduct of all priests, especially his own sons. A man's duty is first to God, before his sons if necessary. Sons

must be chastened first because it is the duty of a father to God Almighty, second it is for the sake of the son's well-being. The "man of God" predicted God's **curse** upon the house of Eli! The sign that God was fulfilling his word to judge the sons of Eli was that they would both die on the same day. The prophecy in 2:35-36 has its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, but also an initial fulfillment in Samuel. The family of Eli, dependent upon the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant for their station and living, suffered greatly when it fell to ruin at the hands of the Philistines. Samuel, in a few years, became to the oppressed nation a leader of hope and the family left to Eli had to come "begging" to Samuel for assistance.

## 1 SAMUEL 3:1—4:22

What could a mere lad do that could be called “ministering to the Lord?” He could do any number of things. Apparently Samuel had something to do with keeping the “lamp” burning within the tabernacle (he was a priest). The “lamp” was to burn continually (Ex. 27:20), but it had to be “set up” morning and evening (Ex. 30:7-8) so the “lamp” had to be relit every evening and morning. Young men can be trained to minister to the Lord today by doing such things in the services of the church. The Hebrew word *yagur* means “rare, precious, scarce.” The idea is that in the time of Eli and Samuel the **written** and **spoken** word of God was scarce and therefore had become almost inoperative in that society. There were apparently very few written copies and those were not being read to the people. 3:1 also says there was no *nipherah chazon* (literally, “open vision”) which means there was no scriptural teaching being spread abroad (preached) in those days. The times called for preachers, prophets, proclaimers of God’s word. Faith has always come by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:14-17). ***Faith in Jesus Christ can’t come any other way!*** Faith does not come by entertainment, ritual, or pleasant circumstances. Faith is a capacity that all human beings possess—BUT THE ***OBJECT*** OF ONE’S FAITH IS WHAT IS CRUCIAL! Faith in Jesus Christ is the result of hearing and trusting a Person who is an Objective Being, Himself, and who has revealed Himself objectively in history! There are many places in the world today where the word of the Lord is just as “rare” as it was in Samuel’s day. The church must raise up preachers and send them. There is nothing more imperative in the purpose of the church. “Go and make disciples of all nations....teaching them...”

An important part of Samuel’s “ministering to the Lord” undoubtedly was his ready and willing assistance to the aging priest, Eli. Eli was becoming more and more incapacitated. He could hardly see (3:2) and his equilibrium was about gone (4:18). Samuel had to control the impatience of youthfulness and be ready at any time Eli called, to run to his assistance. This also would be good training for future servants of God—for the young will all grow old one day. Three times Samuel heard a distinct voice calling his name. Three times he thought Eli had been calling for his assistance. Samuel did not know it was the voice of the Lord, Jehovah, because he did not know what the voice of Jehovah would sound like. **Apparently God’s voice, when he speaks to human beings audibly, sounds like a human voice!** God would certainly have to speak the Hebrew language to a Hebrew and English to an American, or in whatever tongue or dialect any human being converses (cf. Acts 2:11). Of course, Samuel knew who God was; he knew that God had revealed himself to Moses and others—but God had never spoken directly and audibly to Samuel. After the third time, Eli deduced that Samuel’s experience was not a dream; not some subjective emotion; but that the Lord was speaking to him. **The Lord came and “stood forth” calling Samuel.** The Hebrew word *yetheyassab* is the root word for “stood forth” and means, “to set or place oneself” and has the connotation of, “to certify, to fix, to settle, to make true and certain.” WHAT GOD DID, THEN, WAS TO PRESENT HIMSELF TO SAMUEL IN SOME FORM BEFORE THE PHYSICAL EYES OF SAMUEL SO AS TO CERTIFY THAT SAMUEL WAS NOT HAVING SOME SUBJECTIVE “EXPERIENCE.” **It was an objective revelation of God’s *being* in some form visible to the human eye!** In 3:15 when Samuel writes of his “vision” he uses the Hebrew word



*hammare'ah*. *Hammare'ah* means “something made visible to the human eye.” God’s greatest, and **final**, objective revelation of himself to the world was in Jesus Christ (and the Holy Spirit inspired, eye-witnessed, apostolic completion of that revelation). People are thus called to minister to God through that final revelation which we call the New Testament. God does not need to appear objectively, to the human eye, anymore. He has, in fact, appeared in the most perfect way he could in Jesus and the New Testament scriptures. God calls men now through the Gospel (2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Thess. 1:12; 1 Pet. 1:15; 1 Thess. 5:24; 1 Cor. 7:20; 2 Tim. 1:19).

God is about to do something in Israel so dreadful and unexpectedly terrible that the news of it will, so to speak, slap both ears of anyone who hears so sharply they will “ring” with pain—the Hebrew word in 3:11 is *tsolal*, “ring.” This “ear-ringing news” would be the capture of the ark of the covenant and the destruction of the priests and sanctuary at Shiloh! The concept of “ear-ringing-news” is used again in 2 Kings 21:12; Jer. 19:3 in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (which Jeremiah compares to the fall of Shiloh, Jer. 7:12; 26:6-9). **On the day God “rings” the ears of Israel with calamitous news, he will also punish forever the iniquity of Eli’s house!** Is there a point in human sin against God at which there is no forgiveness? Is there a point at which God will not accept expiation by sacrifice and offering (3:14)? See Numbers 15:27-31 for the sin “with a high hand” and Matt. 12:22-37 (and parallels) for the “sin against the Holy Spirit” for which there is no forgiveness (see also 1 John 5:16-17 for the “sin which is mortal”). Samuel did not want to tell Eli what God said about punishment. One must admire the submission of Eli to God’s will about his family. Yet Eli could not seem to muster the courage to exercise the same obedience to God’s will about restraining his sons in their wickedness! Could this be a lesson that it is so often easier to submit to the “bigger” things in God’s will than it is in the “little” things? The NT clearly emphasizes the point that loving God and desire to do his will must be manifested in the “little” things as well as the large (cf. Matt. 10:42; 12:36; 18:10; 25:34ff; Luke 19:17; James 2:1ff). If I give my body to be burned as a martyr and have not the *agape* love which loves people deliberately and in spite of what they are, what am I? If I have done many great things for the Lord and yet destroy the unity of the church by partiality like the Corinthians were doing, what am I? Truly good and lasting contributions to God’s kingdom come only when we have the faith and courage to be faithful in the **little** things. God proved Samuel’s words to be divinely revealed through fulfillment and various miraculous verifications. God did “not let any of Samuel’s words fall to the ground unfulfilled.” Samuel was a godly, forceful dedicated personality. And it was so evident that he had the approval of Jehovah, all Israel began to find restoration to God’s will and national unity through his ministry as prophet and judge.

Apparently the Israelites had enjoyed some measure of success against the Philistines since the days of Samson when Israel was dominated by the Philistines.. Perhaps Eli had been responsible for some of that success by his leadership. Whatever Eli accomplished by himself was negated, however, by his wicked sons and their influence. The elders of Israel suggested bringing the ark of the covenant from Shiloh to the battle front to assure themselves victory. This is simply another historical instance of man’s constant self-deception that *a symbol of deity may be substituted for the necessity of moral union with the Person of Deity*. There are many examples of this in the Old Testament. It is simply idolatry! The Israelites even did this with the brazen serpent (2 Kings 18:4). The Pharisees did it with their *traditions* (Matt. 15; Mk. 7). They made **void** the word of God.

People still do it with church buildings, denominational structures, political ideologies, etc., etc. Israel thought “God must be on our side because we have the ark of the covenant, because we have the democratic political system, etc.” GOD IS ON THE SIDE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHEREVER IT IS! The Israelites of the days of the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, et. al.) just could not believe their prophets that God was going to judge them and take them into captivity because they had the temple and the holy city (see Jer. 7:4). We must not put our trust in movements, symbols or even in religiosity. We must not be lulled into complacency and think it cannot happen to us—it happened to Christian churches in the book of Revelation (chs. 2-3). Actually, the Israelites reverting to dependence upon “things” played right into the hands of the Philistines. The pagan world has all the expertise in “things” and the church today plays right into the hands of the devil when it depends on temporary “things” and a philosophy that “the end justifies the means.” The Philistines defeated God’s people as a consequence. The Philistines were superstitious pagans. They believed the Israelites carried their “gods” around in a box (the ark). When they heard the Israelites had their “god-in-the-box” with them at the battle they were aroused and fought even more fiercely. The bringing of the ark of the covenant to battle actually worked against the Israelites! In 4:9 we have the first use in the OT of the Hebrew language word—*ha’iberim* or “Hebrews.” The word *Hebrew* means, “those who have passed over...” The father of the Hebrews, Abraham, “passed over” (the River Jordan) to Palestine (Canaan-land) centuries earlier from Mesopotamia. The Philistines have their history confused (4:8) about the Egyptian plagues. It had been some 350 years prior to Samuel that the Egyptian plagues had taken place so their confusion is understandable. Yet it is probable that the mighty miraculous works of Jehovah when he led the Israelites to conquer Palestine under Joshua were a part of the Philistine historical tradition (see Josh. 2:8-14). The Hebrews were “slaves” to the Philistines during the days of the Judges especially in the days of Samson (Judg. 14:11). The Philistines killed 4000 Hebrews at the first battle and then 25,000 more making a total of 30,000 (4:10) Hebrews slain. This is quite a number of dead when one realizes it took 2 or 3 years of modern warfare in Korea to kill 50,000 American boys. There are about 50,000 killed on American highways every year—half of that number killed by drunken drivers!

The two sons of Eli were slain by the Philistines. But most disastrous, the ark of the covenant of God was captured by the Philistines and taken to their camp. Sometimes the misuse of holy symbols by God’s people has been taken by the enemies of God and used to bring harm and defeat to God’s people! Even the “cross” has been commercialized to the point that many people have become cynical about it! The last act of Eli’s life was one of reverence for the things of God over and above even his own flesh and blood. Eli had his priorities right, even though there were times when he failed. His horror and shame and grief at the mention of the capture of the ark of the covenant revealed his loyalty of heart to spiritual matters. The poor old man reaped the reward of his failure with his sons in pain and death, but he also showed his profound concern for the honor and glory of God. We must distinguish between the ruin of a man’s work and the ruin of his soul. Eli’s heart was right with God, but his will was too weak to work as he ought. That is probably true of the best of us, even apostles (see Rom. 7:15-25). A right heart—a single-mind for the spiritual—is what God wants above all else. After all, we shall never be saved ultimately unless we are saved by grace (1 Cor. 3:11-15). **We are not going to be saved by our successes!**

***Ichabod*** is the Hebrew word that means, “the Glory has departed.” It was not so much the ark of the covenant itself being captured that grieved Eli and his daughter-in-law, it was the fact that the glory of God (symbolized in the ark’s capture) had departed his people because of their unfaithfulness and moral failure. When moral decay sets in no one cares about what is right, honest or true. No one has the will to resist wrong. The glory of any person or nation is in the possession of and exercise of righteousness, justice, honesty, truth and mercy. When that is gone, the glory is gone! But God continues to work in the midst of human failure and despair. God rescued Israel under David and Solomon and restored her glory. But then after Solomon she went back into the decadence of their forefathers and Ezekiel portrays the spirit or glory of Jehovah departing the temple and the city and leaving Israel to her own shame (Ezek. 11:23). Once again in Ezekiel’s time, Israel was “Ichabod.” But again, God rescued Israel from her exile and restored her to her land. Through the restored “remnant” God sent the Messiah and they condemned him to death. Jesus pronounced them “forsaken” and “desolate” (Matt. 23:37-39). The glory of Jehovah departed old Israel forever (1 Thess. 2:16) as a consequence, and now resides in the church of Christ—new Israel (Gal. 6:15-16). The dying experiences of Eli and his daughter-in-law focus us on what constitutes the greatest calamity that can befall an individual or a nation—the loss of the glory of God. Paul tells us that “Christ in us is the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). The ark of the covenant represented God’s presence with Israel—when that was gone, God’s presence was gone. The loss of people, wealth, international influence, health and even home is not to be compared with the loss of covenant relationship to God! Within the church herself, numerical growth, budget growth, influence or status in the world’s categories, are not to be compared with spiritual growth or the residence of the glory of God (see the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor, Rev. chs. 2-3). The more we concentrate on spiritual growth, the more numerical, financial and influence-growth we shall have. **SO, DON’T GET DISCOURAGED—GROW IN SPIRITUALITY AND THE GLORY OF GOD WILL BE MANIFEST IN OUR MIDST!**

## 1 SAMUEL 5:1—6:21

The Philistines must have made a thorough ransacking of Shiloh when they captured the ark of the covenant (read Psa. 78:60-64; Jer. 7:12; 26:9). Ashdod was one of the capital cities of Philistia. It is the Azotus of Acts 8:40. The tribe of Judah was supposed to have occupied these Philistine cities (Josh. 15:47) but failed to do so because “they had chariots of iron” (Judg. 1:19) and Judah was afraid of them. Judah forgot how God had delivered them from Pharaoh and the Red Sea, etc. Azotus today it is a few mud huts in the Gaza Strip occupied by nomadic Arabs. Archaeological *bas-relief* from Khorsabad (Mesopotamia) shows a figure of a half-man/half-fish with a crown and a beard and fins as a Syrian or Philistine god. The Hebrew word *dag* is “fish.” *Dagon* was apparently a “fish-god” of fertility. The temple of *Dagon* existed as late as the time of the Maccabees (read in 1 Macc. 10:38ff; 11:4) for a female deity half-woman/half-fish). The statue of *Dagon* fell down, was put back up, and fell down again with head and hands lying “cut off” upon the threshold of its temple. Its members were “cut,” (not broken) as if some supernatural power had been at work! *Dagon’s* fall and dismemberment was not accidental! From that time a superstition arose about *Dagon’s* temple. All who entered from that time on stepped over or jumped over the threshold. Some commentators see Zeph. 1:9 (Zephaniah lived about 500 years later) as a reference to the continuation of this superstition among those of the Jews then worshiping pagan deities. The Philistines put the ark of the covenant in their pagan temple to show they believed they had defeated the power of the God of the Hebrews. This was, and still is, the practice of paganism (Isa. 10:5ff; Dan. 5:1-4, etc.). The motive behind attempting to reduce Jehovah God to a pagan deity is that such a “demoted” god may be manipulated, exploited, and especially so that man has no moral responsibility to any Person **higher than himself**. The motives behind unbelief and idolatry are dealt with in Rom. 1:18ff; John 3:18-21; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; and 2 Pet. 2:1—3:7. The OT prophets have much to say about the idiocy of worshiping idols (Isa. Chs. 40-46; Hosea 9:10; Psa. 115:1-11). Today’s “movements” attempting to reduce Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ, to pagan level are: (a) Eastern mystic religions that reduce God to something humanly mental in philosophy or subjectivism; (b) Western evolutionism or scientism that makes God a creation of man’s evolutionary, psychological need; (c) Modern theological existentialism and post modernism that reduce God’s power to be subject to the relativistic whims of human feelings; (d) Islam that makes Jesus Christ **not** God but a mere dead human. The Hebrew word *yeshimmem* in 5:6 is translated “terrified” in RSV but would better be translated “wasted” or “destroyed” as in ASV. Many died (see 5:12). God afflicted them with *hepholim* (the Hebrew word for *hemorrhoids*) is translated, “tumors” or “swelling” or “hill” and is the same word from which the name of Mount Ophel comes (2 Chron. 27:3). This word is not allowed to be pronounced in the Jewish synagogues when the text is read—the word *techorim* from Deut. 28:27 is substituted (one of the loathsome skin diseases of Egypt). These “hemorrhoids” or “tumors” must have been some kind of repulsive, loathsome, ulcerated, swelling which “broke out” upon the surface of their skin. These afflictions or “tumors” caused great panic among the Philistines. The Hebrew word is *mehumah* and is translated “destruction” in the ASV but “panic” in the RSV. The basic meaning of the word is “confusion” and is so used in Joel 3:14 where it is interestingly translated, “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of *decision* (i.e., “*confusion*”). These five

cities of Philistia—Ashdod, Gaza, Gath, Ekron and Ashkelon formed what was known as the Philistine Pentapolis (i.e., league of five cities). Each city was governed by a “lord” or “prince.” Actually, the Hebrew word *sareneyi* may mean “hinge, axle, or prince.” Philistia apparently did not have one ruler but five (Judges 16:5). THINGS HAVEN'T CHANGED MUCH IN GAZA SINCE YASIR ARAFAT AND HIS HEIRS, THE “TERRORIST PRINCES”! The Hebrew word *sather* appears in the Hebrew text in only this one place! Some translations take it to mean “concealed” or “secret parts” others translate it “break out” or “lacerate.” The most probable meaning, in light of other indications in the context, is “breaking out” or “becoming ulcerated,” to the point of causing death (5:9). The Hebrew word *hashamayim* is plural and should be translated “heavens.” The Philistines did not know about “heaven” as we know about it. Their cry was in the general direction of the sky which many pagans recognized as the residence of the gods of rain, lightning, thunder, hail, etc. It is interesting to note that they did not cry out to *Dagon* to save them!

God does, indeed, reveal his wrath from “heaven” against all ungodliness and wickedness of man (Rom. 1:18ff) through “natural” calamities such as floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, pestilence, and wars. All death, of the whole creation, is a revealed judgment of God calling all men to repent (Lk. 13:1ff; Rev. 9:20-21, etc.). God does not leave even the pagan world without warning about his wrath upon sin (Rom. 1:18-32). Nor does he leave the pagan world in ignorance about the uselessness of idols. Men refuse to believe in God and turn to follow their idols because they want to. **Nature is part of God’s revelation of himself. But that revelation alone cannot save men—for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.** God still reveals his wrath against sin through natural causes. As Paul wrote in Rom. 1:27, human beings suffer in their own bodies (eventually) the due penalty of their errors. All natural disasters and every death of every physical body today is a call from God to the world in general to repent because this world and these physical bodies are not our final existence. Of course, as Jesus pointed out in Lk. 13:1ff, a tornado or flood or death does not mean that a **particular** city or part of a city or person was a worse sinner than all other people. What it means is that except individuals everywhere repent, they shall “perish” as did those upon whom the tower fell! **Christians should take advantage of all these “natural” signs in a general way and remind the unsaved that God is speaking to them (and to Christians), saying, “This world is not your eternal home.”** These “natural disasters” **constantly** happening in the world do bring “confusion” to those who do not understand them through the perspective of divine revelation. THE CHRISTIAN HAS THE KEY TO THE MEANING OF HISTORY—IT IS THE BIBLE!

“Diviner” is from the Hebrew word *kosam* and the Septuagint uses the Greek word *manteis*—both words mean “soothsayer” or “fortune-teller.” Divination or soothsaying was practiced by all pagan religions and still is. It is an attempt by modern horoscope-casters and “diviners” to obtain secret knowledge, especially of the future, or to separate things into the two classes of “lucky” and “unlucky.” The Bible is emphatically opposed to all divination, soothsaying, fortune-telling, horoscope-casting. God penalized such sin with death (Lev. 19:26,31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:10-12)! The Philistine diviners were in for a shock since what they suggested was going to come to pass because Jehovah would see to it. The Philistine soothsayers recommended sending the ark of the covenant back to Israel’s God with a “guilt offering.” This was not a guilt offering in the Mosaic sense or Biblical sense. They offered mice and mice (even symbolic mice) were “unclean” and an abomination to the Lord God. How would pagans know about “guilt offerings”? Both

ancient and modern religious history indicates that heathen humanity has, even without a Biblical revelation, attempted to appease, propitiate or make atonement for guilt by offering to the gods. This is, itself, proof of the existence of a God. This idea had to come from somewhere. It came from Abel and Cain, as God told them. Man cannot create anything outside his own experience. A Higher Being to whom man owes guilt offerings is outside human experience except as it has been revealed to him from that Higher Being. These Philistines had this concept handed down to them from their ancestors who went all the way back to one of the sons of Noah, and Noah's knowledge of "guilt offering" comes from Abel. Noah's life overlapped that of Seth, a brother of Abel (Gen. 4:25). What the Philistines practiced had become perverted through unbelief, but the concept was there as a testimony to God's existence, nevertheless. "Mice" (Heb. *akeborim*) were a common source of pestilence, disease and destruction to crops and mankind in that country. The "mice" were probably adding to the affliction and misery of the "tumors."

Once again in the Bible we are told of the historical event of the Egyptians and the Israelites (which took place 350 years before Samuel) and how the God of Israel dealt with the Egyptians who "hardened their hearts." There are great historical judgments of God recorded in the traditions and histories of races of men to which some men still pay heed. The Flood traditions are to be found in many "primitive" tribes even today! The Flood-judgment of God upon the earth can be seen by honest-minded archaeologists and geologists today! Some, however, choose to ignore the **facts** of geology and archaeology (2 Pet. 3:5) and preach "evolution." God expects all human beings to learn from history. History is progressing toward a goal—redemption and judgment. While history is progressing and each generation is one of different and new individuals and the technology of humanity changes, still the moral principles of truth, righteousness, purity, goodness, and values by which God governs are eternal and never changing. The Philistines knew about the deliverance of Israel from Egypt because the Israelites had been in the land of Canaan for 350 years at this time. The word had gotten out from Israel to their neighbors, the Philistines, through trade, commerce, and other associations. The Philistines also would have learned that the God of Israel miraculously supported Israel's conquest of Palestine (just as Rahab learned it 350 years earlier). The Philistines learned that to harden one's heart against the God of Israel brought judgment to the Egyptians and to themselves. Christians have the real and final information as to what history is all about and what people should learn from it. **Christians have the record of the greatest event history has ever known—the vicarious death of Christ on a cross and his bodily resurrection from the dead** (Acts 17:30-31; 1 Cor. 15:1-58). That is knowledge of first importance (1 Cor. 15:3)!

The Philistines hitched two "unbroken" (unbroken to being yoked together and pulling a cart) heifers to a new cart and put the ark of the covenant (and their "guilt offerings") on it and sent it toward Israel. The text says: "...if it goes up on the way to its own land...then it is he (Jehovah) who has done us this great harm; but if not...it happened to us by chance..." 6:9. Probably the first reason for the "unbroken" heifers was to put on a show of "respect" toward the God of the Israelites. That is better than what Belshazzar did 500 years later when he blasphemed Jehovah by using the vessels of the temple for a drunken feast (Dan. Ch. 5). Second, the Philistines, because of their dire circumstances, really wanted to know the **truth** about the **Source** of the judgement of "tumors" and "mice" upon them. It was a customary practice of heathen people to devise such ingenious tests

of deity as this—e.g., Laban with Jacob; Egyptian magicians with Moses; sailors with Jonah; Haman with Esther; Nebuchadnezzar, Darius and Daniel; Suetonius and the *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*. In many of these cases it is evident that God used the attempts of the heathen with an exercise of his Sovereign Providence directing events so that the message was unmistakable—**Jehovah is Sovereign!** In this case, God over-ruled the natural instincts of “unbroken” heifers and they went straight to Beth-shemesh! They went straight to Beth-shemesh, turning neither right nor left, bellowing all the way because they were being driven by some force against their instincts away from their calves. **It was the providence of God—creation obeying its Creator’s sovereign will!** It is a sad, sad commentary that while animals obey their Creator, often, human beings do not (see Isa. 1:3). The Philistines did precisely what God wished them to do! God wants men to “seek after him, hoping they might feel after him and find him” (acts 17:27). God will honor all sincere searching for the truth. God will keep on honoring it as long as the “search” keeps on (Matt. 7:7-12), and as long as it is sincere—even from heathen (e.g., Cornelius, Acts 10-11; the Ninevites, Jonah; The Berean Jews, Acts 17:11; The Ethiopian Eunuch, Acts 8; Naaman 2 Kings ch. 5). The question is, are we willing, today, to become God’s instrument through which to convey the truth to those searching for it. It is God’s plan to save the world through peaching the gospel (Rom. 10:14-17). The Israelites could have told the Philistines as much as they knew about God, but the Israelites didn’t even act toward the ark of the covenant as they should have when it came back to them (1 Sam. 6:19ff).

Beth-shemesh is a town about 15 miles directly west of present Jerusalem near what was then the border of Philistia. It was a city given by Judah to the Levites (Josh. 21:16). The name means “house (Beth) of the sun” (shemesh). Archaeologists have uncovered tools and artifacts of the late Canaanite and early Israelite period suggesting confirmation of this text in 1 Samuel. It figures in the later history of Israel (1 Kings 4:9; 2 Kings 14:11-13; 2 Chronicles 25:21-23). The people of Beth-shemesh were reaping, suggesting the ark of the covenant was returned in May or June (harvest time). A great stone was there. The Hebrew word for “stone” is *‘eben* which is the first part of the word *Ebenezer*. This is **not** the same stone as the “Ebenezer” of 1 Sam. 7:12, since the latter one was between Mizpah and Jeshanah. The Israelites living in Beth-shemesh took the cart and broke up the wood, killed the two heifers and offered a sacrifice upon the great stone. It was lawful to offer sacrifice there because wherever the ark of the covenant was, offering could be made. Notice the reverence the people **first** showed toward the ark of the covenant: **(a)** they let the Levites handle it; **(b)** they sacrificed for its safe return; **(c)** they put the ark upon the great stone. **But after the sacrificial feast they let their curiosity override what they KNEW to be AGAINST THE WILL OF GOD—THEY “PEEKED” INTO THE ARK!** Apparently the book of Samuel was written some time after these events, for the great stone “was a witness” to the event as the event was being recorded. The Masoretic text (the most ancient OT in Hebrew language) of the Hebrew Bible says 50,070 men were slain because some of the people of Beth-shemesh looked into the ark of the covenant. The Septuagint also says 50,070. *Lange’s Commentary* says the number “fifty thousand” is missing in Josephus’ *Antiquities* 6:1:14, and in some Hebrew mss. (Codex Kenn 84, 210, 418). Lange thinks the number 50,000 was a marginal emendation. Some commentators doubt that there would be 50,000 people living in the city of Beth-shemesh. They think the number 70 is more likely. One commentator thinks the error was in copying. Some scribe may have thought the Hebrew letter *ayin* (which also stands for the number 70) in one mss. looked like the letter *nun* with two dots under it (which would stand for

50,000), and thus copied what he thought he saw instead of what was probably there. The sacrifice would be followed by a feast. Apparently the people began to be merry and probably drank too much wine. They lost all sense of reverence and encouraged one another to look into the ark, and examine its mysterious contents; and God slew many of them. Their looking at the ark as it came to their city on the cart was not condemned by God, because the people were given encouragement by it and rejoiced. **However, as soon as the priests received it they should have put a veil over it (Num. 4:5).** To not do so was to neglect their duty and endanger the people. The people should not have been so familiar and contemptuous of this **holy symbol** of God's presence because they had definite instructions in the law of Moses "NOT to look upon holy things" (Num. 4:20). Immediately upon the death of the people for their disobedience, the rest of the people of Beth-shemesh insisted the ark be sent to Kiriath-jearim. The question..."And to whom shall he go up away from us?" is a personification of the ark of the covenant for God. It was evident to them that God was **personally present** somewhere in or around the ark, so they wanted to get "him" away from them, meaning, get the ark away from us! "Kiriath-jearim means, "the city of forests (or woods)." A former center of Canaanite Baal-worship assigned to Judah (Josh. 9:17; 15:9,60; 18:14-28). The ark of the covenant remained there 20 years until David brought it up to Jerusalem. There were probably Canaanite sacred "groves" of trees there and perhaps idols around the area. Israel's experience with the ark of the covenant here proves that emotions must be controlled. Emotions in worship are natural and good, but they must be under the control of the mind and reason. The Israelites "rejoiced" at the return of the ark, but apparently they let their rejoicing get out of control and override what they knew in their minds to be wrong—THEY LOOKED INTO THE ARK! The NT insists that Christians keep their emotions under the control of the mind (1 Cor. 14:15-19; Eph. 5:17; Col. 3:16). CHRISTIANITY IS A MATTER OF KNOWING AND DOING—NOT "FEELING." **GOD IS HOLY—HE IS ABSOLUTE.** He cannot tolerate unholiness, irreverence or disobedience! The **only** reason Christians have for not existing in cringing, tormenting, guilt-ridden fear of Almighty God is their trust in the vicarious death of Jesus Christ. Christians certainly are not "good" enough by some "merit system" to stand in God's presence on their own (Heb. 10:1-39). Human beings cannot even stand in the presence of holy angels! (Dan. 10:7-9; 10:15-17; Rev. 1:17; 22:8-9). Any irreverence and disobedience that causes Christians to "tamper" with things God has said, "Leave alone!" is extremely dangerous (Acts 5:1-11; 8:14-24; 19:11-20; 2 Pet. 2:10-12; Jude 8-13; Rev. 3:24; Eph. 5:3-13, etc.).



## 1 SAMUEL 7:1—8:22

Abinadab (“noble father”) and Eleazar (“the help of God”) are common names in the Levitical genealogies. Since none but a Levite would be selected for the holy duty of keeping the ark of the covenant, we assume this was a priestly home where the ark stayed for many years until David moved it to Jerusalem (see 2 Samuel 6:1:2-12; 1 Chron. 15:1-29). **Israel lamented this incident for 20 years.** The Hebrew word is *yinnahu* and means “wail, cry, mourn.” The word is onomatopoeic which means it is a word whose pronunciation sounds like the action it is describing. It describes a continual sighing or moaning. The very fact that the people left the ark of the covenant at the house of Abinadab for 20 years indicates how slow the Israelites were in realizing their estrangement from Jehovah. For 20 years they moaned over the oppressions of the Philistines without realizing they had incurred the disfavor of God! Why did they lament so long before repenting? Why do people **moan** so long today over their frustrations, ruination and emptiness without turning to the Lord? **PRIDE!** That’s the answer. Many people refuse to admit they have a problem they can’t solve. They continue all their lives moaning about their problems never seeking God’s help.

Notice: 20 years of simply **lamenting and sorrow** did not put the people in right relationship with the Lord! Samuel said if they were in the frame of mind to return (Hebrew word is *shuv*, “turn, repent”) to the Lord, they must **act**. Samuel mentions five phases of repentance (lamenting is but the *prelude* to repentance): (a) “prepare” your heart to heed Jehovah—the Hebrew word is *kun* which means, “fix, adjust, direct, aim, set”; (b) “put away the strange or alien gods” from among you—the Hebrew word for “put away” is *sur* which means, “turn away from, remove completely, sever relations with”; (c) “pour out water” (since water in that arid land was precious and water symbolized life) Samuel was asking for an expression of sorrow, sorrow unto death, for sin (see Psa. 22:14; 2 Sam. 14:14; Lam. 2:19)—they afflicted their souls and fasted; (d) “...they said, we have sinned against the Lord”—confession of sin and recognition of **Who** has been offended is necessary unto repentance (Hosea 14:1-7; 1 John 1:8-10); (e) “...Samuel offered...and cried to the Lord...”—offering and prayer are necessary for repentance—Christians have offerings to make as they repent (themselves in service, Rom. 12:1-2; words of praise to the Lord, Heb. 13:15; their money in obedience to the gospel, 2 Cor. 9:13).

### Applications:

People are slow to repent. We must not become impatient—God doesn’t. We must patiently sow the seed of God’s regenerating word (as Samuel undoubtedly did during these 20 years) and let the word, “first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear” proceed to work repentance.

Repentance is not just sorrow for sin. There is a sorrow that leads to death, 2 Cor. 7:10. Sorrow that refuses to seek the mercy of God and the change of action that faith in him brings, results in despair and increased self-deception and increased guilt. Both Peter and Judas were sorry for betraying the Lord. One changed his mind and actions and became a great proclaimer of the faith; the other would not change and hanged himself.

Repentance involves afflicting the soul, subjecting the fleshly desires and bringing them into control to serve the Lord, and **depending** totally upon the Lord for salvation. The Israelites poured out water in deep humility signifying their helplessness; they fasted, signifying they were bringing their fleshly nature under subjection; they cried, or had Samuel cry, to the Lord for deliverance (no more depending on “things” like the ark of the covenant).

Repentance involves sacrifice. Repentance that costs nothing is worth nothing. Ungodly thinking and actions have to be given up, put away, not wanted any more. We must give ourselves up to being slaves of godliness (Rom. 6:12-23). There is no such thing as absolute human autonomy (self-rule). We will either be slaves of some “thing” or slaves of Someone!

There are at least four attributes of godly leadership exercised by Samuel in 7:9-17: (a) in 7:9 Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it—he turned the people’s attention toward God; (b) Samuel “cried to the Lord for Israel”—he prayed for his congregation; (c) we do not know for certain, but he was probably a leader of the Israelite army that “routed” the Philistines; (d) Samuel constructed a “memorial” (the Ebenezer stone) to be a constant reminder to the people of the Lord’s help; (e) Samuel “rode a judging, teaching circuit” annually throughout the Israelite nation; (f) he always came back to Ramah where his home was and fulfilled his duties there. The Hebrew word for “offered” is *’olah* and means, “that which ascends, or goes up” symbolizing devotion to God. The Hebrew word *kalil* is translated, “whole” and intensifies the idea that all the offering was consecrated to God. No part whatsoever was reserved for the priest or the people, symbolizing that the people were giving themselves unreservedly to the Lord. As Samuel was offering, the Philistines attacked. Consecrating ourselves wholly to God does not mean the “enemy” gives up—Satan and his “aides” will still attack as long as this world exists. God “thundered” with a great noise (the Hebrew word for “noise” is *qal* (pronounced “kol”) and means, “voice, sound, speech.” It is used to denote one of the “voice-stems” in Hebrew grammar. God speaks and it sounds like thunder (John 12:28-29) and it occurred so rarely in Palestine it was considered a sign of divine displeasure (1 Sam. 12:17; see also Ex. 9:22-26; 19:16-18; Job 37:2-5; 40:9; Psa. 18:13; 29:2-9; Isa. 30:30). The very superstitious Philistines were thrown into confusion and were beaten. Beth-car means, “house of sheep.” It was west of Mizpah (which is directly north of Jerusalem about 10 miles) and the “Ebenezer” “stone” was set up near it. Note that even though God delivered through a miracle, the people had to do their part by pursuing the defeated army. The word *eben* means “stone” and *ezer* means “help.” Ebenezer means literally, “stone of help.” It was not the stone which helped, of course, but God. The stone was to memorialize deliverance by the hand of God. The “valley of Jehoshaphat” symbolized “Fear not and be not dismayed at this great multitude for the battle is not yours but God’s...you will not need to fight in this battle...stand still, and see the victory of the Lord on your behalf...” (2 Chron. 20:15-17; Joel 3:1,11,12). The Passover feast was a memorial of deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Twelve stones from the Jordan placed at Gilgal (Josh. 4:19-24) were to memorialize that the hand of the Lord is mighty. Amorites means “the high, mountainous ones.” They were a tribe of Canaanites who lived in the mountains of Palestine (Canaan) as opposed to the Philistines who lived in the plains. The miraculous defeat of the Philistines must have had some deterrent influence upon the Amorites. Verses 7:15-17 are a kind of “flash-back” summarization of Samuel’s whole judgeship. It is extremely difficult to

obtain any accurate chronology of Samuel's judgeship between Eli and king Saul. Apparently Samuel continued with much influence even after Saul was crowned king. Wilbur Fields thinks this great victory over the Philistines was 20 years after the ark of the covenant's capture and about 2 years before Saul was crowned king. The Hebrew word *moshpath* is translated, "administered justice." The word is often translated, "judgment" and "right." (Gen. 18:25; Job. 34:6; Job 34:17; 35:2; Psa. 9:4; Prov. 12:5; 16:8; Isa. 10:2; 32:7; Jer. 5:28; 17:11; 32:7; Ezek. 21:27, etc.). **Justice is "that which is right" as God has revealed what is right!**

Samuel evidently had only two sons. "Joel" means, "Jehovah is God," and "Abijah" means, "Jehovah is Father." But their names did not match their character. They took bribes in direct disobedience of the OT law (Ex. 23:6-8; Deut. 16:19) and were "blinded" to justice. They never attained the high position Samuel had—they probably were his assistants. He stationed them in the far southern outposts of Judah in Beersheba to "judge" the people and act as priests there. It is rather shocking that Samuel, having the benefit of Eli's mistakes, could not rear sons more godly than Eli's. Again, we must not put all the blame on Samuel. When human beings start to make their own decisions, they are morally responsible for those decisions themselves. Some children make bad choices after they are grown in spite of the good their parents have taught and practiced (Hezekiah and his son Manasseh). Some children make good choices after they are grown in spite of the bad taught and practiced by the parent (Jacob and Joseph). Jesus was perfect in spite of some weaknesses in his mother, brothers and sisters. The elders of Israel asked for a "king," giving their reason as Samuel's old age and the rebellion of his sons. This may have been only an **excuse** for them to do what they wanted to do all along. Samuel's sons could not have had that much influence on the whole nation. God had foreseen the day when Israel would demand a king (Deut. 17:14-20). The people were presumptuous in demanding a king before it was deemed proper within God's timetable. Samuel was displeased, because: (a) they were determined to have a king without consulting the will of God (cf. Hosea 13:9-11); (b) they had something better than a monarch in the theocracy if they had only submitted to the rule of God through his word; (c) since God had to console, him perhaps Samuel suffered a small bit of jealousy. **Israel wanted a king like all the goyim (Gentiles, nations).** They wanted to be like the world around them. They were not supposed to be like the world around them. God set them in the midst of the world so they could be a witness of something different than the world (Lev. 20:26; Ezek. 5:5-6). Samuel was told to hearken (Heb. *shema*, "hear, obey") to the voice of the people who cried for a king. But he was also told, in the Hebrew language, to *ta yid*, (to protest, enjoin, admonish, warn again and again). The people had earlier repented of being "like the nations" and put away Gentile gods. Now they want to be like the nations politically or structurally. This led eventually to a "wholesale" return to heathen idolatry.

A "king like the nations"—with all his governmental structure, his need for advisers, an army, and parity with "kings" of the nations around him in power and riches would **cost plenty**. Here is what Samuel said it would cost them to have a king like the nations: (a) the best of all the young men to serve in armies; (b) some to serve in the king's fields; (c) some to serve in the king's "factories"; (d) some of their women to serve as cooks and bakers; (e) one tenth of their best grain in taxes to the king; (f) 1/10th of their best orchards; (g) 1/10th of their best vineyards; (h) 1/10th of the best of their flocks; (i) some of their best beasts of burden; (j) the king would take their servants for himself. All this is over

and above what they had to give to the Lord. **One tenth of all society would serve the king—one tenth of all produce of the nation would go to serve the king.** The king will not turn it back into the hands of society except for the services of protection—he will give most of it to his palace servants. The people were literally going to put themselves back into slavery. They wanted a king to serve them. They would get a king whom they would have to serve! Does all this “ring a bell” to modern socialistic governments (including the USA)?

The Hebrew idiom (or, colloquialism) in 8:20 is interesting—literally translated it would read: “But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and said, NO! But a king shall be over us, and we shall be, **even we**, as all the nations....” Their obsession was —“**we must be like the nations...**” Earlier they had wanted Gideon to be “a king over them” (Judges 8:22; see also Judges 9:9). With that kind of rebellious insistence from his creatures, what can the Creator (who has given them the freedom to choose for themselves) do except allow them to make their choice and suffer the “due penalty of their error” (see Rom. 1:18-28). God is merciful and longsuffering—he wants to give Israel plenty of opportunity to repent of this rebellion. But a headstrong people must learn by experience. Wisdom seldom comes to willful people except by the consequences of their follies. To show by experience that to “be like the nations” is not satisfying or ennobling, but enslaving, God gives in to their demand. God gives in to prepare the way for the King and the **Kingdom** that **God** would choose. The Divine purpose, because of the immaturity of Israel and her hardness of heart, is not accomplished by direct and immediate exercises of the supernatural power of God. It is accomplished through long and complex processes of human action and counteraction—through the smarting of suffering and the recoil from danger. God would not work a miracle to override Israel’s obsession to have “a king like the nations.” **The failure of human kingdoms (Hosea 13:9-11) to bring the kingdom of God to men prepared a “remnant” ready to return to the kingship of God himself through the Messiah who came 1100 years later.** Praise God, there are no more human kings in the Kingdom of God. Everyone in the Kingdom of God is a subject, a servant, for there is only one King, Jesus Christ. Paralyzing fear of non-conformity—gets everyone sometimes. Some preachers want to conform to the “accepted” standards so they compare themselves with others and begin to doubt themselves, drop out of the ministry—all because of this overpowering urge to be like everyone else. Bible colleges feel like they must become like their secular university and college contemporaries because everyone else is doing it—we sure wouldn’t want our Bible colleges to be different than secular colleges—they might laugh at them. Churches feel like they have to have denominationally structured systems and “kings” or “secretaries” like other churches. They just wouldn’t be recognized or have any clout unless they are like the world thinks of churches. Congregations often “ape” the kind of program that secular, corporate businesses have because they think “it works.” The church may be in the world but she cannot be like the world—Christians must be different. **And the church had better make its obsession to be different from the world!** J. B. Phillips paraphrases Romans 12:1-2: “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.” Jesus could have been “a king like the world” (John 6:15); but his kingship and kingdom is not of this world. **WE DARE NOT TRY TO MAKE IT FIT THE MODEL OF THE WORLD!**

## 1 SAMUEL 9:1—10:27

The things which human beings believe to be priorities in leadership abilities, do not necessarily prove true. Men's views of leadership potential are usually superficial (men look on outward appearance—God looks on the heart. Saul had these humanly-exalted attributes for leadership: **(a)** he was rich; **(b)** he was good-looking (handsome); **(c)** he was virile and majestic in bearing; **(d)** he showed concern for his economics and property (9:5); **(e)** he was charitable toward the man of God (9:7); **(f)** he was popular with all his contemporaries (9:20); **(g)** he had a (false) appearance of humility (9:21; 20:22); **(h)** he had charismatic powers (10:6-13); **(i)** he had a good sense of timing toward enemies (10:27). But Saul was a failure. He had what appeared at first to be splendid qualities. But he became proud, disobedient to God, and eventually insanely murderous. Saul was granted to Israel as king, contrary to God's will. Did Saul ever really have a chance to "make good" in God's sight? Could he possibly have succeeded under such circumstances? Was he not condemned by God to failure even before he started as king? NO! The answer is clear in 1 Sam. 12:12-15. Samuel tells Israel that if both they, and their king, would fear Jehovah and obey his commandments, all would be well. The only reason any person is ever rejected by God is because that person has first rejected God! Another "Saul" (the apostle Paul) in physical appearance and behavior allowed the Corinthian church to ridicule his leadership potential—but God knew that the outward appearance of Saul of Tarsus was superficial—his heart was honest and obedient—that's primarily what God asks of leaders. When Samuel saw Saul, son of Kish, the Lord told Samuel that Saul was the man who would "rule" over God's people. The Hebrew word for "rule" is *ya'etzor*, and means, precisely, "to shut up, hold back, restrain, domineer, repress, vex, oppress." There are other Hebrew words for "rule" which are milder and could have been used here. This is a plain indication that Saul's rule would be strict and stern, vexatious and often oppressive.

Saul, ever the "public relations" expert, did not want to appear to seek the ministry of (Samuel) a "man of God" without a "present" to take to him. The Hebrew word here is *shur* and means, "caravan, travel, present," hence, specifically, a customary gift of a traveler. It was customary for the Hebrews to support their "prophets" as well as their priests (Amos 7:12). It has always been an ordinance of God that those who speak for him should be supported in their living-necessities by those who receive the benefits of their ministries of the word of God (Deut. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:9; Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:18). Saul's servant had 1/4th of a shekel of silver—worth about \$1.00 in today's inflated U.S. money; it was probably in the form of a weight, not a coin, and worth about half a day's wages. There are four Hebrew words for "prophet" in the OT—*ra'ah*—"to see, seer"; *navi*—"to announce, to speak for another"; *chazah*—"to see, behold, perceive, a seer"; and *matiph*—"to drop—a dropper of words." In 1 Sam. 9:9 we have *ra'ah* and *navi*'—the implication of this verse is that First Samuel was written after "prophets" became known more for their preaching than for their "visions."

Samuel defers in honor to the future "prince" by saying, "Go up before me..." Samuel tells Saul he is going to honor Saul by demonstrating his prophetic power and tell him things Saul does not, as yet, know. Saul would need evidence of Samuel's authority

from God when Samuel would tell Saul God has chosen him as king of Israel. *Today's English Version* of 1 Sam. 9:20 reads: "But who is it that the people of Israel want so much? It is you—you and your father's family." Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, Jacob's youngest son. Benjamin inherited the smallest portion of the land of Canaan since it was probably the smallest tribe. At the time of the civil war in Israel (Judges 19-20) Benjamin mustered about 26,000 fighting men; 25,100 of those were slain in this civil war, plus many of their villages were burned to the ground. Saul's *disclaimer* (9:21) is fitting! Nevertheless Samuel honored Saul by placing him and his servant at the head of those invited to the sacrificial feast by giving Saul the "leg and upper portion" of the animal sacrificed. That was the best portion because it had the most meat on it—plus it was the portion reserved for the priesthood! Samuel also spread a bed on the roof of his house for Saul where it would be cool and safe. Samuel discussed privately with Saul the matters concerning the office of king. To communicate personally in such things is to honor someone—not to communicate is to dishonor. It was not easy for Samuel to honor Saul. Saul would become "leader" of the nation and that would necessarily take away some of Samuel's personal glory (see 8:6). Samuel undoubtedly knew what kind of troubles would come to Israel when Saul became monarch (see 8:10-18). **But Samuel honored Saul, nevertheless.** It is a Christian obligation to honor God-ordained leaders in society's structures. Peter writes, "Honor the emperor" (when the emperor was probably Nero) (1 Pet. 2:13-17). Paul said give "honor to whom honor is due" (Rom. 13:7) in a context speaking about honoring government authorities (when Nero was emperor). It does not mean we are to condone an emperor's (or president's) sinfulness; but we are to respect the principle of government and structured leadership. David honored Saul as king and would not kill him twice when he not only had righteous provocation to do so, but had an excellent opportunity to do so!

Saul was anointed king and given evidence of God's sanction, plus he was given certain *charismatic* gifts for leadership. The Hebrew word for anoint is *meshachaka* from which the English word "Messiah" comes. All Hebrew kings were types (at least the office of king) of the Messiah ("God's Anointed"). The "kiss" was probably a sign of personal affection or well-wishing from Samuel to Saul. It was an "embrace" and not a "kiss on the lips." It was never an official part of the anointing ceremony for kings. God's **first** sign that he had sanctioned Saul as king was that Saul would meet two men by Rachel's tomb at Zelzah and they would tell him his father's mules had been found and that his father is anxious about his son. The **second** sign was that at the oak of Tabor he would meet three men going up to God at Bethel (i.e., "house of God"). They would have 3 loaves of bread, 3 kids (young goats), and a skin of wine. They would offer him 2 loaves of bread which he was to accept. The **third** sign was that at Gibeathelohim ("the hill of God") where there was a garrison of Philistine soldiers. He would also meet a band of prophets, **prophesying to the accompaniment of musical instruments** (see 1 Chron. 25:1, where the vocal chords are instruments). The Spirit of the Lord would come mightily upon Saul and he would prophesy and be turned into "another man." When all this happens it will signify that God has sanctioned him as king and Saul is then to do whatever the occasion demands. After the **third** sign, Saul was instructed by God's prophet, Samuel, to proceed to Gilgal and wait 7 days until Samuel should arrive to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings. When Samuel arrived he would have further instructions from the Lord as to what Saul was to do. We know that Saul did **NOT** do as Samuel told him (see 1 Sam. 13:8ff). Gilgal is where the 12-stone-memorial of Israel's national founding or entry to

Canaan was located!

Saul's "being changed into another man" was **not** a spiritual conversion in the heart. Three important rules of hermeneutics (interpretation) need to be exercised here: (a) what the **author** intended to say; (b) what the **context** indicates; (c) what the **grammar** or original language indicates. It is **not** in keeping with the overall teaching of Scripture that God worked some irresistible work of grace upon Saul and forced him to be turned into a "born again," converted man. If Samuel had intended to say this he could have expressed it more clearly than he did. The **context** indicates the phrase "changed to another man" was to be realized in the marked difference seen in Saul (physically) when he "prophesied" with the prophets of God. The people's reaction expressed what Samuel predicted—the people wondered at the change in Saul—but it was an outward change—not an inward one! **Grammatically**, the Hebrew word *haphak* (used in both 10:6 and 10:9) is translated, "changed." It is not the normal Hebrew word used in connection with conversion and repentance—that would be the word *shuv*. The "change" in Saul was outward. When the Spirit of God fell upon him and he prophesied in some ecstatic manner, it was as if he were physically a different man. He was normally shy, retiring, self-declaming (one who would later hide among the baggage). He is the type of man who would never **exhibit** such physical abandon; but he was doing it. Those who had known him before expressed their amazement. His new boldness became proverbial ("Is Saul also among the prophets"). His actions were so out of character for him, some even began to question the source of such actions. There was no inward change in Saul.

Saul's *charismatic* gift to prophesy did not help him make the right moral choices. *Charismatic* gifts of the Holy Spirit were never intended, either in the OT or the NT, to have any connection with the conversion of individuals **except as these miraculous gifts confirmed the truthfulness and power of God's revealed word!** Balaam prophesied by the Spirit of God (Num. 24:2ff) but he certainly was not a converted man. Judas was among the 12 apostles who were sent out to work miracles (Matt. 10:1-8), but his power to do miracles did not indicate his "conversion." The Christians at Corinth had charismatic gifts but because of their impenitent pride these gifts became detrimental to them (1 Cor. Chs. 12-13-14). It is interesting to note the confusion and contradictions of those of Calvinistic persuasion as they attempt to explain Saul's "change." Note this quotation from J. Barton Payne, Prof. Of OT at Wheaton School of Theology, in the book, *The Theology of the Older Testament*, pub. by Zondervan: "Here (in the instance of Saul), for the first time, God's Holy Spirit is named as the divine instrument in what seems to be a natural man's regeneration. Because of Saul's subsequent failures, one might indeed be tempted to question the genuineness at his rebirth from above. It is possible, however, for a man to lose the blessing of the fulness of God's Spirit without, at the same time, ceasing to be one of God's elect." (Our underlining). We would challenge that proposition simply by quoting Romans 8:9: "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." Every talent or gift any person ever has is "charismatic" (i.e., all gifts and talents are from God by his grace). Many people have gifts of grace today which they are using for the devil's work. The heart must be right with God or every human being will take the gift God has given him and use it in opposition to God.

Samuel tells the people that the Lord had always done in the past for them the very thing (deliverance from enemies) for which they now insisted in a human king!

They had rejected the Lord as their king by not consulting the Lord at all about asking for a king. They apparently wanted to separate their national, political, every-day life from their religious life. IT CAN'T BE DONE! When the "lot" (guided by Divine providence which had already revealed to Samuel who the king would be) fell on Saul, he could not be found to present to the people as God's anointed. This was not an election by the people. God had already determined Saul would be king. These were lots guided by supernatural power. Saul was found among the "stuff" or "baggage." When the 12 tribes collected in one place, they would come with all sorts of "baggage" including such weapons and provisions as they could find. They knew that such a tribal "get-together" would not go unnoticed by the Philistines so they would amass as much "stuff" as they could to fight, if necessary. Why had Saul hidden himself? Was it true humility? Reticence to assume responsibility is not always motivated by true humility. Sometimes it may even be a paralyzing fear of failure which is distrust in God's power to give help, which ultimately is pride! Some people *feign* reticence and shyness in order to obtain human flattery or approval which feeds pride. Saul very soon after his first success as military leader, had no trouble with humility or shyness! The people ran and got Saul and Samuel said, "You asked for a king...here is what you get...what you asked for, because he is tall, handsome, majestic...none like him among all of you!" The "rights" of the king are in 1 Sam. 8:10-18—the duties of the king are in Deut. 17:14-20—**(a)** a king was not to build a huge military complex; **(b)** not to seek foreign aid; **(c)** not to indulge himself in polygamy and sexual promiscuity; **(d)** not to build a huge personal fortune; **(e)** must have a personal copy of the Law of Moses made for himself; **(f)** must read the Law of Moses often; **(g)** must obey the law of Moses, just as the people must; **(h)** must not elevate himself above his countrymen ("brethren"). The people cried, "Let the king live!" Or "Long live the king!" What God had done in giving them a king "touched their hearts" with nationalistic pride and patriotism so they went with Saul to his home plantation in Gibeah. BUT THERE WERE SOME WHO WERE NOT IN AGREEMENT WITH SAUL BEING KING. "Worthless fellows" is literally in the Hebrew language, "sons of Belial" just like Eli's sons were called "Belial" in 1 Sam. 2:2. These spoke against Saul, slandering him and stirring up dissension. They despised him and would do despite to him if occasion permitted. They gave him no present, publicly dishonoring him. Saul's reaction is described in the Hebrew language, literally, "But he was as one who is *deaf*." Saul would not hear of their dissension, not wishing to spoil the enthusiasm of the majority. Had he not controlled his hidden anger, a civil war would have been the result, and that might have been his undoing as king. Saul's tribe, Benjamin, knew what civil war did to the nation (Judges chs. 19-20).



## 1 SAMUEL 11:1—12:25

Nahash the Ammonite apparently had attacked the Israelites earlier and was part of the reason the people cried for “a king like the nations”—to take revenge on the Ammonites. Nahash’s son, Hanun, later treats David’s offer of assistance with contempt (2 Sam. 10:1ff). The Hebrew word *‘Ammon*, means, “People of strength.” This is the name given to the descendants of Ben-ammi (which means, “children of my people”), a people related to the Israelites through Lot’s incestuous sexual encounter with one of his daughters (cf. Gen. 19:38). Israel was told not to enter into battle with them in their wilderness journeys (Deut. 2:19). God gave the territory just north of Moab to the Ammonites (that would be modern Jordan). The Ammonites made war (after Israel’s occupation of Canaan-land) to extend her borders farther west (into Israelite territories). This land never really belonged to the Ammonites, but they claimed it and gave this as a *reason* for their aggression (see Judges 11:13). **Another reason** for their proposed cruelty to Israel probably stems from the treatment the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead (which the Ammonites claimed was their territory—although it wasn’t) received at the hands of Israel (see Judg. 21:10ff)—**retaliation**. The Ammonites were known for their hatred for Israel (Deut. 23:4) and for their cold-blooded cruelty (cf. Amos 1:13-14; Jer. 40:14; 41:5-7). The Hebrew word *nagar* is accurately translated “gouge out” because it means to “bore, pierce or dig out.” This **hatred** between ancient Israel and her bordering “neighbors” has not ceased and is boiling over right now as I edit these lessons in the 21<sup>st</sup> century! It will go on until the Lord comes (see Gen. 16:7-14). The heathen, unbelieving world, is the **enemy** of God and God’s people! They certainly aren’t “friends” of God until they are converted (James 4:4-8). The worldly-minded society is the sphere where the devil operates in rebellion against God and his sovereignty. But let the church know this—the world is *not for* the church! The world (represented by “the beast” in Revelation) has declared **war** on the church. The world would like to see the church humiliated and mutilated and killed (see Rev. 11). **THE CHURCH MUST NOT BE DECEIVED INTO THINKING THE WORLD IS A “FRIEND” TO THE CHURCH!** Israel fell for this deception repeatedly going to Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Greece and Rome for help but getting only humiliation and slaughter!

The fact that the elders of Jabesh-gilead did not call upon the newly anointed king Saul to come to their rescue shows the disorganized, helpless condition of Israel from the days of the Judges when they refused to acknowledge God as their “King” and depend on him in faith to deliver them through men like Joshua and Samuel. Apparently the elders of Jabesh-gilead did not know that Saul had been anointed king, and they did not have faith and sense enough to send to Samuel for instructions from God. So, they sent “messengers” throughout the land weeping and wailing, telling their woeful predicament. That kind of whining only benefitted the Ammonite, Nahash, who wanted Israel all along to beg for deliverance and to suffer humiliation from him. Although heathen kingdoms and countries often become aggressive and invade other countries, God holds such aggressive, war-mongering peoples accountable. **God holds the unbelieving world morally responsible for its actions!** God will eventually judge and punish all personal, national and international injustice! (See Obadiah 1-21; Amos 1:1—2:16; Isa. 10:5-19; Ezek. 25:1-7; Daniel chs. 1-12). The last gasp of the Ammonite society was in the days of the Maccabees (1 Macc. 5:6). Jehovah is Sovereign!

The people of Jabesh-gilead were unaware that Saul had been anointed king. They went right into Sauls home town weeping and wailing and telling of their predicament. Even the people of Gibeah wept with them and never thought of calling upon Saul to assert his kingship. This from a people who had demanded from Samuel, “a king like the nations.” Saul had to ask what the problem was! It shows a complete lack of “backbone” and “grit” on the part of the Israelites. How helpless people are when they no longer have God as the King of their lives. The Hebrew word *tzalach* (“came mightily”) means, “descended successfully.” The Spirit of Elohim (God) descended upon Saul and **kindled his anger** against the Ammonites. Saul hacked an ox into 12 pieces and sent a piece to each of the 12 tribes: **(a)** to show that all 12 tribes were to unite in anger against the Ammonites; **(b)** to give a threat (the ox was man’s biggest investment other than his house) and to get the desired result; **(c)** the Levite (Judges 19:29-30) hacked his concubine and had the pieces sent to the 12 tribes of Israel to call them to war against Gibeah. Saul’s ruse did unite the people. The Hebrew text says, *ke’ish ‘echad*, that is, “they came out as one man!” Saul “mustered” Israel. The Hebrew word is *phaqad* and means, “arrange, appoint overseers, command...” Saul **organized** these fighting men into an army. The 11 tribes numbered 300,000 and Judah chipped in 30,000. Judah had more men than this who could fight. We see here (and earlier) Judah kept herself distinctly separate from the rest of Israel as much as possible. Judah had been given pre-eminence (Gen. 49:8-12); Judah was the leader in the march through the wilderness. Judah became the source of national leadership when David was anointed king! **Bezek** was one of the first towns conquered by Israel after Joshua (Judges 1:4). It was probably about 20 miles east of Jabesh-gilead, near the border of Benjamin and Judah...a good place for Israel to meet before crossing the Jordan to deliver Jabesh-gilead. This army of Saul appears to be only about half of the male population able to fight. At the first numbering of Israel there were 603,550 men 20 years old and over (Numbers ch. 1). ***The Spirit of God does incite Christians to anger about sin!*** If a Christian cannot hate what God hates, he cannot be a citizen of God’s kingdom! Christians cannot be good or faithful unless they are intolerant of evil. Jesus was angry (Mark 3:5); Christians are told to be angry about sinning (Eph. 4:26). Jesus was anointed by God because Jesus “hated lawlessness and loved righteousness (Heb. 1:9). Jesus even uses the word “hate” when he warns us we are to love him more than we love our parents, wives or children. God created us to have emotions! God has emotions! Emotions are to serve God by being under the control of the Spirit of God as the Spirit gives orders through the Bible!

Samuel resigns his military/political leadership. He has “obeyed” the voice of the people (actually, he obeyed God) and anointed a “king like the nations.” Now this king “walks” before them—the king is their military/political leader. Samuel does not, at this moment, quit all his ministry. He is simply preparing the people to accept the idea that he will not be with them much longer. He will continue to minister so long as he lives. Samuel’s reference to his age may not be so much resignation as it is challenge to the people to gainsay his integrity if they can. He has lived a whole lifetime in public service—from boyhood under Eli until now when he is old and grey-headed. They have a new leader, but it is not because they could say Samuel was a bad leader! Samuel points out that he has not connived with the bribe-taking of his own sons, nor had he supported it—he had never tried to hide the sins of his sons. Samuel’s challenge is: “Add it all up and evaluate my own personal life. Have I ever wronged anyone? Have I ever oppressed anyone? Samuel had been a judge, prophet and priest. He had plenty of power at his

disposal by which he could have easily defrauded and exploited people for his own gain. With all that power he could most probably have gotten away with it, too. But he didn't! Not one person could bring accusation against him. Samuel claims the right of continuing moral leadership by the testimony of his godly life. If one must choose between *charisma* and character in a leader, one should invariably choose **character**. Saul had charisma; Samuel had character. Samuel was not being an ego-maniac when he challenged the people to review his character. Samuel was challenging the superficial, shallow, worldly-mindedness of the people in their choice of Saul on the basis of appearance and not character. Samuel was using the power of his character to demand a hearing from the people. Jesus' authoritative reception by the multitude was based on his sinless life and his teaching of the truth. Paul, the apostle, demanded the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20) and the Corinthian church pay heed to his teaching on the basis of his own godly actions in their presence (2 Cor. 11-12). Jesus chose his apostles on the basis of fundamental character—not charisma. What leadership charisma did big-mouth, impetuous Peter have? What leadership charisma did the sons of thunder have? Fishermen, publicans, political right-wingers (Simon the Zealot) were not exactly “politically correct” or “public-relations-geniuses.” Young people need character more than charisma to make them leaders. The church needs to patiently develop this in its young people and not thrust them into positions of leadership too quickly. David went through a much longer and better preparation process for the throne than Saul—and David made a better king!

The word “witness” is not in the original Hebrew text in 12:6. It should read, literally, “It is Jehovah who appointed Moses and Aaron...” The stress is on **Jehovah** doing what was done in the past. Samuel wanted to “plead” with the people. The Hebrew word is *shaphat* and literally is the word, “justice, judge, litigate, contend, etc.” It is a strong term. Samuel is not merely lecturing on history—he is administering a judgment—he is arguing with the people. Samuel is trying their case and trying to persuade them they are guilty and need to repent. This is what preaching should be! Preaching is not entertainment. Preaching is not performance. Preaching is not simply lecturing. Preaching is trying sinful man's case—calling people to repentance before the judgmental word of God! The Hebrew phrase in 12:12 would read literally, “*Yaweh, elohikem malekkekem!*” or, “Jehovah-God was your king”—emphasis on **your**. Why did they need another, human, king when Jehovah-God was their king? History unequivocally teaches by factual demonstration that physical and material prosperity, security and peace is connected to due recognition of the sovereignty of God and surrender to his moral guidance. It also teaches that adversity is connected with disobedience to God's moral sovereignty. The devil has seduced most of the world to believe that misery is not connected to moral causes, but to educational or financial deprivation; or some say people are miserable because of environment. Fundamentally, people should be able by faith and moral character to live with bad circumstances and become causes of good circumstances. The Israelites were under the delusion that their troubles were in some way connected with the external circumstances of the form of government under which they had to live. But their problem was, as it had been throughout all their **history**, distrust of God's all-sufficiency. Any kind of **substitution** of human forms of government, bureaucrats, or bureaucratic rules and regulations **for** the practice of personal righteousness is utterly vain. No government or government law on the face of the earth can produce trust in God from which all righteousness ultimately issues. Government can keep overt evil in reasonable check, but it cannot legislate nor enforce righteousness. **HISTORY TEACHES THIS! GOD'S WORD TEACHES THIS!**

REASON TEACHES THIS! Preaching is “getting on people’s cases!” Preaching is contending against sin. Preaching is persuading people of “righteousness and the judgment to come.” Preaching is warning the world that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world...and God has given **assurance** unto all men in that he has raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 17:3-31). Preaching demands the best in a preacher. It demands that he know something of the details of God’s word and history. It demands that he have the power and influence of an irreproachable life (like Samuel). It demands that he be able to deliver or communicate, precisely, concisely, and persuasively, so that his audience will “witness” that what he has said is true! GOD GIVE US PREACHERS, NOT ENTERTAINERS! GOD GIVE US CHURCHES THAT WILL LET THEIR PREACHERS BE PREACHERS, NOT ERRAND BOYS OR OFFICE JOCKEYS OR JOKE-STERS!

Very little rain fell in Palestine during harvest time (12:16-18). Rain falling in harvest time would be extra-ordinary, even supernatural. The people realized this. Samuel told the people, “Present yourselves,” or, “Give Attention!” and see what the Lord will do. The fact that Samuel could call upon the Lord and have the Lord make it thunder and rain would indicate in no uncertain terms that what Samuel was saying was directly from the Lord! Their wickedness was great. The Hebrew word here for “great” is **not gabar** or **gibbor** both of which mean “powerful,” but **rabah** which means “numerous, myriad, much, abundant, vast.” How could asking for a king like the nations be such a **pile** of wickedness? **Because, any action or thought that elevates anyone or anything before God is a “pile” of abominable wickedness (bushels and bushels, see Zech. 5:5-11).** A great number of people had died when they looked into the ark (6:19). One of man’s natural reactions to guilt is fear of punishment. When they realized they had sinned greatly in asking for a king, they asked Samuel to pray to the Lord that they not die. Nothing wrong with that! God made consciences! But, praise the Lord, he also made a way to be forgiven and have a clean conscience! Samuel tells the people how to be forgiven—**Repent!** If they will not *tasuru* (Heb. for “apostatize”) or turn away from the Lord, he will not cast them away. Furthermore, they must **serve** the Lord **with all their heart**. When people turn away from the Lord they inevitably turn to what is vain. The Hebrew word is *tohu* which is the word used in Gen. 1:1 to describe the earth when it was “without form and void.” It is also the word used by Isaiah 44:9 to describe the makers of idols. It means, “chaotic, formless, empty, useless, senseless, meaningless.” The Lord will not **cast away** his people. The Hebrew word is *yitash* from a root word which means “abandon.” The only abandoning will be if the people abandon the Lord. The Lord will act toward them, if they will let him, **for his own name’s sake!** The Lord acts first and always **for his name’s sake!** (See Ezek. 29:9,14,22, etc.). Jesus always prayed **first** that God glorify his own name (Jn. 12:28; 17:1, etc.). God wants a people for **himself!** His people are primarily to glorify him! Samuel would have demonstrated an unforgivable degree of selfishness if he had prayed only when the people had accepted him as their leader. Samuel had a servant’s heart. He considered himself their servant even if they had rejected him as their leader. So he prayed fervently for them!

Samuel would not only pray for them, he would **instruct them**. TO NOT **INSTRUCT** THEM WOULD BE AS SINFUL AS NOT PRAYING FOR THEM! The Hebrew word translated “**instruct**” is *horeythi* and is from the root word *yarah* and is the same root word from which we get *Torah* (which is used to name the first five or six books of the Bible). *Torah* is another word for “law of God.” Literally, it means, “to cast, to throw, to

shoot, to direct, to aim.” To bring people to a proper “fear” of the Lord will cause them to serve him faithfully. The Hebrew word for **faithful** is *amen*, which means, “true, truthful, so-be-it!” Repetition! Have you noticed how much Samuel repeats and repeats, “fear the Lord,” “serve the Lord,” and “follow the Lord”? Teaching is repetition. **Teachers should never apologize for repeating the precepts of the Lord!** People’s minds are prone to rebel and be hardened primarily because of ignorance of God’s word! Isaiah faced a people who criticized him for repetition (Isa. 28:9-13), but Isaiah went right on **repeating** the precepts of the Lord (Isa. 8:16-22; 28:13). The Corinthian church spurned instruction and clamored for excitement of foreign language-speaking and Paul quoted Isaiah 28:9-13 for them as a rebuke. Teaching the will of the Lord is just plain rote repetition. Samuel and Jesus and Paul said the repetition of history was for our admonition (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-16, etc.). **Indoctrination! Now there’s a “dirty” word in the 21<sup>st</sup> century!** But the Hebrew word **torah** means “indoctrinate.” It also means, “aim, hit the mark, give direction.” Instruction must have aim, purpose, directions. To teach is to **indoctrinate**, not merely inform! And it is to indoctrinate in the **right way (give direction)** as opposed to the wrong way. Much of modern education is simply informing people of everything without **instructing or giving direction to the right goal (literacy, morality, purposefulness)**. To merely impart information is **not** teaching! Never was, never will be! The church must never compromise on **indoctrination**. The church is the only real teaching institution in the world today! What good is a mass of information if one does not know what is right and profitable and good and what is evil, wrong, useless and hurtful?

## 1 SAMUEL 13:1—14:52

Saul had a son, Jonathan, who was at this time probably 20 years of age. Out of the 330,000 “registered” for military service, Saul “drafted” or chose 3000 and sent the rest home. He was rather optimistic, wasn’t he! He assigned 2000 to himself and 1000 to Jonathan’s command at Gibeah (Saul’s home town that needed rescuing). *Jonathan* means, “Jehovah’s gift.” Michmash and Gibeah are about 5 miles apart. There is a deep gorge about 800 ft. deep between the two cities. Saul had made good strategic military preparations by occupying both Michmash and Gibeah. He had the Philistine fortress at Gibeah between his 2000 men and Jonathan’s 1000. Jonathan attacked the Philistine fort at Gibeah and defeated it. God had promised the Israelites if they followed him, he would drive out all the nations in Canaan (Deut. 11:23-25). God told Joshua and his successors to occupy the land, by force if necessary (Josh. 1:1-11). The inhabitants (some of them like Rahab) acknowledged (“by faith”) that the Israelites were to be given the land by the Israelite’s God (Josh. 2:8-14). Jonathan was simply doing what God had commanded and that was **not unethical!** Saul was not really boasting, he was only sending a military dispatch—that the trained army of Israel (3000 men) and the “home-front” was to prepare themselves for a general offensive against the Philistines. It is interesting that the “victory” of Jonathan was attributed to Saul (13:4). The translation of the Hebrew word *va’ash* by the English “stink” is rather mild. The Hebrew means, “stink like rotten grapes.” The mighty Philistines had about all they could take of these “rotten” upstart Israelites. The Philistines decided to teach Saul a lesson.

The Philistines mustered an army of 30,000 chariots; 6000 cavalymen; thousands and thousands of infantrymen. They encamped around Micmash and Beth-aven (“Beth-aven” means, “house of nothing”—a deserted place). The Philistine army must have presented an overwhelming, terrifying picture! The Israelites may have been outnumbered 100 to 1 or more. When Saul “blew the trumpet” and announced an attack upon the Philistines, he was not expecting to see thousands upon thousands. Saul’s army certainly didn’t expect it! The Israelites were rather new at this kind of huge campaign of forces. They were totally outclassed in weaponry. In fact, the Israelites probably did not have any weapons except their farm tools (see 13:19-23). And they were going to have to fight against chariots, bows and arrows, spears, swords, cavalymen and who knows what else! Saul’s army was “pressed, squeezed, tyrannized” (Hebrew, *nagas*). They ran; they hid in caves, holes, between rocks, in tombs and cisterns; some of them fled even beyond the Jordan to the lands of Gad and Gilead. Saul was left with about 600 men (see 13:15). Saul allowed himself and his army to be lulled into **overconfidence** in themselves. Saul **underestimated** the enemy. Two initial successes at Jabesh-gilead and Gibeah led Saul to think his enemy was weak and a “push-over.” As a result, Saul and his army were routed and hid like cowards in caves and holes, cisterns and tombs! Christians are prone to do this same thing: **(a)** Peter vowed, “They may all forsake you, Lord, I will not (Matt. 26:33; Mark 14:29)—but he did; **(b)** the Corinthian church, after disciplining the immoral member (1 Cor. 5), underestimated the power of Satan to tempt them to be unforgiving toward the penitent member (2 Cor. 2:5-11); **(c)** Jesus warned that false prophets would be wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15ff); **(d)** Paul said the devil was able to change himself into an angel of light and his servants would be able to disguise themselves (2 Cor. 11:14-15); **(e)**

the devil is a like roaring lion seeking to devour (1 Pet. 5:8); **(f)** Jude said only foolish and irrational men would dare to think they were powerful enough to judge the devil without the Lord's help (Jude 8-13); **(g)** the church at Thyatira thought the "deep things of Satan" were harmless (Rev. 2:24); **(h)** apparently Judas never thought his betrayal of Christ for money would ever end in Jesus' death; **(i)** Jesus warned the 70 disciples not to be so overconfident about their victories (Luke 10:20). "Mountain-top" experiences and great victories sometimes lure us into believing that the devil will never bother us again—WRONG! He will be after us until we have reached the final victory! "Be thou faithful unto death and thou wilt receive the crown of life." There is no relaxation for the Christian! There is no truce! The enemy has been defeated but he has not given up. He has been cast down but he still proposes to make war upon the saints (Rev. 12:17). He is deceptive, cunning, has millions of helpers, and is unceasing. DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE HIM! Overconfidence in Christians may bring disaster—it may cause cowardice, and even surrender to the enemy!

Samuel had previously appointed a specific time he would come to Saul (10:8) and intercede asking the favor of the Lord upon Saul's endeavors against the Philistines. Saul's army was scattering (Heb. *phutz*, "scattered as when hit with a hammer"), so Saul offered the burnt offering himself to the Lord. Saul sinned **(a)** in acting as a priest when he was not; **(b)** disobeying God's directive given through Samuel the prophet about the 7 days; **(c)** in violating his own conscience. He had no sooner disobeyed, than God's word in the mouth of Samuel was there to judge him. This is so often the case (e.g., David & Nathan; Jonah & the sailors; Isaiah & Hezekiah, etc. etc.). Saul justified his action as something done "to produce a good result." It is the philosophy that the "end justifies the means." Saul even justified it as a religious or godly end. At least it had the appearance of a religious end. Saul said he had "forced" himself. The Hebrew word is *'aphaq*, which has the connotation of a mighty struggle like a river torrent or a channel with a strong current. Saul must have really wrestled with his conscience. Samuel told Saul unequivocally that he had "acted foolishly" and had "not kept the commandment of the Lord...which he commanded you." There was no question about Saul's disobedience. What he did was not in the realm of opinion—but in direct disobedience to a specific, plain command of God through God's messenger. Samuel predicted: **(a)** the eventual end of Saul's reign as king; **(b)** that the Lord had already (in the Lord's scheme of time) found a man after God's heart who was appointed to be prince over his people. This of course, is David, son of Jesse whom Samuel does not yet know. Saul, if silence may be considered evidence, does not seem to take Samuel too seriously about losing the kingdom. Samuel went to Gibeah, a well-known place of assembly for the people, probably to offer sacrifices to the Lord. Saul stayed at Geba, probably thinking..."Just let someone try to take my throne away from me!" The "end" does not justify "means" when there is a definite, clear command from God as to the means! Saul violated two specific commandments about means when he sacrificed—he knew he was no priest—he knew Samuel had told him to wait 7 days. This was not in the realm of opinion or guesswork. Moses practiced ends/means ethics in striking the rock! God's word indicates specifically, plainly and repeatedly that the new birth or entry into covenant relationship with Christ is by faith in him as the resurrected Son of God; repentance of sinning; confession of his name before witnesses; and immersion in water. **No** religious **end** such as great numbers "saved," or less chance of catching a cold, or union with other so-called Christians, would justify altering these God-appointed **means!** And what about

using “end of the world” tactics to get people to respond to an invitation? What about trying to circumvent people’s opportunity to think and make their own decision by using emotional pressures? What about misrepresenting the truth to get more money for the Lord’s work? Does this mean that we are *never* free to select a means which we think would best suit the desired end? Yes, if we violate a Christian’s freedom in Christ and the New Covenant. Yes, if we violate another man’s conscience. Yes, if we violate our own conscience by deliberately disobeying a plain commandment of Christ. If none of the foregoing occur, we are free to seek the best means to the Lord’s desired end! God’s ideals are absolute. No divorce, no murdering, no withholding truth; in fact, God’s ideal is no sin at all. But we do not live and move and breathe in an ideal (perfect) world. All around us there are those who would be unfaithful, take human life in murder, lie, cheat, and in fact destroy all societal structures. The devil himself is the chief anarchist. Therefore, there are times when we must be content with less than the ideal if for no other reason than to maintain some semblance of social structure! We have to execute murderers; we have to allow divorce for continued unfaithfulness; we have to withhold truth from those who want to use truth to harm society; we may have to deceive (in war and police work) to protect innocent people against the criminals. In other words, we may have to practice a “lesser of two evils” or a “hierarchy of ethical behavior” principle of ethics since we do not live in a perfect world. **Since we will run across this being practiced by godly men, or violations of it by ungodly men, it well that we consider it here.** God does not make every decision for us. He does not want us to be vegetables—he wants us to be in his image and to make spiritual and moral growth by choosing and by choosing what is always best.



## A HIERARCHY OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

by Millard J. Erickson in,  
*Relativism In Contemporary Ethics*

The “principle” approach draws a distinction between “good” and “right.”

The “good” is an **ideal**, which may or may not be fully realizable.

It is “right,” however, to do that which would most fully actualize the “good.”

It would be wrong to do less than maximum “good,” if one could do more.

This recognizes that there will be some cases in which the best that can be done falls far short of the **ideal**.

The best option available will be the lesser of two evils (for this approach does believe in intrinsically “good” and intrinsically “evil”).

Yet this action, although it cannot be unequivocally termed “good,” is right in the sense that it is that which one ought to do.

This approach attempts to recognize and acknowledge the broken-ness (i.e., fallen-ness) of the world in which we live.

Whereas there is an **ideal** that God desires man to attain, the world as we now find it may be in such a state as to render that objective *unattainable in practice*.

Thus God’s will in the ultimate sense (W1) would be the fully “good.” Yet God’s will (W2) is that man should do what most nearly approximates that complete “good.”

**Example:** it may be God’s will (W1 or **ideal**) that no human life should **ever** have to be taken. This would be the “good” (W1). Yet, given our world in which men are characterized by greed, avarice, hatred, and fear, I may find myself or civil authorities called upon to take the life of another to defend myself or to protect the lives of my children. It may in this case, be God’s will (W2) that this life-threatening person be executed. I cannot say that what was done is God’s **ideal** or “good” (W1), but I can hold that what was done was **right**. This is not intended to create a sense of guilt in any one, but it should produce an intense feeling of regret that the world in which moral choices are made and executed is of this very imperfect character. The distinction between God’s will (W1—the **ideal** or “good”) and (W2—the **right**) is an important one. For a Christian to discuss the morality of war, divorce, police protection, paying taxes to human governments, etc., etc., without observing this distinction, invites confusion.

We must clearly face the reality that we live in a sinful, corrupted world, one in which the **best** that can be done is far from the **ideal** that might be hoped for. **Ideally**, no enemies would exist; no marital unfaithfulness would exist; all men would live in perfect brotherhood and marital faithfulness with one another. Under these conditions the **ideal** of **complete** verbal truthfulness could be practiced and there would be no divorce and no need to ask questions about remarriage. In such situations, the **ideal** of never terminating a human life could be realized. There would not be killing in self-defense or in justifiable wars of defense of “unalienable” human rights (i.e., life, liberty and proprietorship), because such occasions would not arise. No force would ever have to be exerted in apprehending criminals, for there would be none in an **ideal** world. No courts would have to insist that witnesses swear tell the truth in trials—there would be no trials!

An ethic to be practiced presently (in this fallen world) must be designed for the world that now is, not for the world that ought to be!

### God’s **ideals** (some)

### Humans practicing the “**right**” in a fallen world

No taking of human life

War; death penalty for capital crimes, killing when necessary for self-defense or defense of other innocents

No divorce

Divorce for unfaithfulness; protection from spouse and child abuse

No withholding of the truth

Cast not your pearls before the swine—truth withheld from those who would use it for harm

No deception

Military and police deceptions to protect innocent society

Jonathan decided to trust the Lord and allow him to decide whether the Philistines could be attacked or not (14:6). So he told his armor-bearer to follow him. Jonathan did not tell his father Saul he was going to the Philistine garrison: **(a)** Saul would have forbidden it as rash and foolhardy; **(b)** Jonathan knew that secrecy was essential to any opportunity for success; **(c)** Apparently, ever since Samuel's announcement that he was going to lose the kingdom Saul was paralyzed with the same fear and trembling as his army had. Saul had retreated from Michmash, and his strategic position, back to his own home town of Gibeah. Ahijah was the great-grandson of Eli; grandson of Phineas. **Ahijah** means "Jehovah is brother." The house of Eli has recovered from its decadence and is now ministering before the Lord again. Jonathan believed in the God-ordained destiny of his people. He believed in the power of his God. He did not know whether God would give success to his own particular venture against the Philistines but he knew in the long-run God would keep his word and Jonathan was willing to be used in that "long-run" scheme of God! Consider the state of affairs of Israel at this time: **(a)** the tabernacle had been plundered and the ark of the covenant lost for a while—even now it was not at Shiloh; **(b)** Samuel had returned to Gibeah because Shiloh had been forsaken; **(c)** Saul had returned to Gibeah with just 20% of his trained army, the rest had deserted—Saul was not exactly popular; **(d)** after two apparent successes in war, Saul was now faced with humiliation by an overwhelming force of Philistines; **(e)** there were no iron-smiths in Israel to even sharpen farm tools—let alone swords and spears; **(f)** the Philistines considered Saul's army so ineffective they did not even bother to wipe them out; **(g)** Saul has disobeyed the commandments of God; **(h)** the only way for Jonathan to get to the Philistine camp to attack is to climb up a sheer cliff or rock some 6 or 8 stories high—he must do it alone or with only one other in order to facilitate surprise and secrecy. Jonathan proposed a "fleece" sign by which he trusted the Lord to signal his pleasure—whether to attack or not. The "fleece" said, "Come on up." Jonathan and his armor-bearer climbed the crag (600-800 feet), and attacked, killing 20 men within about half an acre. The Philistines, not knowing how many might be following Jonathan, were taken completely by surprise and panicked. They were running "hither and thither" in confusion. While Saul was directing the high priest Ahijah to bring the ark of the covenant to his camp in order to seek Jehovah's guidance, the tumult in the Philistine camp increased. Saul decided that the time was right at that moment to strike—he did not have time for the ark of the covenant to be brought and seek Jehovah's guidance—so he told the high priest "Never mind, forget the ark." Saul attacked. The Philistines began to kill one another in their confusion. Jonathan had said, "Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few!" **JONATHAN'S ACTIONS WERE BASED ON FAITH AND THE COURAGE FAITH BRINGS—NOT ON FOOL-HARDINESS!** Saul may have been cowed by the great Philistine army, but not Jonathan! **God can deliver his people by many or by few.** It is one thing to want all men to be saved and exhort people to evangelism. It is quite another thing to be deceived into thinking that the Lord **has to have great numbers** to carry on his work in the world. **The Lord has always continued his redemptive work through a minority!** We shouldn't have to list the Biblical illustrations to substantiate this! God chose what was weak, low, despised, even things that were not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God (1 Cor. 1:28). **GOD'S WORK CAN GO ON WITHOUT YOU OR ME, OR THOUSANDS OF OTHERS. HE DOES NOT HAVE TO HAVE US TO DEFEAT THE DEVIL. HE ONLY HAD TO HAVE ONE—JESUS—TO DO THAT. BUT WE HAVE TO HAVE HIM!**

The Hebrew text literally says, "...when Saul **adjured** the people, saying, Cursed is the man...." etc. The Hebrew word used here is *y'i'el*, and may mean either "oath, adjure" or "agree, be willing, consent to." The normal Hebrew word for "oath or vow" is *nadar*. In the OT, vows were never regarded as a religious duty (Deut. 23:22), but once a vow was made it was considered as sacred and binding (Deut. 23:21-23; Judg. 11:35; Eccl. 5:4; Psa. 66:13; Lev. 27:1ff). Saul simply gave a foolish command, and he could have rescinded it at any time without any moral culpability. In fact, the foolishness of it, coupled with a probable motive of pride and arrogance, made him morally culpable for having made the order in the first place! With the following circumstances his motive seems to be that of "showing everyone who is king around here." The **first** sad consequence of Saul's command or adjuration was that Jonathan had not heard of it and disobeyed or violated it. What is Saul to do now? Jonathan told the people his father had "troubled" (i.e., brought sorrow upon) the land by making such a foolish command. The **second** sad consequence was that the "slaughter among the Philistines had not been great." It appeared by the 20 mile retreat that Saul had won a great victory, but only temporarily. All because he was consumed with passion to get a "quick victory" or to show who was boss, his victory was empty. It would have been better to let his army eat of the spoils of the enemy, revitalize itself, and go on to decimate the Philistine army. The **third** sad consequence was that the people were tempted and did break their word, and ate of the spoils of the Philistine camp, oxen and calves. Not only so, but they ate them "with the blood," which was strictly *forbidden* in the law of Moses (Lev. 17:10-14; 19:26). Saul told the people **they** had acted treacherously (i.e. covertly, slyly). Saul always has to blame someone else for his failures—so he is implying that if they had not done their deed slyly, he would have prevented it. Without waiting to learn why the Lord was **not** answering his request for divine guidance, Saul made another rash command or "adjuration." The people's silence must have been embarrassing. Earlier they had joined him in swearing—now they will not; now they listen in terror at the rash and violent oath Saul takes for they know he has condemned his own son! The **fourth and saddest** consequence of Saul's rashness—the "lot" falls upon Jonathan! In order to maintain "his image" as king among the people, Saul was willing to kill his son who had not knowingly disobeyed him. It appears the people were going to **force** Saul to spare Jonathan for they were convinced Saul was wrong. Saul might feel bound by his rash oath, but the consciences of the people told them that an oath to commit a crime is an oath to be repented of as a sin, and not to be performed as a duty. The people **ransomed** Jonathan. They paid the price for Jonathan's release from death by challenging the king and laying their own lives on the block!

**Military success; MORAL FAILURE!** It is interesting that the Bible devotes most of its space in the case of Saul **detailing his moral battles (and failures)** while it summarizes his military battles (and successes). God is more interested in Saul's character than his expertise! Saul routed the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, the people of Zobah and the Philistines. His confrontation with the Amalekites is another story and we shall deal with that in chapter 15 (and again God details Saul's moral failure with the Amalekites). Saul had four sons; three are mentioned here: Jonathan, Ishui, Melchi-shua, and Ishaball (or Ish-bosheth) mentioned in 1 Chron. 9:39 who was temporarily made king over Israel after Saul's death, 2 Sam. 2:8. The 3 older sons of Saul were killed in battle with their father on Mount Gilboa. Daughters are not often mentioned in the Bible unless they are involved in important events. Two of Saul's daughters are mentioned. Merab, supposed to be given to David as wife but given to another (1 Sam. 18:19); Michal, Saul's

younger daughter, loved David, and Saul did give her as wife to David (1 Sam. 18:27). Only one wife is mentioned—Ahinoam—perhaps Saul had only one wife. He did have a concubine (2 Sam. 3:7) named Rizpah. Saul called his wife “a perverse and rebellious woman” (1 Sam. 20:30), probably because of his own insane jealousy and selfishness. Abner, Saul’s cousin was his “chief of staff” or leading general. Abner remained with Saul throughout his reign and tried to uphold the honor of the family (2 Sam. 2:8). Abner tried to put David on the throne of all Israel but was killed for it by Joab. David respected Abner and called him a prince and a great man (2 Sam. 3:38). Most of Saul’s reign was spent in battle. This must have placed much stress both financially and psychologically upon the people of Israel. Samuel had warned the Israelites that “a king like the nations” would cost them. He did take their sons to go to war; he did take their farm produce; their daughters and their beasts of burden to serve his war program. “When Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he attached him to himself.” That pretty well sums up Saul’s reign! Saul was a hero—but a hero with feet of clay! **Beware of heroes!** The people wanted a king like the nations—**they got one!** Most of the time they gloried in him. “Whether sitting at table with these officers, who attendance was especially required on the new moon and other festive days, or whether he appeared in public, surrounded by his body-guard, the king was distinguished by a tall spear, suited to his stature, which was placed beside his chair when he rested, and by his pillow when he slept, and which he wielded with terrible effect in battle, where the mightiest weapons of Israel were the spear of Saul and the bow of Jonathan (1 Sam. 18:10; 19:9; 20:33; 26:11; 2 Sam. 1:6). He wore a royal diadem and golden armlet (2 Sam. 1:10). He loved to hear the acclamations of the people, and the songs with which the women greeted him as they came out of the cities of Israel, to welcome his return from battle and to receive robes or scarlet and ornaments of gold from the spoil (1 Sam. 18:6; 2 Sam. 1:24).” —from *Old Testament History*, by Smith and Fields, College Press, p. 399. How like human nature today that has not been changed by the power of God! Men and women, boys and girls, give hero worship to the vain, perverse, almost insane, greedy, profane, decadent rock “stars” movie “stars” sports “stars” and political “stars”—even “religious stars.” IN THE NAME OF REASON AND COMMON SENSE IT WOULD APPEAR THE PEOPLE COULD CHOOSE BETTER “STARS” THAN THESE TO IDOLIZE! **Look at the trouble Israel fell into for idolizing Saul!**

## 1 SAMUEL 15:1—16:23

One commentator says the name *Amalek* means, “a strangler of the people.” The Amalekites (probably a grandson of Esau) were an ancient and nomadic marauding people dwelling mainly in the Negev desert of southern Palestine. They existed at least as early as Abraham (Gen. 14) and as late as Hezekiah (1 Chron. 4:43). Because of their unprovoked attack upon Israel in the days of Moses (Ex. 17:8ff; Num. 14:45) and at other times (Judg. 3:13; 6:3,33; 12:15) God decreed they should be obliterated (Num. 24:20). Saul spared the Amalekite king Agag (Saul was himself later slain by the Amalekites, 2 Sam. 1:8ff). David smote the Amalekites severely (1 Sam. 27:8; 30:18). They were war-like marauders, plundering and killing wherever they roamed “...smiting the hindmost...all that were feeble...and feared not God” (Deut. 25:18) even spitefully burning crops. Archaeology has produced no remains of them as a people to this day! How could a loving God command Saul to “utterly destroy” men, women, children and animals? God commands Saul to “have no pity.” The question is best answered by asking other questions. (A) How can a **good** God allow the forces of **nature** to destroy men, women, children, animals and property? (B) How can a **good** God allow his sinless, divine **Son** to be crucified as a criminal? We must answer; (a) it is in the nature of an absolutely holy, just, righteous, merciful and wise God that his word must be vindicated not only in the hereafter, but in the here-and-now if men (who exist temporarily in the here-and-now) are to **trust** him; (b) we cannot really, without prejudice, judge the intrinsic evil of our own sins, let alone that of the Amalekites. We are biased in favor of sin too much to really see its evil. God has tried to show us how terrible it is in the death of his sinless Son. The Amalekites opposed God’s redemptive work in the world—sooner or later, if they do not repent, they will suffer the awful judgment of God. No empire, however strong, rich or world-dominating, can stop the redemptive work of God! The Canaanite tribes couldn’t; Assyria, Babylon, Persian, Greece, Rome couldn’t. The Nazis and Communism couldn’t. And Islam will not! God foretold the demise in precise, chronological detail of world-dominating ancient empires (see Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, etc.). AND IT WAS SO! Whoever touches God’s covenant people “touches the apple of his eye” (Zech. 2:8). The “apple of the eye” is the eyeball, the most sensitive spot on the human body. GOD IS SENSITIVE ABOUT HIS PEOPLE! God saw the “harlot” (ancient Rome) “drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus” and brought judgment upon her. The saints and all heaven were told to **rejoice** when God’s judgment fell upon her (Rev. 17:18; 18:20). God is serious about his people being **separated** from sin and unbelief! God had to take **drastic** action to impress the people of the OT with this fact (and believers who would come after them). Saul did not destroy the Amalekites—Israel suffered contamination of idolatry as a consequence. Later God told Israel to “come out from among” the heathen (Isa. 52:11; Jer. 51:45) and Paul repeated these prophecies (2 Cor. 6:17) as a warning to the church not to have partnership with iniquity. John told the churches of Asia Minor to **separate** from ancient Rome’s decadence (Rev. 18:4) lest the churches be destroyed with Rome. Jesus advocated the drastic measure of cutting off one’s hand or plucking out the eye if such were the causes of sin...better than going to hell whole! IS GOD SERIOUS ABOUT SEPARATION FROM SIN? Ask the ancient Amalekites!

Quite to the contrary of repenting, Saul set up for himself a monument. The

Hebrew word translated “monument” is *yod*, literally, “a hand.” Saul “gave himself a hand—a round of applause.” Some kind of pillar or monument was erected to celebrate Saul’s victory which Saul set up by his own “hand.” Perhaps it was a trophy or monument in the form of a hand which symbolized in the Bible subjection of one’s enemies and the victor’s “honor.” Absalom’s “hand” in 2 Sam. 18:18 had something to do with claiming superiority. Saul’s exposes his feelings of insecurity again by “giving himself a hand.” We would do well not to “give ourselves a hand” too often! It is well to encourage people by expressing our appreciation for their godliness and helpfulness, BUT LET’S NOT BUILD TOO MANY “MONUMENTS” FOR OURSELVES! There is a very thin line between appreciation and “flattering people to gain advantage” (see Jude 16). God exalts the humble and brings low the proud.

When confronted by Samuel with the very plain facts that did not harmonize with God’s plain commandment, Saul began to blame the *people* for the disobedience. Saul lied and said, “*They*” spared the best. Samuel told Saul to cease his plunge into deeper and deeper self-incrimination. The Hebrew word translated “Stop!” in 15:16 is *raphah* and means, “Relax!” Saul was caught in highhanded sin, caught red-handed, and by *lying* was only exacerbating his problems! Saul cannot or will not recognize the truth. He recognized only that truth which gave him pleasure and refused to recognize any that would be unpleasant. “Rebellion” in the Hebrew language is *marah* and is from the same root word from which we get the English, *Miriam*. It is the strongest Hebrew word to describe rebellion. *Qasam* is the Hebrew word for “divination” and is what false prophets did (Ezek. 12:24; 13:7, etc.). Saul was a “false prophet” in his disobedience. The Hebrew word *patzar* means, “stubborn, willful, resistant, insolent—like a file that grates against anything.” *Teraphim* means, “household gods, idolatry.” And *ma’as* means, “to despise, hold in contempt, reject, dissolve.” SAUL HAD CONTEMPT FOR THE LORD’S WILL; GOD HELD SAUL IN CONTEMPT OF THE COURT OF DIVINE JUSTICE! God’s truth is so often contrary to the “stroking” of the flesh. We so often refuse, for that reason, to acknowledge truth (Jn. 8:45—“**Because** I tell you the truth, you do not believe me...””) (see also Jn. 3:19-21; Rom. 1:25; 1:28; 2 Thess. 2:9-12). God’s truth is never, **of itself**, obscure, vague, obtuse or unattainable. God reveals himself and his nature in that which he has created and in direct, verbal revelation (the Bible). God’s commandments are not grievous or burdensome (1 Jn. 5:3). So, why will people not acknowledge his commandments as truth and keep them? **BECAUSE THE DEVIL HAS DECEIVED THEM INTO BELIEVING GOD’S COMMANDMENTS ARE RESTRICTIVE, BURDENSOME AND UNFAIR** (Gen. 3:1-7). Then, the devil deceives those willing to believe lies into thinking they are not being deceived! The Jewish rulers affirmed that a “notable sign” had been done by Peter and John, and “they could not deny it,” yet, they charged the apostles to stop preaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:13-22)! **Because the gospel of Christ is unacceptable to the fleshly-minded, they cannot tolerate it being propagated!** Let us be on guard against the ever present, but very subtle danger of recognizing only that part of God’s truth which we “like” in order to indulge ourselves. We must search for, acknowledge, and do the whole truth, and nothing but the truth! Someone said of Samuel’s exposure of Saul’s duplicity, “No interview recorded in history has a deeper moral significance.” It is an eternal principle that man cannot propitiate God with offerings, retaining his sin and willful ways, and be moral! According to the Joplin, MO, *Globe*, the Roman Catholic church took a survey in A.D. 2010 of “Catholic” young people between the ages 19-29, “82 percent believed that morality is relative, and there is no absolute right or

wrong.” Saul did some things right, but he was not right. Righteousness is first **being** right with God, not merely doing religious things. The constitution of the Kingdom of God (i.e., Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount) begins, “Blessed are...” HOWEVER, OBEDIENCE TAKES PRIORITY OVER CEREMONY, ESPECIALLY OVER HUMAN OPINION! Obedience to God is the fundamental virtue according to God’s revelation (1 Sam. 25:22; Jer. 11:7; Rom. 5:19; Heb. 5:9; John 14:15,23; 2 Cor. 10:5—even our thoughts should be obedient to God). Truth must be obeyed (1 Pet. 1:22; Gal. 5:7). Wickedness must *not* be obeyed (Rom. 2:8). The gospel must be obeyed (1 Pet. 4:17; 2 Thess. 1:8). Obedience was primary with Jesus (Matt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46). Obedience is a privilege, not an obligation. It is through obedience we really have faith and it is by faith we participate or share in the grace of God which he provided in the vicarious death of Jesus Christ. Obedience is not only offered to us, the means or agencies by which we may obey (not merit) are given—baptism, the Lords’ Supper, stewardship, benevolence, making disciples, worship, etc. Christ became the only perfectly obedient Man and we may claim participation in his perfect obedience by our faithful obedience to him and through faithfulness (not perfection) receive Christ’s grace.

God does not change his will once it is expressed. His will must be without variation or we would have a God who vacillates. God’s will is **conditional**. He always offers man options. Either man believes and obeys God’s will and receives God’s grace or man disbelieves and disobeys God’s will and receives the condemnation God promises. It **is** true that God feels. He does not make mistakes so that he is sorry for lack of wisdom—but he hurts, he regrets out of love that Saul had chosen to destroy himself. The Bible is in human language. “Repent” is a human word. God wants us to look at his feeling toward Saul and the kingdom through the only frame of reference we have—human feelings. God was grieved because of Saul’s freely chosen failure. The best way we can understand how God felt is to have God’s feelings expressed **anthropomorphically** (i.e., “in human form”). God plainly told Samuel that Saul did **not** keep his commandments (plural)—more than once Saul blatantly disobeyed. Samuel had a personal liking for Saul and was grieved over Saul’s disobedience. How often Samuel prayed for the people and for Saul (7:8-9; 12:18; 15:11). But God does not forgive one man simply on the basis of another man’s prayers. The sinner must repent before forgiveness can be applied. God does not change. He may grieve, but he cannot be manipulated or thwarted (see Num. 12:19; Psa. 110:4; Isa. 40:8; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). God is moved to action by man’s actions, but God is not influenced by man. God always acts according to his will. His will moves calmly, inevitably, inexorably toward his purpose without hindrance or influence by men or nations. One instrument may be laid aside and another chosen, because God ordains that the instruments by which his will is to be done shall be done by persons endowed with free will. But if one instrument does not do his will, he will find another who shall!

Samuel announces that the Lord will “tear” the kingdom from Saul and give it to a “neighbor” who is “good” (Heb. *tov*) compared to Saul.” Saul has forfeited his leadership, not by ineptitude in expertise, but by moral blindness. When Samuel saw Jesse’s firstborn son, Eliab, he thought surely the firstborn, tall, handsome, experienced, would be God’s choice to succeed Saul. Samuel fell into the old trap again of “looking on the outward appearance” for leadership potential. **But God corrected Samuel—God chose the next king according to his own standards!** Seven of Jesse’s eight sons passed before Samuel, but the Lord told Samuel that none of these were to be anointed. The Hebrew idiom has God saying to Samuel, “Do not look to his appearance, nor to the

height of his stature...for he, that is man, he looks at the **eyes**, but Jehovah looks at the heart.” The Hebrew word *‘ainayim* is translated, “outward appearance” but is literally, **eyes**. The word is used again in 16:12 to describe David’s beautiful **eyes**! *David* in Hebrew, means, “beloved.” He was Jesse’s “baby boy.” Samuel wanted David because God told Samuel that David was the one to be anointed king. Samuel said they would wait until David came in from tending the sheep before they all sat down to eat the sacrificial meal. Tending sheep was a **highly responsible** task for a youngster. It would require him to have veterinary, hunter, and agricultural skills. David was “ruddy”—the Hebrew word is *‘ademoni*, the same word from which we get Edom, or “red.” Some think David had red hair. David had beautiful eyes. David was “handsome” to look upon (Heb. *tov*, “good-looking”). David had the spirit of Jehovah come **mightily** (Heb. *tzalah*, meaning, “with success, to prosper”) upon him from that day forward. God’s perspectives are different than man’s. God really wants man, as much as man is able in his finite limitations, to see things as God sees them. This is what the Bible is all about. God, in his great love and mercy, has given us the incomparable blessing of telling us his mind—his outlook—his views on everything and every truth that will affect our character. Not only so, but God himself, in the Person of his Son, came to this earth in human flesh and exemplified or personified how he sees things and people. This is exactly what Paul meant in 2 Cor. 5:14ff. Once we are constrained by the love of Christ because we are convinced of his death, burial and resurrection, we no longer regard people (or things) from a human point of view. We died with Christ, i.e., our old, carnal, human viewpoint died with Christ when we accepted his death in our place. Therefore we see history, the world, people, everything from a new perspective—that perspective is God’s perspective. Of course, we cannot know another human being’s thoughts until he/she tells them (1 Cor. 2:1-16), but we can know human nature in general because God, who made man, knows man, and has told us in the Bible what the human heart is like (Jer. 17:9-10). **LET US RESOLVE TO KNOW THE BIBLE, AND LET IT BE OUR POINT OF VIEW!**

God allowed the evil spirit to inhabit Saul, but it was Saul who was responsible. He could have resisted the evil spirit by repenting of his sin. Hebrew *ruach yaweh* is, “the spirit of Jehovah,” while *riach-elohim ra’ah* is “a spirit from God, an evil one...” This cannot be explained by mere “natural melancholia” or mental illness. Actually, there is no such thing anyway (except for physio-chemical imbalance in the brain). All “mental disease” that is not congenital or accidental in the physical aspect of the brain, is due to spiritual reasons! A “disease” is something that is contagious—“catching.” Did God send this “evil” spirit upon Saul? YES. But not without Saul’s consent! God permitted the evil spirit to dwell in Saul because Saul did not want God’s spirit in him. David was a different kind of man—he wanted God’s spirit to stay with him (Psa. 51:10-12). God “sends” strong delusions, to “make” those believe a lie, who **will not believe the truth**, but take pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:11-12). Such people **refuse** to love the truth (see Rom. 1:18-32; Jn. 3:18-21). James says bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, boasting and being false to the truth is earthly, unspiritual and **demonical** (from the devil) James 3:14-16. Jesus called some of the Jewish rulers “sons of the devil” (Jn. 8:44-45) because they rejected the truth. Satan “entered” Judas because Judas chose to betray Christ (Jn. 13:21-30). It is possible for men to have the “evil spirit” of the devil to believe in Christ and repent, be delivered and become obedient to God (Rom. 6:12-19; Eph. 2:1-10). It is possible for such a man to “fall away” and return to obedience to the “evil spirit” again! The immoral man in Corinth was “delivered unto Satan” until he should repent. A person either



lets God's Spirit possess him and dwell in him and direct him, or he lets the "evil spirit" do so! It is terrifying, but true! There is no third option! One is either "with Christ" or "against Christ." When the Spirit of God is rejected, man is not left simply to himself.

David entered the **service** of Saul—the Hebrew word is not the normal word translated "service," but is the word *'amod* which means, literally, "stood" and implies regular, official, permanent service. Saul **loved** David greatly. The Hebrew word *'ahav* is a word of strong feeling. It is more intense than "friendship" or even "affection." David was Saul's armor-bearer—a position of great personal trust and companionship (cf. Jonathan and his armor bearer). Saul loved David because of David's great ability to play and sing music. Music can be a ministry for the Lord. David was a "Minister of Music." Max Schoen, in *The Psychology of Music*, says, "Music is made of a stuff which in and of itself is the most powerful stimulant known among the perceptual processes...Music operates on our emotional faculty with greater intensiveness and rapidity than the product of any other act." Music can temporarily change the pulse rate and blood pressure. It can increase the secretions of the adrenal and other energy-producing and pain-fighting glands. It can affect the outpouring of gastric juice, thereby having a bearing on digestion. It can reduce or delay muscular fatigue and also increase muscular strength. "There is scarcely a function of the human body which may not be affected by musical tones"—Podolsky, in *The Doctor Prescribes Music*. That may be a little overstated, but good music has harmony and order. Good music is organized sound, coupled with lyrics (which can be heard and understood) which express high ideals. Unquestionably, David sang some of the lyrics (of the Psalms) to Saul as he played on the harp. As long as Saul gave his mind to these testimonies of praise to God, the evil spirit would leave him. But when Saul let his mind dwell on his own selfish, jealous, proud ambitions, the evil spirit would return regardless of music's sounds. **CHRISTIANS NEED GODLY MUSIC...BOTH GODLINESS IN SOUND (i.e., HARMONY AND ORDER—NON-EAR-SPLITTING VOLUME) AND GODLINESS IN LYRICS (i.e., SCRIPTURAL)!**

## 1 SAMUEL 17:1—18:30

The Philistines were encamped some 15-16 miles due west of Bethlehem at Socoh and Azekah in Ephes-dammim (the latter word means, “border of blood” probably from the continual fighting done there). There is in this vicinity a natural amphitheater with a valley separating two sloping hills about 1/4 of a mile apart with a dry stream-bed running nearer the eastern slope whose bed is full of smooth, round stones from one to six inches in diameter. Saul and his army was encamped within a mile or two of the Philistines. The Hebrew word *‘aish–habbenayim* is translated “champion” and literally means, “a man of the two middles,” i.e., one who enters the space between two armies in order to decide, by single combat, the outcome of a “stand-off” between two armies. This was customary in ancient times. **Goliath was 6 cubits (108 inches) plus a span (9 inches) tall—if a cubit is 21 inches, that makes him 11 feet and 4 inches tall!** (His **head** would extend a foot and 4 inches above the rim of a modern basket-ball “basket”). His “coat of mail” was of bronze (copper alloyed with tin) and it weighed 5000 “shekels” (or about 210 lbs.!) It overlapped like scales. His spear-head weighed about 19 pounds (modern shot-put for track and field only weighs 16 pounds). **What a terrifying sight he must have presented! Goliath** was probably a survivor of the “strong” and “great” people of Anak (Num. 13:28) the spies with **Joshua** saw and said they were like the “giants” (Nephilim of Gen. 6:4) of the pre-Flood days. **Goliath** cries, “Am I not **the** Philistine?” “And are you not the servants of Saul?” Saul had not really come off too successful yet against the Philistines. They were not yet convinced Saul had the where-with-all to combat them to a defeat. Of course, **Goliath** knew that in one-on-one, hand to hand combat, he would be unconquerable by any little Hebrew. **Goliath** is said to have **defied** the Hebrews. The Hebrew word is *cherapheti* and means, “reproach, scorn, taunt, be contemptuous of.” He was insulting and belittling them. He was bullying them. The Israelites and all they stood for, including Jehovah, was being dishonored by this heathen. The devil uses deceit and trickery to get Christians to think he is a “giant” that cannot be defeated. The first century churches of Asia Minor were tempted to say with the rest of the ancient Roman world, “Who is like the beast (i.e., Rome), and who can fight against it?” (Rev. 13:4). People of the world often look at the daily news and, finding evil seeming to have taken over the world, withdraw into their own little personal worlds hoping to not have to face the “giant.” Frightened and trembling they are paralyzed to do any good for the world. They are afraid they will get hurt if they struggle against evil. **Christians**, on the other hand, like David, know that our battle is **not** one-on-one. We have God as our Strength and we know that “the battle is the Lord’s” (2 Chron. 20:15-17). We know with John the apostle, that the “beast” is 666 (“vulnerable” or “human”) and that the King of Kings is the Victor. We are not afraid to enter the battle!

This question refers back to Samuel’s warning as to what would happen when the Israelites got “a king like the nations.” Sons not only went to war, the families back home had to support their subsistence. At least the support went directly to the sons—there were no bureaucrats in between getting a “cut” (except the commander who received 10 cheeses)! It was well-known and often repeated among Saul’s soldiers that Saul had promised a bounty or bonus to any soldier who would go to battle and kill the giant Goliath. Saul promised: **(a)** to give the slayer of Goliath great riches; **(b)** make the victor his son-in-law by giving his daughter in marriage; and **(c)** free the father of the soldier’s house from

taxation and the burdens of supporting the king's palace and army with his children, etc. David's brother Eliab was burning with anger at David's offer to fight Goliath (Eliab was probably reacting out of guilt feelings for having fled with the rest of Saul's soldiers at the sight of Goliath). Eliab accused David of insolence and presumption and of having "an evil heart." Perhaps Eliab believed David was only interested in "feathering his nest" by going after all the rewards promised. Maybe he simply thought the boy was just trying to precipitate a battle so he could stand back and watch the fighting. David answered calmly, "What have I done now? Was it not a word?" The Hebrew phrase is literally, "Was not a word it?" The Hebrew word *davar* ("word") is being used metaphorically or metonymically for "cause." In other words, David seems to be saying, "Was it not a good cause I was talking about?...or, "Isn't this the word (or **cause**) on every one's lips?" 17:30 would *literally* read, "And he turned from him (Eliab) toward another and said according to the word (*davar*) this same; and replied to him the people a word (*davar*), like the word (*davar*), the first one." i.e., the word (*davar*) is being used in this context to describe a specific conversation—a specific topic—a specific "**cause**." David is **not** saying, "I was just talking—I was just saying words." David **is** saying, "I was talking about the deliverance of Israel from this unbelieving, profaning Philistine army—which is what everyone else is talking about." **DAVID FACED GOLIATH FOR THE SAKE OF "THE CAUSE."** The **cause** was to rid Israel's land of heathen idolaters to keep the Israelite's pure in their devotion to God.

Saul called David a *na'ar* ("child," in Hebrew); while he said that Goliath was a man and had been a soldier since he was a *na'ar*. Saul implied that David knew nothing about soldiering. David told Saul that often he had "gone after" lions and bears who had stolen sheep from his father's flock. Most shepherds would have gladly let the lion and bear alone unless they had caught them attacking—not David, he tracked them down and rescued the lambs and killed the lions and bears. David would grab the lions and bears barehanded by the *zagan* ("chin") in order to kill them. A young lad fighting lions and bears and killing them, would be agile and quick-witted enough to find a way to do battle with a lumbering, over-confident, encumbered 11 ft. giant of a man! David believed that the Lord delivered him from the lions and bears and the Lord would also deliver him from the "uncircumcised" Philistine. It was not presumption on David's part—IT WAS FAITH IN THE **CAUSE OF THE LORD!** David was primarily concerned that the Lord's name be glorified. If the Lord wished, he could keep David from being slain—if not, David was willing to sacrifice his life to defeat the Philistine (e.g. Dan. 3:16-18, and the three Hebrew men and the fiery furnace). Saul was convinced. Besides, no one else had the courage to even try. He sent David to meet the giant with his prayer that the Lord would be with David. Christians must not be cowed by the forces of evil. We must renew our confidence every day that only those in covenant relationship with God (through Christ) have the promise of eternal life; that God's work is the most important work in the world; that God wishes the forces of evil to be defeated (see 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10ff) through the proclamation of God's word "to every nation."

David took his shepherd's staff, five smooth stones from the brook, his shepherd's bag and his sling and approached the Philistine front lines. Sling in Hebrew is *gela'*. It was a common weapon of the shepherd and farmer as well as being used in warfare. It was one strip of leather made broad at the middle to form a pocket to hold the stone or other missile. The ends were firmly held in the hand as it was whirled around the head and one end was let go so the stone might fly toward its target. The Benjaminites

were excellent “slingers” and ambidextrous (Judges 20:16). The sling was a weapon used by the armies of Egypt and Babylonia. You can see it on TV news this very day when the Palestinian youngsters hurl stones at Israeli tanks and soldiers in modern Israel. David, young as he was, was wiser than all the soldiers present, including Saul. He knew that the best way to defeat the giant was to put to use the abilities and tools that would take advantage of the giant’s vulnerabilities. David took the time to be observant: **(a)** no matter how tall and powerful this Goliath might have been, David could see that with all that armor and weight, he was vulnerable. He would be clumsy, unable to move quickly, unable to cope with anyone in a fight unless his opponent came close and engaged in hand-to-hand combat attired in the same cumbersome armor; **(b)** David probably also had figured out that Goliath was really intended more for intimidating the Hebrew than anything else—a tool for “psychological-warfare.” A young man who had faced lions and bears would not be “psyched” out by a lumbering, stumbling giant; **(c)** furthermore, David had the power of truth and righteousness while the giant was on the side of falsehood and evil. The Christian’s enemy, the devil and his false helpers, are vulnerable. We must be aware of the devil’s way of thinking (2 Cor. 2:11, Greek, *noemata*, “mentality”). We must be aware of his vulnerabilities. He cannot stand against the word of God (Matt. 4:4,7,10). We must not let him intimidate us or “psyche” us out. It is not presumptuous to believe we can stand against our enemy when we have used our God-given source of wisdom to know how he fights and to trust in our God-promised spiritual power to overcome him. The Christian’s weapons are “mighty through God” (2 Cor. 10:3-5). And the Bible tells us Christ has defeated the devil and rendered him powerless to those who believe (cf. Heb. 2:14-18; James 4:7-10; Eph. 6:10-20). David’s motive was not his own fame, but fame for the God of Israel. David did not go against the giant in the name of his family, himself, or his country, but in the name of his God—giving all the glory and credit to God. How many great things could be done in the Lord’s work and how much harmony could be attained if Christians did everything simply for the glory of God and not of men. Paul had to fight “glory hounds” in Corinth, among his own co-workers, and many other places. **David’s purpose was to show Saul and his army of Israelites that GOD IS ABLE TO DELIVER THOSE WHO PUT TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AS THEIR PRIORITY!**

Apparently the way David conducted himself and the respectful humility David show toward king Saul is what first attracted Jonathan to David. The Hebrew word translated “knot” is *qarshar*, “knotted together—tied together.” David and Jonathan were “soul-mates” bound strongly together. Jonathan loved (Heb. *ahav*) David as his own soul. They were bound together by some magnetic, unbreakable tie of kindred-ship of mind and spirit. Strong personal friendships and relationships are based on kindred-ship of mind and spirit. Lasting and true relationships cannot be based on the superficialities of physical attractions, wealth, popularity, compromise of standards, or just emotions. True relationships are based on true love. The Hebrews have words to describe the love of desire (*chashaq*) which is emotional; the love of affection (*’agevah*); and the love of mind and will (*’ahav*), this last one being like the Greek *agape*. The highest form of love in the Hebrew language is denoted *’ahav*. It is the kind of love that does not seek its own way, but the way of others. It is like the love described in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 and Philippians 2:1-11. That is the basis of real and lasting human relationships. Jonathan and David believed in the same things; they had the same courage and faith in God. Jonathan honored David with the best he could offer. David did the same, later, to Jonathan. Christians, because they have the same mind and spirit, should be “knotted” together with the same kind of love

as Jonathan and David. Christians should not feel guilty that they find they have more in common with Christian associates than with their own blood relations at times. Water **IS** thicker than blood when we acknowledge that in being baptized (immersed) into Christ we become **brethren**. The act of Christian baptism draws us into a more binding, lasting covenant than the ties of human ancestry.

Saul became extremely jealous of David's popularity. The women were singing and dancing praises in David's honor. Saul was "burned up" (Heb. *charar*, "to burn fiercely as with fever") with anger. The next day, an evil spirit was permitted (by the Lord) to "overpower" Saul and the king threw his spear at David trying to kill him. Twice he tried to kill David but twice David escaped. Since Saul could not become more popular than David he thought to make David his son-in-law (Saul offered his daughter Merab to David as wife) and in so doing make David subservient to the king. Perhaps Saul also thought that if David were his son-in-law he could pressure David into undertaking rash, risky sorties against the Philistines and maybe David would be killed. David handles the prospect of being suddenly made a member of the royal family (which could lead to great fame and riches) modestly and humbly. Saul was being devious—David was being sincere. David felt that because of his lack of riches and his lowly background, he was not worthy to marry the king's daughter. David surely knew of his popularity with the people but when he says he is a man of no repute, he means his background as a shepherd is not such as being fit to marry the king's daughter. The simplicity which is the fruit of innocence is a great virtue. Guilelessness is godliness. David was such a man. He considered Saul sincere in his promises to make him the king's son-in-law. He did not suspect any evil intentions from Saul. Even to the very last of Saul's life, David could hardly believe that Saul, of his own accord, sought his life (26:19). Experience often makes men cautious; but it is better to be deceived a hundred times than to lead a life of continual suspicion or to have to resort to guile. David always considered himself unworthy of the praise and successes he had. But he always accepted it humbly and cheerfully in the name of his Lord, giving God the glory (read the Psalms). David always honestly, faithfully and efficiently did the duties assigned to him whether shepherding, playing the harp, bearing the king's armor, or commanding troops. Someone has said, "Genius is simply the carrying into the maturity of our powers, the simplicity and ardor of childhood." The simplicity and innocent humility such as David had (a) affords the least occasion for an adversary to take advantage; (b) attracts the respect and help of true friends; (c) insures the favor of God ("the Lord was with him").

David dealt with Saul's attempts on his life in all innocence and sincerity. David simply carried out with integrity the orders his king (Saul) gave him. God debases the proud and exalts the humble. Saul's envy so consumed him he could think of nothing else except how to kill David. Saul undoubtedly let the affairs of state languish while he "eyed" David and let his mind dwell constantly on how to get rid of David. His mind was obsessed with evil. His character took a noticeable plunge into insanity, his actions were murderous. **People noticed.** Saul was abased in their eyes. **David, on the other hand, refused to retaliate; he did not seek popularity; he befriended the son of his persecutor; he kept his mind on doing the Lord's work in fighting the Philistines; he acted prudently and wisely; he let his mind dwell on good, and PEOPLE NOTICED; David was loved and respected and acclaimed.**

## 1 SAMUEL 19:1—20:42

No! Jonathan was not being disobedient—he was being truthful, merciful and trying to be helpful to his father, Saul. Saul’s conscience and soul was being blinded and hardened to the truth by his inordinate envy and jealousy of David. Saul was about to do himself great harm in the eyes of the Lord and of the people he ruled. **Jonathan was making the only effort he could to deter his father from self-destruction!** Truth is the force to sway the conscience. Jonathan simply, in a kindly, gentle way, reasoned with his father and related the true facts of their debt to David: **(a)** David’s risking of his own life for Israel’s benefit; **(b)** David’s services to Saul, personally, and to Jonathan; **(c)** David’s godliness and guilelessness; **(d)** Saul’s previous joy with David’s ministrations to him. The truth of it all had its effect even on the hard-hearted Saul. Temporarily, at least, Saul’s conscience was stabbed and he was reconciled to David. Three things are necessary in dealing with hardened sinners: **(a)** truth must be presented to the conscience—truth is the only hope since force, duplicity and sham will never work; **(b)** kind rationality must be given—it was Jonathan’s manner that caused Saul to even listen—harsh rebuke would have only aroused antagonism; **(c)** and a prayer of faith that God’s will shall be done. Younger people will do well to take Jonathan as an example in seeking to bring older people to face their consciences and change their ways! There are instructions in the NT on how younger people should deal with their elders (1 Tim. 5:19; Titus 2:1-10, etc.).

Michal lied when she said, “David is sick.” She knew very well that David had slipped out of the house, and that he was not sick. Saul soon found out that his daughter had lied to him and asked her why she had deceived him. Michal apparently lied again. She said David forced her to lie about his sickness by threatening to kill her if she did not. There is no statement in the record that David threatened her, or even asked her to lie for him. Difficult moral decisions are often thrust upon individuals when human life is at stake. We must remember however: **(a)** the record of human deception to protect human life in the Bible is not necessarily approved in every case; **(b)** although God has sometimes used the actions of evil people to fulfill his omnipotent purposes, he has at other times, because the hardness and wickedness of people’s intentions, apparently condescended to the use of deception by godly people to protect human life (e.g., Rahab lying about the Israelite spies; Joshua and the citizens of Ai, Josh. 8:1-35; etc.); **(c)** sometimes even a lesser law of God must be broken to uphold a most significant law of God (e.g. Matt. 12:1-8); **(d)** however, the principle involved in truth-speaking is of such vast importance, it is worth much sacrifice for its vindication; **(e)** there may be times when we must not give our “bread” to the dogs nor our “pearls” to the swine (i.e., there are some who would use the truth to do great evil and therefore the truth must be withheld from them). **IT IS ALWAYS RIGHT TO DECEIVE WHEN THERE IS CERTAINTY THAT SOMEONE ELSE’S LIFE WOULD BE INDISCRIMINATELY TAKEN IN MURDER! SAUL INTENDED TO TAKE DAVID LIFE!** If Michal must lie to keep her father from becoming a murderer, and to keep David from being murdered, she was right. In a sinless world there would be no need to lie to protect human life—but we do not live in a sinless world. Police and military people, to maintain law and order locally and internationally, must often practice deception of those who would destroy civil order and take innocent human life!

David escaped and fled to Samuel at Ramah (Samuel's home). Saul sent emissaries to Naioth to "take" (arrest) David. All these officials of the king ended up "prophesying" (*nibe'im*) and did not return with the prisoner for whom they were sent. The text says literally that the Spirit of Elohim (God) fell upon Saul's messengers and they prophesied. There is no reason to explain this as some ecstatic emotional trance. It is plain from the Scriptures that it was supernatural in its origin. **God sent it.** After three groups of officials did not return, Saul himself went to Naioth. Sure enough, the Spirit of God came upon Saul and he also prophesied, stripped off his outer garment and lay speaking as God gave him utterance all that day and all that night. The people were amazed (as before, see comments on 10:11) because Saul seemed to be so much different than he was at other times—now he appeared to be serving God as a prophet. **There was no INWARD moral change by the Spirit, it was all outward, charismatic.** IT WAS NOT EVIDENCE OF THE SAVING GRACE OF GOD. IT WAS ONLY EVIDENCE THAT GOD DISAPPROVED OF WHAT SAUL HAD SET HIS HEART TO DO! God can use his supernatural Spirit for miraculous demonstrations, but he will not **force** his indwelling Spirit, irresistibly upon anyone. In the case of the messengers and Saul prophesying, they literally were caused by God's Spirit to speak whatever God wanted them to say. But that did not arbitrarily change their hearts. God did this very thing with Baalam (see Numbers, chapters 22-24). God gave Judas miraculous powers (see Matthew ch. 10:1-4) but it did not change Judas' heart! Saul should have acknowledged by this miraculous demonstration that he was fighting against God when trying to kill David. THAT IS WHY GOD CAUSED HIM TO PROPHESEY! Saul was not completely bereft of reasoning power. He knew exactly what he was doing in coming after David. God sends his Spirit—even his angels (making them wind and fire, Heb. 1:7,14) to providentially give evidence of his existence and his wrath against sin (Rom. 1:18ff). MEN NEED ONLY HUMBLY AND REASONABLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE EVIDENCE TO FIND THEIR WAY BACK TO THE TRUTH! It may be observed that God has at least three ways he can protect his saints; **(a)** deliver them by their own courage (David vs. Goliath); **(b)** deliver them by the intercession of beloved friends (Jonathan and David); **(c)** deliver them by providential restraining power of the Divine Spirit. God never changes—he still delivers his covenant people today through the same three means and gives evidence to an unbelieving world that he is wrathful against sin.

Jonathan commits himself even to deceiving his own father to save David's life. David was willing to be killed at the hand of Jonathan if he had done anything worthy of death. Jonathan vowed his absolute faithfulness and truthfulness to David and vows to tell him of any evil scheme he learns from his father. David feared that Saul would answer Jonathan "roughly" (Heb. *qasha*, "severely, harshly, vehemently") and did not want Jonathan to endanger his own life. The trust and fidelity between David and Jonathan goes to the very limit. David is willing to offer himself to be slain by Jonathan if he is guilty of treason against Saul; Jonathan is willing to endanger his life with Saul to protect David. Jonathan's love is a beautiful example of the love of the Christian for Christ (God's Anointed): **(a)** Jonathan pledged himself in total commitment to David's wishes; **(b)** Jonathan was convinced that David was God's anointed (20:13-14) and that he would be willing to serve David as king; **(c)** Jonathan was willing to give up "house and lands" (throne) and father and mother for God's anointed—Jonathan had to have a very high spiritual view of God's will and kingdom to give up all that (just as Moses did, Heb. 11:23-28); **(d)** Jonathan's love for God's anointed was pure, **steady**, unaffected by public opinion

and private influence, prompt in expression and never measured by “what he could get out of God’s anointed.”

Jonathan says, “The Lord is **between** you and me for ever.” The Hebrew word is *byin* and means, “middle-man, umpire, teacher, partner.” In other words, though the two friends may be separated by the hatred of Saul, their love was to continue and the **Lord** was to be the center or **pivotal** tie of that love since the Lord was called as Partner to their covenant. Notice how these two men always seriously took the Lord into their private relationships. They did not just use the Lord on Sabbath day or at given times of worship—they made the Lord a Partner to their intimate lives—both in crises and for future years. In fact, it was their personal relationship to the Living God that was the real bond to their friendship. He was the “**middle-man**” or the **pivot-man** to all they did toward one another!

David rose when Jonathan approached and literally fell on his face to the ground, bowing his face into the ground three times (Jonathan was the “prince” of Israel—presumed heir to the throne). Then they kissed one another. The Hebrew word is *nashaq*, and means “to join, to arrange, to touch, to embrace.” The LXX uses the Greek word *katephilesen* which Vine says means, “to kiss or embrace fervently.” We must remember foreign peoples (especially Semitics and Latins) are much more demonstrative than we Anglos. It is not unusual for men to kiss one another on each cheek in greeting or parting. These two friends also “wept” with one another until David’s weeping “exceeded” (Heb. *geddil*, “greatly”). These two demonstrated the true elements of deep and abiding “brotherhood”: **(a) Each counting other better than himself**. David, though anointed to be the next king, did humble obeisance to the prince, Jonathan; **(b) tenderness**—sympathy or empathy is a mark of godliness. Jesus was tender with his human friends (Mary, Martha, the disciples). We must cultivate tenderness—it will not occur automatically. The NT says, “rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15)... “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another” (Eph. 4:32). The word in Eph. 4:32 is the Greek word *eusplangchnoi*, literally, “well boweled.” It means have deep, inward, emotional, passionate feeling for one another; **(c) godliness**—Jonathan said to David, “Go in *shalom*, we have sworn in the name of the Lord.” *Shalom* means peace, wholeness, good health, blessedness. The Lord was to be their “middle-man” forever. The soul of each was knotted to the Lord before being knotted to one another; **(d) hopefulness**—without doubt, they hoped to meet again. Indeed they did (23:16). Friendship based on these elements will survive death. We shall meet again! THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH TWO CHRISTIAN MEN “HUGGING” ONE ANOTHER AS A GREETING! It might not be appropriate, in our culture for a Christian man to hug a Christian woman not his wife—then again, it might! David never again had a friend like Jonathan. Those kind of friends are rare in all the human race!



## 1 SAMUEL 21:1---22:23

Nob was a city of priests (22:19) between Anathoth and Jerusalem (see Isa. 10:30-32). *Nob* means, “knoll or hill.” *Ahimelech* means, “brother of a king.” He was the grandson of Phinehas and the great-grandson of Eli. Since Nob had 85 or more priests there, it may have been a new center of the ceremonial religion and perhaps the ark of the covenant was there. David brought some followers to Nob (Matt. 12:1-4) but left them apart somewhere while he went alone to see the high priest. David and his men were nearly famished. There were no restaurants or inns where David could safely eat and rest. He dared not approach any of the private citizenry or even return to his father’s house in Bethlehem except under cover of darkness and stealth. He asked what the high priest had on hand to eat. He knew there would be “Bread of the Presence” at the tabernacle. He believed he could trust the high priest to be a compassionate man. Ahimelech’s answer: “I have only *lechem godesh*, “Holy bread” which is called “Bread of the Presence” in 21:6. The Hebrew word for “presence is *hapanim*, literally, “the face.” It is often called “show bread.” Semitic idiom uses “the face” to represent the **presence** of the person. This bread was the 12 loaves that were to be baked fresh every week and placed on a table in the holy place in the tabernacle, to be eaten by priests only (Lev. 24:9); it represented the 12 tribes as being **present** before the Lord. The high priest seemed willing to give the hungry David and his followers some of this bread to eat (in spite of the Levitical law) **if** the men (Ex. 19:15) were not defiled in a ceremonial way. David assured him they were not. **Jesus, in Matthew 12:1-4; Mark 2:23-28; and Luke 6:1-5, justified David and the high priest in suspending the ceremonial requirement for the higher law (really the principle behind all law) of MERCY, compassion and love, and the sanctity of human life (see Gen. 9:5-7).** God desires mercy and not sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22; Hosea 6:6; Matt. 9:13; 12:7; 23:23). Eating “show bread” is to supercede a ceremony which, if held to in a legalistic rigidity at the sacrifice of human life, would be a violation of the fundamental principle of God’s law and will concerning mercy and the sanctity of human life. Jesus referred to this incident to teach that even the Sabbath rules (an institution begun at creation, long before “show bread”) could be superceded for the sake of human need (if there was real need). Priests “worked” on the Sabbath; it is right to do good, to heal, on the Sabbath. No ceremony or ritual in God’s revealed will is to keep us from doing good. We could not refuse to help a neighbor in real need on the excuse that we had to attend church. It is the nature or character of God (i.e., love, goodness, helpfulness, mercifulness) that is the essence of all law and Scriptural ceremony. The apostle Paul talks about the “letter” and the Spirit” in 2 Cor. 3. To enforce the “letter” of the law with complete disregard to the Spirit” of the law is **killing**. To violate the “Spirit” (nature of God) of the law in blind legalism is to kill men’s souls. Special ceremonies, days and weeks, methods, objects, rules and laws are only means to an end. Even the commandments of Christ are means to an end. They are not the ends in themselves! **The more a person is transformed into the image or character of Christ the less he will need commandments!** That is what Christian freedom consists in—that is the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament! **Christ’s image** in us is the **end** sought for us (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18)—his commandments are the means to that end. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. The time has now come, in Christ, that those who worship God are not

confined to “the letter” but may worship him in Spirit and in truth. The careful student should study *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. II*, by Harold Fowler, College Press, pp. 597-635, on this most important issue. Without intending to oversimplify, the case might be stated thus: (a) the OT covenant was a codification of God’s will to **restrain** man from doing evil; (b) the NT covenant is God’s will personified in Jesus Christ with whom we may be personally and spiritually united and thus **freed** to do good. Since the OT was a shadow and type of the NT, any man or woman with the faith to recognize and obey the “Spirit” (i.e., God’s full nature of compassion and love) in OT times, like Ahimelech, received God’s approval.

**Pride prompted David’s actions in the presence of Ahimelech.** A certain man was there at Nob, named *Doeg* (in Hebrew, his name means, “sorrowful”). He was a sorry character, as we see from 22:9-10 and 22:18-19. Doeg was an Edomite (descendant of Esau, inveterate enemies of the Israelites) yet Saul had him as his chief herdsman. Doeg must have been “detained before the Lord” for some purifying rite. He must have been a proselyte to the Hebrew religion. Both Doeg and David were well aware of the age-old animosity between Israelites and Edomites (read Obadiah). Doeg no doubt was secretly rejoicing at David’s hapless state, and saw immediately an opportunity to further his own ambitions with Saul by reporting David’s whereabouts and his weaponless situation. David, when he saw Doeg, realized how helpless he was and asked Ahimelech for a weapon. The priests normally had weapons for slaying sacrifices. Ahimelech offered David the only weapon of war available, the sword of Goliath, which David himself had placed in the tabernacle, no doubt, at the same time he took Goliath’s armor to his own home (17:54). The sword of Goliath had been wrapped in *vassimelah* “the cloak” (in Isa. 9:5, this Hebrew word is used of military clothing so some assume “the cloak-wrapping” was Goliath’s cloak). The sword had been placed behind the “*ephod*” (Urim and Thummim)—a place of holiness and honor. David said, “There is none like it; give it to me.” He took it with great relish—it was a memorial of his greatest achievement. David must have presented a very hopeless, helpless, hapless picture as he came up to Nob and the tabernacle. He certainly did not look like the one women had been singing and dancing over—he did not look like the slayer of Goliath or son-in-law of the king. He looked the part of a fugitive. He had nothing to eat, no weapons, and apparently was all alone (his men camped somewhere else). There was this Edomite there (Doeg, one of Saul’s most important hired servants). So David tried to cover his embarrassment with deception about the reason for his circumstances—by saying he was on a “mission” for the king. **Pride begins to raise its ugly head in David’s heart!** The very spirit that is ruining Saul (evil pride) starts to work on David. The disciples of Jesus were occasionally embarrassed by apparent weakness in their Master; and they compromised the spiritual nature of their calling by resorting to worldly cover-ups (e.g. with the Samaritans who would not let them stay in their territory; with Jesus at his arrest in Gethsemane). Those who believe power is in being worldly will perish in worldliness. Christians should never be embarrassed about the Christian way of life as if it were the way of weakness; never compromise out of embarrassment at not being rich in this world’s goods, or not being able to retaliate; or of appearing to be narrow-minded about self-indulgence; or at being a “minority” in the social structures of the world. There will be people of the world observing God’s believers. Any show of embarrassment or weakness will be exploited by those who observe, and dishonor God and hinder God’s work, like Doeg who observed David’s hapless condition and reported to Saul.

David was on the run from Saul. He assumed that Doeg would go immediately and tell Saul his whereabouts. Gath was the closest place, outside the land of Israel, where David might possibly find refuge, shelter, food and protection. Gath was west of Nob, about 25-30 miles, over the central mountain range of Palestine, due west of Tekoa, down to the Philistine plain. Achish was “king of Gath.” (David calls him Abimelech in Psa. 34, which was the official title of kings of Gath for centuries, see Gen. 26:1). Why did David flee into the very city of the people whose “champion” he had beheaded? (a) David was in great danger from Saul—a desperate man will do the unusual; (b) he had just suffered great emotional stress (parting from Jonathan and embarrassment and fear at meeting Doeg; (c) he had grown (probably now had a beard) since his defeat of Goliath, and hoped he would not be recognized; (d) perhaps the Philistines would welcome a “deserter” from Saul, their arch enemy, and he could trade upon that image for food and protection. But David was recognized! They called him “king” probably not because they knew of his anointing by Samuel, but because David had been the highly popular “champion” of Israel, widely immortalized in song, which the **Philistines had heard**. David changed his behavior (Hebrew, *ta'am*, “taste, judgment, discrimination”) and acted as if he had lost his powers to discriminate or judge properly. The Hebrew word translated “pretended to be mad” is the root, *halal*, and is the same root word from which we get the English words, “praise, hallel, hallelujah” etc. The same word may also be translated, “boasting.” Could David’s feigned madness consisted of alternate “boasting,” and religious expressions in highly emotional gesturing. The word translated “made marks” is the Hebrew letter *tav* which was in ancient Hebrew made in the form of a cross. The word translated “spittle” is *rur* and is used also to mean, “slime, white of an egg yolk.” How pathetic the former giant-killer, acclaimed by all Israel, now a groveling, pretended moron abasing himself before his former enemies. Achish rebukes his servants for bringing David, whom he fully believes to be mad into his presence. Insane people were considered by the ancient people to be possessed of the gods because of all the *halal* (“praising”) and all their other unnatural behavior. Such people were not hindered, in fact, they were pampered, supported and usually allowed to roam wherever they wished—even into the king’s corridors. An ancient tradition says that the wife and daughter of Achish were insane. Whatever the case, Achish had all the “madmen” he could stand roaming around his house. Psalm 34 (title) indicates Achish “drove” David out, and he went away. Uncircumcised Philistines will not help the man of God. Non-covenant unbelievers are no source of fellowship and safety for Christians! David was later told by the prophet of God to return to the land of Judah. David did so, but here, in a moment of embarrassed weakness and distrust in the word of God, he turned to his enemies for safety; there was only increased danger! Christians are sometimes tempted to feign a behavior in hopes of gaining some worldly support or gratuity. Young people are especially susceptible to “peer pressure” compromises of behavior. They will engage in behavior that is plainly foolish and sometimes bordering on the insane just to gain approval from non-Christians. Paul said to the Corinthian brethren, “Come to your right mind, and sin no more” (1 Cor. 15:34, RSV). Sin is insanity. Man is not using his mind sanely when he sins. Man will do things and think things that are illogical, unreasonable and self-destructive when he rebels against God or distrusts God’s word.

David fled from Gath and went back up into the western slopes of the Judean hills to a little town of Judah known as *Adullam* (Heb., meaning, “retreat, place of justice”), and hid himself in a cave there. David’s family, his father’s house, with brothers, sisters

and cousins (see 2 Sam. 12:13-17) joined him to live in the caves of Adullam for fear of reprisal from Saul. Also joining David were 400 men, some were *tzuq* (“pressed, straitened, oppressed”) some had *nasha* (creditors, debts) and some were *mar-nepshesh* (“bitter of soul”). David became *sarah* “prince” (same root from which *Israel* comes) over them. These were not merely malcontents following David. They were soul-sick from the oppressive rule of Saul (high taxes, conscription, etc.). Saul could not wisely and justly administer his kingdom because of his all-consuming passion to hunt down David and slay him. He probably had impoverished the people as Samuel had predicted he would. David went from Adullam to *Mizeph of Moab*: *mizeph* means, “watch-tower, a natural fortress.” Moab was the high-cliff country east of the Dead Sea, today occupied by the nation of Jordan. David probably took his aged parents there because Jesse’s grandmother was Ruth, a Moabitess (Ruth 4:18-22). Whenever Saul was angry about David he called him “the son of Jesse,” probably deriding David’s Moabite ancestry. *Moab* means, “descendant of the father.” David requested, literally, in the Hebrew language, “let my father and mother **come out** please, and be with you.” His father and mother were old and were hiding with David in the various cliffs, caves and natural watch-towers of the rugged country-side of Judea. Not only was it difficult for them, it would be a hindrance for David’s operations. Saul had fought war against Moab (14:47) and the Moabites were probably glad to help David since they understood him to be in the process of taking the rule of Israel from Saul. David apparently regained his strong faith in God (as he writes in Psa. 34) and now waits “to see what God will do for me.” Suddenly there appears a prophet of God whose name is Gad. Perhaps Samuel sent him to David. Gad became: (a) David’s counselor (2 Sam. 24:11); (b) David’s judge for numbering the people (2 Sam. 24:13); (c) David’s historian (1 Chron. 29:29). The prophet told him the will of God—“Do not remain in Moab; but go to the land of Judah.” There, with God’s help, David would deal with the Philistines (which Saul was no longer able to do) and gain a large following, preparing him to eventually assume the throne. David went to Hereth, a forest, 3 miles from Adullam, near Hebron and the oaks of Mamre. All this adversity, living in caves, caring for aging parents, etc., was preparing David. A position of prominence, living with royalty, success on the battlefield, having popular songs sung about him, may have temporarily turned David’s head. Now, just the opposite, has turned him toward God. Now he can say, “...till I know what God will do for me.” Although we should not morbidly or masochistically long for adversity and persecution, still the scriptures tell us to accept it with rejoicing for it has its benefits: (a) Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, said that when we are persecuted we should jump for joy like a winning athlete (that is the Greek word used) for it proves we are winning the Christian race; (b) James said, “Count it all joy” when we are tested and tried; (c) Paul said that is affliction, even to despairing of life itself, was to make him rely not on himself but on God (2 Cor. 1:8-11); (d) Paul considered affliction “a school” in which one learns how to help others who are afflicted (2 Cor. 1:3-7); and (e) discipline and chastening from the Lord proves we are children of God (Heb. 12:1-17); (f) finally, Paul said suffering produces character (Rom. 5:1-5). Christians should never be surprised that they are tried, tested, chastened, persecuted, as if something strange were happening to them (1 Pet. 4:12-19).

Saul made his fellow Benjaminites his “inner circle” of aides and commanders. Partiality seems to be another of Saul’s failures. He appeals to their greed and asks whether they can expect David to continue them in their favored positions should David become king in Saul’s place. Then suddenly he turns on them in rage and suspicion, accusing them of joining together in a conspiracy to keep secret from him the conspiracy he

thinks is between Jonathan, his son, and David. In self-pity, he accuses his Benjamite “brethren” of not being sorry for him. And his mind, obsessed as it is by suspicion, fear, envy, self, and paranoia, he harbors the idea that David is secretly plotting his murder. **Doeg**, the Edomite, spoke up. Perhaps to divert Saul’s attention away from accusations against his servants. More likely, for reasons of greed and malice. The KJV translates Doeg “the Edomite which was set over the servants of Saul.” The Hebrew word *nitzav* could also mean, “...he (Doeg) was standing *with* the servants of Saul...” which would be more likely. It is doubtful that even Saul would appoint an Edomite as his chief of staff! Doeg’s report was that he had seen David come to Ahimelech, the high priest for help. Ahimelech “inquired of the Lord for” David (not mentioned in 21:1-6), gave David provisions, and gave David the sword of Goliath. Doeg’s motives were likely from a mercenary basis, hoping to receive some reward or promotion from Saul; and no doubt from the background of inveterate hatred between the two nations (Edomites vs. Israelites). That hatred had simmered and boiled for centuries and would continue for centuries. Many of the prophets (300-400 years after Saul) spoke of the animosity between the two peoples (read esp. Obadiah). Doeg was enjoying every minute of this fight between Saul and David and relished any agitation he might contribute. Sin or resistance to God’s will is always self-destructive. The more Saul resisted the will of God, the more mentally unbalanced he became. He could not think straight, he could not control his emotions. He became obsessed with the idea (from a guilty conscience, no doubt) that everyone “was trying to get him.” We call it *paranoia*. He was suspicious of everyone. Those trying to help him and keep the nation intact he considered traitors and personal enemies. *Paranoia* may be one of the tortures of hell where the unforgiven will have to live with. Saul continued to whittle away at his own character until it was practically gone. Every day, he debased himself as he contrived some new way to retain his kingship. He played partiality with the men of Benjamin; he appealed to their greed; he tried brow-beating them with accusations of conspiracy; he groveled for their pity; he calls an Edomite as an accomplice (a base man whose cooperation with Saul contributed to Saul’s self-destruction). Saul also destroyed those who could have helped him rebuild his character into one of godliness. Spiritual death is nearly complete when a man is willing to destroy the ministers and messengers of God’s word (or the church). Saul was willing to destroy the priesthood. A man is in the total power and grip of evil when he can accept the suggestions of non-covenant people and at the same time cast aside all reverence for that which is holy. There are such blasphemers alive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century like Bill Mahr, a self-proclaimed atheist and political pundit, said on national television, January 2011, that “the founding fathers of America believed the Bible was full of bull-shit.” Mr. Mahr is totally ignorant of America’s founding fathers reverence for and belief in the Bible. These were all self-determined choices of Saul. He did not have to choose these courses of action. He could have surrendered to the edict of God through Samuel that the kingdom was to be given to another, changed his mind, and lived out his days in quiet, peace and support from David, Jonathan, Samuel and the priesthood. We believe, had he done so, the Lord would have forgiven his former disobedience. SAUL CHOSE THE COURSE OF SELF-DESTRUCTION. GOD GAVE HIM UP TO HIS CHOICES! GOD WILL GIVE MR. MAHR UP TO HIS CHOICES!

Saul summoned the high priest to Gibeah and arraigned him before the royal court. Saul summoned all the priests at Nob, including all of Ahimelech’s family (descendants of Eli). There were more than 85 people there being accused of conspiracy to commit treason against the throne. **Ahimelech’s answer is classical for its**

**forthrightness and courage.** In defending his actions toward David, the high priest asks Saul, “who among your servants is so faithful as David?” In other words, “David is the last person on earth anyone would suspect of treason—I did not have the slightest idea he was considered your enemy!” That probably grated against Saul’s conscience and enraged him that much more. Next Ahimelech said, “David is your son-in-law” so the high priest would assume to help David would also be help to Saul. That agitated Saul deeply. Next Ahimelech said, “David is captain over your bodyguard, and had an honored place in your house.” The innocent assumption of the high priest is that Saul himself had trusted David as he would a son—so why should the high priest be suspicious of him! Last, Ahimelech reminded Saul that (even if Doeg’s report was accurate) he had inquired of God for David many times in the past (probably when David was fighting the Philistines as Saul’s captain). In conclusion, Ahimelech said, “I have known nothing at all of this war between you and David.” Even David had not informed the high priest of his reason for appearing at Nob starving to death, without weapons. Ahimelech was completely innocent! But that was beyond Saul’s mental processes to accept. He had already decided that anyone connected with David in any way was guilty of trying to take his throne away from him. So, without hearing any other testimony, he sentences Ahimelech and all his family to death. God does not always give physical deliverance to the innocent and honest. **Ahimelech is a man to be much admired.** He helped David; he was innocent of any crime against the throne; he was straightforward in his defense before Saul; he did not lie; he tried to show Saul his error. And for this he was killed—he and all his family and his city! It is one of the great mysteries of life in this “vale of tears” that the wicked seem to prosper and the righteous seem to suffer. Four books of the OT deal specifically with that enigma (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes). **The only solution to this apparent paradox of life is FAITH IN GOD! God has given sufficient evidence, in time and in history, documented in the Bible, that those who trust him, even though they suffer, will at the consummation of all things, receive vindication, salvation and glorification.** (See Rom. 8:18-39; 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Pet. 5:10). Ahimelech (we may be sure by the promises of God) though he and others suffered, lost nothing, but gained the eternal glory of God. Is there any way to be sure of this? YES—HISTORY!—THE EYE-WITNESSED, AUTHENTICALLY RECORDED, HISTORICAL, ACTUAL, BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD! (1 Pet. 1:3-9).

Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, escaped and fled to David and told him of Saul’s massacre of the priests at Nob. Thus began a friendship between David and Abiathar which lasted all of David’s life: (a) Abiathar and Zadok shared the high priesthood when David ordered the ark brought to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 15:11); (b) Abiathar gave loyal service to David during Absalom’s rebellion (2 Sam. 15:1ff; 17:15; 19:11); (c) after David’s death, he was banished by Solomon for favoring Adonijah who tried to seize the throne from Solomon (1 Kings 1 and 2); (d) with the banishment of Abiathar, the rule of the house of Eli in the high priesthood came to an end as had been prophesied 150 years earlier by Samuel (1 Sam. 2:31-35); (e) Jesus refers to Abiathar (co-priest with Ahimelech) in Mark 2:26. David is mortified at the news. He knew that Doeg was going to get the information to Saul about his being at Nob and the priests helping him. David felt a sense of awful responsibility for the massacre. Perhaps his guilt and embarrassment at having lied to Ahimelech and appearing without weapons had caught up with him. Perhaps he thought he should have immediately left Nob upon seeing Doeg there and thus he would not have implicated the priests. Our sins will find us out! David could have gone without bread and

suffered. But now others have suffered for his moment of weakness and it is beyond remedy. There is no sting so sharp as the feeling that, for one's own safety or interests, he has misled his own friends and brought suffering upon them. WE MAY REPENT, AND TURN TO DOING GOOD FOR OTHERS, AS DAVID DID!

## 1 SAMUEL 23:1—24:22

The Philistines were relentless in their attempt to drive the Hebrews out of the land of Canaan. They constantly made war on Hebrew settlements. Keilah was a village about 2 ½ miles south of Adullam, and about 20 miles ssw. of Jerusalem. A threshing floor was usually just hard-clay packed to a smooth surface where sheaves of grain were thrown and trampled by oxen which pulled crude wooden sleds with notched rims. These sleds separated the grain from the husks or “chaff.” Often times, the people slept at their threshing floors during harvest-time to fend off robbers (Ruth 3:4-7). Give David credit—he sought the Lord’s will in what he should do about the predator Philistines who kept terrorizing the Hebrews at their “threshing floors.” David prayed to the Lord and/or he had Abiathar with his “ephod” in his company and the Lord revealed to Abiathar what he wanted David to do. The message from God was “Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah.” Keilah and Adullam were in territory the Philistines considered theirs. David and his 400 men were last located in the forest of Hereth (22:5) which is atop the central mountain range in Judah (just 10-15 miles east of Keilah). David’s men were reluctant to open a “second front.” They were already having to constantly defend themselves against the enraged Saul and his army. Now they are preparing to attack the Philistines. **David “checked” with the Lord a SECOND TIME to reassure his men.** The same answer came: “Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will give the Philistines into your hand.” This time the Lord adds his promise to insure victory. The parenthetical note is inserted that when Abiathar, the son of the slain Ahimelech, fled for refuge with David, he brought the ephod (Urim and Thummim) with him.. This is probably how David inquired of Jehovah. Urim and Thummim are not positively identified in the OT but are probably the 12 stones of the high priest’s breastplate worn in the presence of the Lord by which he ascertained the will of God on any important matter not otherwise revealed in Moses’ law (see Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8). **The Lord’s will for human society and civilization is ORDER.** God is not pleased with chaos, anarchy, civil rebellion, and tumult. God has ordained human authority (governors, kings, magistrates, soldiers, armies, policemen, etc.) to maintain civil order (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). God’s ideal, of course, is a society without anyone wishing to rob, murder, rape, assault, lie, divorce or disobey him. That is what the church of Christ is—GOD’S IDEAL SOCIETY, CONSTRAINED BY THE LOVE OF CHRIST (2 Cor. 5:14). But the rest of the world is not like the church. It has to be restrained or constrained by **force and fear.** Sometimes, when men refuse to submit to rule by enforcement of laws, capital punishment must be exercised for the maintenance of civilization. **War is capital punishment on an international level.** God sent David to enforce by war his sanction against robbery. If men will not refrain from taking another man’s property by the consideration of an orderly social structure, then the society must restrain that man either by restitution, retaliation (modern incarceration) or execution. God does not want war. God does not like war. But, at the same time, God wants, above all else, an orderly society where truth may be proclaimed and men may come to know him and have an opportunity to obey him (see 1 Tim. 2:1-4). When men rebel against God’s will for an orderly society, drastic action must be taken. God then approves of the use of force (war, execution, incarceration, punishment, retaliation by civil authorities, restitution) to restrain the lawless (1 Tim. 1:8-9). Those who serve society to enforce the law are called “ministers” of God



(Rom. 13:1-7). Christians are expected to obey civil laws (1 Pet. 2:13-17) unless a civil law orders a Christian to disobey a clear and unequivocal command of God in the Bible. David was serving God by making a war of defense of social order against the Philistines who were robbing men of their grain. MAKE NO MISTAKE—CHRISTIANS ARE ENGAGED IN A SPIRITUAL “WAR.” The “weapons” of Christians are not carnal (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-20)—their weapons are truth, love, goodness, and kindness—but they are in a war, nevertheless (Rom. 7:21-25; Gal. 5:16-17; Eph. 6:10-20; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3-4; Jas. 4:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:11-12). While the book of Revelation is a prediction of an historical war of the Roman empire against the ancient Christian church (A.D. 30-500) beginning with the crucifixion of Christ and continuing until the demise of ancient Rome, it is, at the same time, a metaphorical warning to the church in any age of her struggle against the “beast” (military, political opposition), the “false prophet” (humanistic religious opposition), and the “harlot” (seduction of sensuality). THE CHURCH IS AT WAR! God’s word (the “sword of the Spirit”), properly wielded, will prevail!

David hears of Saul’s plan to trap him in the city of Keilah. David immediately seeks the Lord’s guidance. The Lord tells David what will happen and David is left with the decision as to what to do about it. David and his men decide to leave Keilah before Saul arrives. The Hebrew phrase (23:13) is *yitkehalleku ba’asher yitkehallaku*, or, “they went about wherever they went about.” In other words, they left Keilah without any organized plan of retreat and just roamed about as circumstances or necessities dictated. David now has 600 men with him roaming about the hills and valleys of southern Canaan. Ziph, about 10-12 miles s.w. of Keilah, borders on the great southern uninhabited, desolate regions of the Judean wilderness—close to the cave of Engedi. Saul hunted David and his 600 men for battle **every day**, but God did not allow Saul to find him. The RSV says, “David was afraid” (23:15), but the Hebrew text says, *yare’ david*, literally, “David saw...” Even the LXX uses *eide* (Greek for “perceived”). There is no reason to translate this to make it appear that David was terrified of Saul. David later goes right in to Saul’s camp and right up to Saul’s sleeping body (24:1ff; 26:6ff). David merely **sees** that if he does not wish to engage in a life and death struggle (and David doesn’t), he must constantly retreat, dodge and parry any action Saul takes to cause a showdown. Once again, the brotherhood (spiritual) of Jonathan and David is strengthened by the trials they must both endure at the hand of Saul. Jonathan goes out to the camp of the “hunted” David and strengthens him. Jonathan was either already considered an outcast by his father Saul, or was willing to risk further agitation of his father’s already expressed ill-will by visiting David. There was no doubt now in Jonathan’s mind that his father’s rule would pass to David, not to himself. Jonathan encouraged David that what was happening was the will of God and the best thing for Israel. This would be a great blessing for David. Jonathan also encouraged David by acknowledging that he had no ambitions to the throne. He was quite willing to be “next to” David when David became king. The Lord reveals his will to those who humbly seek it. In OT times, when a written revelation was incomplete “in divers portions and divers manners” (Heb. 1:1), God revealed his will to certain men through audible human language or by inner illumination silently in the mind, by some other “sign.” Today, those who want to know what the Lord’s will in its **final, complete** revelation is, must turn to the Bible (especially the New Testament), using logical common sense and accepted hermeneutic (interpretative) principles of human language, and read it for themselves. God speaks to man in man’s language. He expects man to understand his word with the same principles he uses to understand any other written communication in human language. David not only sought

the Lord's will, he paid heed to it. **DAVID TRUSTED THE LORD AND WAS NOT AFRAID.** Although David had to make the decision about leaving Keilah, he was not afraid to make it because he trusted that having sought the Lord's will he was making the right decision.

The Ziphites were determined to please Saul by betraying David to him. The Hebrew word *metzdoth* is translated "stronghold" and means "barricade"—probably a natural fortress provided by the extraordinary terrain of that area. Travelers to Palestine today describe the territory of the Ziphites "barren and wild beyond all description...peaks and knolls of fantastic forms rise suddenly from the swelling downs, and magnificent precipices of ruddy limestone stand up like fortress-walls above the sea." It was in this pathless wilderness that David found refuge from Saul's persecution. Saul's *paranoia* and self-pity come out again. He broods over his rejection from being king and the statements being made that David is to succeed him. His soul is gripped with melancholia. Saul is a classic manic-depressive (alternating feelings of exhilaration and depression). **Saul pronounced God's blessing upon the Ziphites because he considered himself the one being wronged in all this and the Ziphites were, he felt, being "compassionate" toward him.** But Saul was tired of "wild-goose-chases." Every time he got news that David could be cornered, Saul sped off to corner him only to find David gone! He told the Ziphites to make **sure**. They were to see the place where David's **foot** (Heb. *ragei*/ RSV translates "haunt") was. Saul had been told that David was extremely "cunning." Saul charges the Ziphites to make a thorough reconnaissance of the barren wastelands of the Negev near the Dead Sea and "make note" of all David's hiding places and return the report to him. Then he will go and search David out from all the "thousands" of Judah. **Saul officiously pronounced God's blessing upon the Ziphites for what he could get from the Ziphites!** Saul was playing the religio-politico game! David knew of a specific "rock" near Maon which would provide a good hiding place from Saul's army. Saul pursued; David escaped by going on the opposite side of the rock (Heb. *sela*, "cliff or ledge"), but Saul had David and his men surrounded. *Just at that moment* a messenger came to Saul with the critical news that the Philistines had mounted a new, national offensive against Israel. Saul had to give up his sure-to-be-successful capture of David and return to Gibeah to engage the Philistines in a defensive war. That "rock" (or ledge) was forever after called *Sela-Hammahlekoth*, literally, "the rock of dividing, or the rock of separation." *Engedi* is along the shore on the west side of the Dead Sea, about half way south. *En-gedi* means, "spring or fountain of the wild goat." It is an oasis in the midst of all the barrenness of that area. God protects his servants. Willard Winter says, "Things happen in life that cannot be explained except that they are directed by the hand of Almighty God." David recognized the hand of God in his deliverance from Saul and named the place, "rock of separation." David was saved. David wrote Psalm 54 during this time. There he attributes his deliverance to God. The Christian's hope is not necessarily continued existence in this world. The Christian's hope is unequivocally tied to the next world! Christians are "other-worldly-minded" people. Yes! They do believe in "pie in the sky bye and bye"! If a Christian has to suffer, go through great tribulation and die for his convictions, he knows that God will deliver him into a state of eternal blessedness (Lk. 16:22-26; Rom. 8:28-39; 1 Cor. 15:42-58; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:1-21; Phil. 1:19-24; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; 1 Jn. 3:1-3; Rev. 7:8-18; Rev. chs. 21-22). Christians do not expect to **earn** this deliverance; they expect God to give it to them freely because they want him and his deliverance and are preparing themselves to enjoy it. They have entered into a covenant relationship with God believing he will give it to them. Christians believe that if they set

their heart on treasures in heaven, God will be faithful to his promise to forgive their sins (because of Christ's merit) and give them those treasures. THAT IS TRUE, ETERNAL DELIVERANCE.

Saul, obsessed with his intent to kill David is driven back into the Judean wilderness with 3000 select men. Saul went into a cave at En-gedi "to relieve himself" (RSV). The KJV translates the Hebrew literally, "to cover his feet," (*lihasek 'eth-ragelayo*). Most commentators consider "to cover his feet" an euphemism for performing the necessities of the human body (cf. Judges 3:24—it was a custom in the ancient East to cover one's feet when "relieving oneself" in a bodily function). **However**, the *Pehsitta* (meaning, "simple") version of the OT (Syriac or Aramaic version) translates this Hebrew phrase as "to sleep." The LXX uses the Greek word *paraskeuasasthai* which would literally be translated, "to make preparation." It is most probable that Saul went into the cave, preparing to rest or "relieve himself" in sleep, since the context following seems to favor such action. David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of this very same cave. Visitors to these caves say they are as dark as midnight, and one looking into the cave cannot see five steps ahead, while someone within the cave looking toward its entrance could see with perfect distinctness all that takes place in that direction. David's men urge him to consider this confrontation an opportunity to slay Saul, in the name of the Lord, and rid himself of his persecutor. David, with great stealth, simply cuts off a "wing" (Heb. *'eth-kenaph*, "corner, piece") of Saul's robe. David used this opportunity: (a) to prove to Saul he was innocent of any murderous intentions against Saul; (b) to soften Saul's bitterness toward him; (c) to keep his promise to Jonathan and the Lord. **David's heart "struck" him because he had shown even the slightest disrespect to God's anointed king of Israel by cutting off a piece of Saul's "skirt."** David had a tender conscience. This is a great asset in the development of David's godly character. David would not harm the one whom the Lord had anointed. He would be fighting not Saul, but the Lord, to do so. David would not permit his men to harm Saul. The Hebrew word is *yeshassa'* and means "crush down," i.e., David had to exert all his authority to keep his men, vexed by Saul's persecutions, from killing Saul themselves. "If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord..." Rom. 12:18-19. David bases his attitude toward Saul (non-retaliatory) upon his allegiance to the Lord's will. David will not put forth his hand against Saul to retaliate because he is the Lord's anointed. Christians are committed to the will of Christ so that they will never take **personal** vengeance into their own hands. God is the one responsible for vengeance, justice and retaliation. Anyone who suffers persecution or injustice of any kind is too emotionally involved to administer justice. God has ordained human governments and government officials to be his servants in executing his vengeance upon the evil doers of society (Rom. 13:1-7). Our attitudes and actions toward those who do us personal harm must be under the control of the Lord's will. **David's was!** David left vengeance up to the Lord. The Lord executed his justice on Saul through the Philistines.

David said, "My lord, the king." Saul was taken by surprise. What a great heart, what self-control, what faith in God that David could "do obeisance" to Saul who was, without any justification, hunting David down and stigmatizing him as a criminal of the worst sort. David did not allow circumstances or other people's actions or even his own emotions dictate his course of action—David's mind and spirit and actions were dictated by the

revealed will of God. David still refuses to believe that Saul is personally and exclusively responsible for his own actions. David wants to think the best of Saul. David thinks Saul may be getting bad advice from “words of men.” Actually, in the Hebrew text, it literally reads, “words of man...” David may be remonstrating with Saul because Saul has not listened to the words of God (vs. human wisdom) through the prophets and his own son, Jonathan. David gives objective evidence for his innocence. All Saul has to do now is use the simplest, most direct forms of logic and common sense to see that had David any intention to take the throne, he could have slain Saul in the cave. David had been close enough to Saul to take a piece of his outer robe and go completely undetected. Saul’s very life had been in the hand of David to do with as David wished. David commits his cause to the Lord. He will wait patiently upon the Lord to vindicate his innocence and judge the guilty. David’s actions are much in contrast with modern-day dispossessed peoples in that area. Modern-day oppressed peoples usually form guerrilla forces and take terrorist actions to overthrow persecuting tyrants. The Bible is filled with promises of God and historical examples that God, in his own good time and in his own way, enthrones and dethrones tyrannical rulers (cf. the book of Daniel). The human challenge is patience and faith in the Lord! **David quotes an ancient proverb as proof to Saul that he has no evil intentions**, “Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness” is the same as, “A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can an evil tree bear good fruit.” If David had any wicked intentions toward Saul, here was the most opportune moment for him to have acted. **David compares himself to a “dead dog and one flea” trying to picture for Saul the pathos of his situation.** The Hebrew text says, “...after **one** flea...” and the impact of the comparison is lost in the English translation with the omission of “one.” Living in that vast, barren wilderness, scurrying night and day from one cave to another, pursued relentlessly by the man with all the power of the nation at his command, David felt like “**one flea.**” David is not being sarcastic—he is trying to play upon Saul’s conscience and any compassion left in Saul, implying that it is unbecoming and inhumane for a king to go forth with 3000 men of war to hunt for a “dead dog” and “one flea.” Saul’s conduct is unprovoked, unjustifiable, inhumane and foolish. David appeals to Jehovah to “give *shaphat* (judgment)” between im and Saul. The Hebrew idiom is interesting: “...and judge me out of your hand.” In other words, David hopes the Lord will judge him, and is persuaded he will find David innocent, and thus David will be “judged (delivered) out of Saul’s hand.” One commentator points out that David’s knowledge of the cunning, lying, hypocritical men who were advising Saul that he was a traitor, is what called forth some of the severest, most scathing remarks by David in what are called “The Imprecatory Psalms” (cf. Psa. 57:4). David’s knowledge of such hypocrites urging Saul to do their evil for them, renders David’s “imprecations” in the Psalms holy and justified in view of what, should they succeed, it would have done to Israel—God’s “anointed” nation. One has to be able to be angry with evil in order to be pleased with good!

The truth of what David said ripped away all the facade of pretense from Saul’s secret wickedness and Saul was publicly, openly ashamed, and wept. The Hebrew verb *yeveke* is in the imperfect which means Saul kept on weeping. Saul had to acknowledge the glaring fact that David’s actions were right and his were wrong. David had recompensed good for evil, whereas Sal had recompensed evil for good. Touched, momentarily at least, by David’s mercy and generosity and forgiving spirit, Saul prays that the Lord will reward David with goodness. Jonathan knew that David was to be the next king. Jonathan said that Saul knew it (23:17). The numerous miraculous deliverances of

David, the very fact that in spite of all Saul had done to kill David, and the former glorious deeds of David (his “ten thousands”), all combined to probably form public opinion that David would be the next king of Israel. Saul knew, although he did not want to face the fact, that the kingdom was to be taken from him. Saul begged David to enter into a covenant with him and swear that when he came to the throne he would not blot out Saul’s name from the history of Israel. It was a practice of the ancients (as well as moderns) to deface monuments and erase any permanent records of tyrannical leaders after their deaths or dethronements. It is a mark of the foolishness of men that they fret more over the fame and glory they may leave behind in this perishing world than over the reputation they have to take with them to the next world. **Did Saul repent? Beware of substituting emotional regret for the hard realities of repentance!** Saul’s voice trembled, tears flowed down his cheeks, he wept publicly and openly, acknowledged his guilt, but his heart remained unchanged! **Not long after this “experience” Saul was back again, his heart harder than ever, pursuing David to kill him (1 Sam. 26:1ff).** What God seeks in our lives is balance! John R. W. Stott has written a little book entitled, *Balanced Christianity*. He writes, “...one of the greatest weaknesses which we Christians display is our tendency to extremism or imbalance. It seems that there is almost no pastime the devil enjoys more than tipping Christians off balance...My conviction is that we should love balance as much as the devil hates it and seek to promote it as vigorously as he seeks to destroy it.” Stott continues, “...we should not allow our temperament to control us. Rather, we should allow Scripture to judge our natural temperamental inclinations. Otherwise we shall love our Christian equilibrium.” God seeks “steadfastness” in us. On-again, off-again, up-down religion is a renunciation of the faithfulness of God. If we continually vacillate in our focus on God, one time extremely sincere and emotional, another flippant and immoral, it brings dishonor on God and keeps others from being able to trust us or the God we claim to follow.

David took the oath Saul sought because David had a good heart and wished to do the Lord’s will. Goodness proceeds from the good! One of the best ways to test the goodness of your heart is to evaluate your attitude and actions toward someone who has wronged you when you have that person at your mercy! What is your intention when you have at a disadvantage someone who has wronged you or one of your loved ones? What is your evaluation when someone who has wronged you suffers some setback?—“Good enough for them”—or “May I be of some help?” David had “an honest and good heart.” When the “seed” (i.e., the word of God) fell upon his heart, it bore fruit unto righteousness. Even when he had weakened and fell into sin occasionally; the ruling principle of his heart was that the Lord’s will be done. David could have had an evil heart and justified a retaliatory crusade and counted himself not nearly as bad as Saul. But one of the signs of a good heart is that one “does not compare himself by actions of other men” (2 Cor. 10:12), but compares himself according to the Divine standard, the Bible! David sincerely wanted no harm to come to Saul—consider how devastated David was when he received word that Jonathan had been slain and Saul had committed suicide in battle (2 Sam. 1:1-27). David would not speak evil of the one who persecuted him, even at the persecutor’s death! And he kept his vow not to cut off Saul’s descendants and destroy Saul’s name out of his father’s “house.” Psalm 7 is attributed to David’s hand from experiences at this time. Read it and find applications for your own life!

## 1 SAMUEL 25:1—26:25

Samuel died. All Israel (except David and his men) gathered at Ramah for his funeral. The world goes on. History moves on, inexorably, toward the Divine fulfillment. So, David, making his choices, playing his part in history, moves to the extreme s.w. most portion of the land of Palestine—the wilderness of Paran (probably near Beer-sheba) some 20-25 miles south of Maon and Carmel. Another person enters to play his part in history and make his choices. He is a citizen of Maon, **very rich** (3000 sheep and 1000 goats). His business was in Carmel. It was sheep-shearing time, a time of great festivity and hospitality (2 Sam. 13:23-24) much like “threshing-time” 70-80 years ago in our country. David might expect liberality from such a rich man at a time like this. The man’s name was *Nabal* which means, literally, “flat, vapid” and is translated, “fool.” His wife’s name was *Abigail* which means, “one who gives joy.” Abigail is characterized as “of good skill, wisdom, understanding, and of beautiful form.” Nabal is characterized as *qasheh*, “hard,” and *ra’*, “evil” in his dealings. The English translates it “**churlish**” which means, “rough, surly, self-willed, un-pliable, and ill-behaved.” Nabal was a Calebite. The Hebrew word here is *kelibbo* in the Kethib text (the consonantal text of the Masoretic scribes), but the Qere text (the text with variant, vowel-pointing consonants in the margin) has *kalibbi*. This is the difference: *kalibbi* means “Calebite” and *kelibbo* means “according to his heart.” Most commentators prefer *kalibbi*, “Calebite” however the LXX has *anthropos kunikos* (“dog-like), and Josephus, the Arabic and Syriac versions say the word is a derivative of *keleb* which means “dog-like.” Genesis 38:12ff show that sheep-shearing was a time of lavish hospitality upon those in need. David sent ten men to Nabal’s place indicating he expected a liberal gift of food from him.

Although David had been in contact with Nabal’s shepherds and flocks, and had taken nothing from them, had not harmed them, **and had actually *protected* them and their sheep (see 25:21), he still showed respect and courtesy to Nabal by requesting help—not demanding or taking (as some in David’s circumstances have done).** David sends greetings and inquiries about the welfare of Nabal’s family and business, wishing him, *shalom, shalom, shalom*. David even pays deference to Nabal when he asks, “give...to your **son**,” a sign of the respect of the younger David to the elder Nabal. David’s 10 young men delivered his request.

Nabal’s answer was both insulting and miserly. David, to him, was a “nobody.” In fact, Nabal considered David a mere runaway house-servant of Saul, a rebel, a no-good. He knew who David was but he was contemptuous of him. He would not even give David part of what he had already killed for the sheep-shearers. Nabal reminds us: “As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous...” (1 Tim. 6:17). Riches are dangerous! “For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts through with many pangs” (1 Tim. 6:10). “Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction (1 Tim. 6:10). The desire to be rich and keep his riches turned Nabal into a “**dog**.” Watch a dog when he

eats—although he may have plenty, yet he snarls and bites at any other dog trying to help himself to part of the plenty. Nabal is like some selfish people today who excuse themselves from helping the poor and needy by categorizing all needy people as “welfare bums” and saying to help such people only encourages idleness, impertinence and wastefulness. Jesus helped many people who “were not worthy” and who never returned to thank him (9 of the 10 lepers)—the only one who returned to thank Jesus was a Samaritan! DON'T LET YOUR MATERIAL BLESSINGS MAKE YOU A HAUGHTY, GREEDY “DOG” LIKE LABAN!

Whereas Nabal was haughty and miserly Abigail (a) is humble, prostrating herself before the young fugitive, David, and begs to be heard, admitting guilt in the rebuff David has received from her house (25:23-24); (b) she honestly characterizes her husband, Nabal, as the fool he really is, saying she is aware of his “ill-natured” temperament (25:25); (c) she protests the innocence of the rest of her house, implying that if she had known of David’s circumstances he would have received help from her (25:25); (d) counseled David that he must let the Lord restrain him from taking vengeance with his own hand lest he be found with bloodguilt (25:26); (e) declared she would make some restitution to show the sincerity of her penitence over the way David has been treated by her house—she brings him a “present” (25:27); (f) she appeals to David to “forgive” her trespass and “bear” it—the Hebrew word translated “forgive” is *nasa'*, and literally means, “bear with.” In order to forgive, the one sinned against must “bear” the offense. To retaliate is not to forgive—it is to “get even” (25:28); (g) most significantly, she reminds David that he must be the object of God’s love and care and evil should not be found in such a man so called and blessed (25:28-29); (h) she reminded David that she, along with others, was aware of David’s divine destiny to be “prince over Israel” (25:30); (i) she warned David that he must protect himself against a guilty conscience and personal remorse for the future (25:31). David immediately recognized the wisdom and personal benefit of following Abigail’s advice and expressed his appreciation for it. “A good wife, who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.” The power of womanhood for good (and bad) is documented again and again. Abigail’s influence upon David at this crucial moment in his destiny had far reaching consequences. Never discount the counsel of a woman! One commentator says, “Only a woman could have managed such a negotiation as this so smoothly and successfully; but only a God-fearing woman would have managed it so as to bring David to a sense of the sinfulness of the act which he had been about to commit.” A more beautiful example of the art of persuasion in the sphere of private life is not found in the Bible or other histories. Women today should recognize that this is a special gift of theirs from God. This is where they excel. This should be their primary focus (not on the spheres of maleness). Abigail’s appeal to God’s care for David apparently touched him most significantly. It was “the love of Christ” that constrained (or, “controlled”) the persecutor of Christians, Saul of Tarsus, and transformed him into Paul the apostle (2 Cor. 5:14). We are to be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving to one another “as” God in Christ has forgiven us” (Eph. 4:32). How could David, so richly and undeservedly blessed by God be revengeful or act in any way unworthy of the name of such a God? This is what Paul meant when he wrote, “...let the peace of Christ rule (Greek, *brabeueto*, “arbitrate, umpire”) in your heart” (Col. 3:15). Honest-hearted people are always deeply touched by the knowledge of what God has done for them through Jesus Christ—when they are made aware of it. Let us be bearers of this “good news” to the world.

David is being hunted by Saul again, after Saul had apparently experienced heart-felt repentance for his evil intentions toward an innocent David (24:16-22). It was the same Ziphites, the same territory, the same persecutor and very nearly the same resolution. When David ascertained where Saul's camp was and what the situation was, he asked for volunteers to go with him on a dangerous mission. Ahimelech (not the high priest of ch. 21-22) the Hittite declined while Abishai (brother of the famous Joab, 2 Sam. 8:16) volunteered to go. They found Saul's army all asleep, including Saul himself and Abner, Saul's chief of staff. Abishai begged David for permission to "pin" Saul to the ground with his spear while Saul slept. Abishai thought he could do it with one stroke (probably thinking it would arouse no one and he and David could escape easily). This must have been a great temptation to David. But he still maintains his control by the knowledge that Saul is the Lord's "anointed." David is willing to leave Saul's destiny to the Lord. Whatever the circumstances of Saul's death, it will be by the will of God but not at the hand of David. The Lord providentially caused a "deep sleep" to fall on Saul and his men so that David and Abishai could penetrate into the very center of the camp, stand and talk about Saul, remove the king's spear and water jug without anyone knowing, awakening or seeing. David tactfully chastises Abner, Saul's general, with failing to be as alert as a general should be to guard his king. **What David is really doing is proving to Abner (and ultimately, again, to Saul) that he is innocent of any charge of treason or intent to kill Saul.** Abner realized that David could have killed Saul had he wanted to. David points out that Abner is more worthy of death at the hand of Saul than David is! Tactfully, David prompts Saul to search his own heart for the reason, if there be one, that he pursues David so relentlessly to slay him. One consequence of Saul's persecution that hurt David was that he had to wander through the wastelands and borders of the heathen, often having to call upon them for refuge from his own brethren and countrymen—and, *worst of all*, David was kept from the tabernacle and the presence of Jehovah. The heart of David was heavy with this burden. We never know how much we would miss the opportunity to worship the Lord in the fellowship of brethren until we have to do without it. We should take Paul's admonition to Timothy seriously to pray for a peaceable and tranquil political situation. It is a terrible burden for some of the modern saints of God to bear when they are deprived of worship service, a Bible, permission to do evangelism and even the permission simply to meet with those of like precious faith. *We should be able to read the Psalms of David with new insight after studying 1 Samuel.* Hear the pathos of his words, feel the burden of his heart, that he cannot worship the Lord in his house. BE THANKFUL YOU CAN WORSHIP GOD—DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO REMIND OTHERS TO BE THANKFUL—MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

Saul confessed that he had been wrong. This time without tears! He must confess because now it is evident even to Abner that David means no harm to Saul. Saul admits he has "played the fool" and "erred exceedingly." BUT HAS SAUL CHANGED? David reminds Saul again that the facts of God's providential deliverance of him time and time again has proved that the Lord is with David. Saul is fighting against the Lord! Saul allowed David to return to his place without engaging him in battle, and Saul "returned to his place." Saul did not return to his house as at the earlier meeting (24:22), indicating that Saul continued his animosity for David after this parting, until David fled to Gath (27:4) beyond Saul's reach. They were never again to confront one another alive. Saul dies by his own hand—David becomes king. Even Saul's benediction upon David is more general and detached than his previous acknowledgment that David would some day be king



(24:20-21). Here Saul simply says he is sure that David will some day find success. SAUL HAS NOT TRULY REPENTED! It is one thing to recognize and applaud what is good, but another thing to imitate it. Saul recognized the good in David's actions, but he made no move to imitate it. Many people today applaud the "good Jesus" but never surrender themselves to his doctrine or his example. That, in itself, is self-condemning and one thus classifies oneself a fool who admires, recognizes and applauds good but refuses to do it.

## 1 SAMUEL 27:1—28:25

David “said in his heart” is a literal rendering of the Hebrew text. He was counseling himself. He evidently was not consulting the Lord here! His reasoning probably went something like this: (a) everywhere I try to help one of my own people, I am betrayed or rejected (e.g. Keilah; the Ziphites; Nabal); (b) I have just narrowly escaped being surrounded by Saul’s army (23:26); (c) I have sworn that I will not lift up my hand against Saul, the Lord’s anointed; (d) I have endured plenty of pain already—surely the Lord does not expect me to endure more; (e) although the Philistines are enemies of the Lord, perhaps I can make them think I am on their side long enough to carry out the Lord’s work for me. To compromise or not to compromise, that is the question. All of us have reasoned this way at one time or another. David may even have rationalized: “If Saul keeps up the pressure, and keeps making promises and breaking them, some day it will come to a shown-down and I will have to kill him—that would be bad—so I will go to the Philistines before I am put in that position.” The last word David had from the Lord was that he should not remain in a foreign land, but should remain in the land of Judah (22:3-5)! He also should have known that the Philistines would not be all that much help to him (21:10-15). When despairing of life itself, like the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 1:8-10), David should have relied totally on the Lord! David was received now by the king of Gath, whereas he was not welcomed in ch. 21. The difference is that in ch. 21 David was thought to be a solitary deserter from Saul’s army and David was feigning insanity, and he was remembered as the slayer of Goliath. Now, however in ch. 27, David appears in royal style with all his retinue (600 soldiers and his two wives, etc.). The long years of persecution by Saul had made David more acceptable to the foreign lords around the Hebrews. Saul heard that David had obtained asylum with the Philistines and was beyond his reach (Saul would have to fight the Philistines to get to David), so Saul gave up his daily search for David.

David was anxious about being in a place where the king of Gath could watch his activities closely so he asked the king for a place in one of the country towns (the Hebrew text, literally reads, “one of the cities of the field”) away from the capital city. Achish gave David the city of Ziklag, apparently some 15 miles south of Gath, a good day’s travel away. The king of Gath condescended to this probably because it would have overpopulated the city of Gath to receive 600 men plus their families and made very serious circumstances prevalent in Gath. The note that Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day indicates that this latter part of 1 Samuel was written by someone after Samuel’s death and perhaps on into the days of Solomon or later. David dwelt in the country of the Philistines a year and four months. Though he was safe from Saul, his heart longed to return to his homeland and especially to the presence of the Lord at the tabernacle. David wanted to find relief from his struggles of fleeing from Saul. David had an alternative. He did not have to give up and give in. It was perfectly evident that the Lord was fully capable of extricating him from any danger. Furthermore, he had Saul as an example of one who disobeyed the Lord’s word. He could have stayed in Judah and trusted the Lord to have his way in David’s struggle against Saul. The Lord had surely proved that he was having his way all along. Paul wrote in the book of Hebrews in the NT, “For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised” (Heb. 10:36). God’s will is that people come into the kingdom through many tribulations (Acts 14:22).

The way that leads to life is “difficult and narrow” (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24). David had great success during his year and four months in Ziklag. He “smote the land.” 1 Chronicles 12:1-22 tells that many Israelites joined his forces, literally thousands and thousands. David’s successes were due to his base of operations—but his base of operations was due to his willingness to compromise the truth and dissimulate. When the king of Gath questioned David about where he had been making raids, David would always give rather generalized answers...never any specific details. In fact, David so arranged his answers as to give Achish every reason to believe he was raiding Israelites or friends of Israelites. David’s motive was to deceive. There is no question about that. He was careful to kill every one who could witness against him to the King of Gath. Did David’s “teamwork” with the Philistines really work? Later, when David is off at the battle front with the king of Gath, the Amalekites capture his wives and take them hostage (28:1-2). David’s willingness to compromise and join forces with the enemy almost put him in the position of having to actually fight against God’s people. So, it is true of those who compromise their “base of operations” today. No matter the motive, if it is a compromise of the revealed will of God, it is fighting against God.

The two historical notes of this verse are to set the stage for Saul’s subsequent actions—to show his desperation: (1) Samuel had died. Saul had no spokesman from God with any personal sympathy for him as Samuel had— **Saul had previously made a great show to purge the nation of witches and diviners—now he will turn to one in desperation (his original purge must have been only for show);** (2) the Philistine army (accompanied with David and his men) are massed to begin a new offensive against Israel—the two armies were encamped opposite one another—the Philistines on the slopes of the “little” Hermon mountains at Shunem—Saul and his army encamped across the valley on Mt. Gilboa. Saul’s heart “trembled” with fear. Interestingly enough, the spring *Harod* on Mt. Gilboa is from the same Hebrew root word which means “tremble with fear” (see Judges 7:1). The text (28:6) says “Saul inquired of the Lord...” but did he really? 1 Chronicles 10:14 tells us that Saul was slain because he “did **not** seek guidance from the Lord...” Going through the motions of guidance by God is deceiving one’s self! We’ve had presidents in the USA do exactly the same. Saul pretended to see the guidance of God, but really was after self-justification for a self-willed path. The people in Isaiah’s day wanted someone who would **not** speak the word of God, but instead speak “smooth things...illusions...” (Isa. 30:9-10). Jesus was constantly amazed at the Jewish rabbis and priests who studied the written word of God, but did not know what it said or meant (Matt. 22:29-33; Luke 11:52; Jn. 5:39-46). Paul said the Christian age would see people who would not endure sound teaching but would heap to themselves teachers to suit their own likings (2 Tim. 4:3-5). God does not approve of witchcraft **in any form** (e.g., Num. 23:23; Deut. 18:9ff)—astrology (horoscopes), fortune-telling, “psychics,” black-magic, occultism, *ad infinitum*. Moses used all the words his language contained for the different methods of exploring the future and discovering the supernatural when he legislated against it. God never has approved of the occult and never shall. Such practices destroy faith in God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son and their Word. Millions of people today turn to every new philosophical, psychological fad and teacher who comes along—all the while scorning the Bible as “outdated.” There are even professing Christians who think the Bible is not enough, that we must have some new “prophet” with some “new revelation” because we are incomplete without some “word” from God **beyond** the Bible. **Christians must stand against all such deception because its origin is from hell—IT IS NOT**

**HARMLESS FUN!** The New Testament is clear about condemning witchcraft and idolatry (e.g., Acts 15:20-29; 19:18-20; 1 Cor. Chs. 8-9-10; Gal. 5:20; 1 Jn. 5:21; Rev. 9:20; 21:8; 22:15).

Saul went to false prophets for their dreams (cf. Jer. 23:25); he had made his own “ephod” since Abiathar had long ago fled to David with the original “ephod”; he had consulted some other false prophets for a revelation. Therefore, Saul really did not inquire of the Lord—he only went through the motions, never intending to really learn and do what the Lord wanted. He had already made it clear that the Lord’s revealed will was not going to deter him from the goals he had chosen. What Saul wanted was that the Lord would at last tell him what he wanted to hear—that God approved of his wicked intentions; or that God would deliver him from the consequence of his wickedness—which is really the same. **God answers with silence! God will not honor pretense! God will not assist rebellion against his will!** God will not contribute to a man’s damnation by delivering him from the consequences of his wickedness so that he may continue in wickedness. But Saul would not heed what he knew God’s word said about “mediums and witches.” If God will not answer him as he wishes to be answered, he will find someone who will. Saul turns in desperation to a witch, a medium (in Hebrew the word is *’ob*). The Hebrew word *’ob* means, literally, “a leather bottle.” Those who “had familiar spirits” usually had large bellies (like a leather bottle) into which it was *supposed* the departed spirit had entered and then to speak through the medium. The LXX uses here the Greek word *enggastrimutho*, which means “one with a word or fable in the belly,” i.e., a ventriloquist. Saul disguised himself. The “witch” of Endor was dreadfully afraid for her life because she knew the king of Israel had *purged* the land (probably by executing) many “witches and mediums.” The “witch of Endor” asks, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” She uses the very “matter-of-fact” idiom, almost like a modern store-clerk, “How may I help you.” The disguised Saul said, “Bring up Samuel.” “When the woman saw Samuel” means in some way mean she recognized **who** the appearance was. Did Samuel really come up from the dead—or was it merely an illusion? The language, plainly understood, indicates it was **really** Samuel! The witch recognized him; Saul recognized him; the Bible says it was him. **Samuel’s “coming up” was by the miraculous power of God. The witch was surprised at what happened—she did not really expect such a reality!** She had no power to contact the dead or to raise them up. God does not give that power to anyone except himself and his divinely appointed representatives! The devil and his cohorts have only **deceptive** powers—“lying” or “pretended” powers (2 Thess. 2:9-12; Rev. 13:11-18—remember in Rev. 13:11-18 the “beast” with his powers is exposed as 666, that is, human, and **not** supernatural). The great Houdini and his wife spent years and a fortune exposing so-called mediums as hoaxes. No human being has the power to contact the dead.

The Hebrew word for “disquieted” (28:15) or “disturbed” is *ragaz* and means “to shake, tremble with passion, be agitated especially with anger” (see Job 12:6; Ezra 5:12; Dan. 3:13; Hab. 3:2). Very few commentators deal with this word from the lips of Samuel. The LXX uses the Greek word *parenchlesas*, the root of which means “crowd,” but those combinations are used in the NT to mean, “bitterness” (Heb. 12:15), “troubled” (Lk. 6:18), or “vexed, to annoy” (Acts 15:19). **It was the “bringing up” that disturbed Samuel—(a) he had left this world of woe and was now at rest in the Lord; (b) he was brought up in connection with a “false” prophetess, which he had given his whole earthly life to combat; (c) he was going to have to tell Saul the awful truth of his doom again.**

Saul's excuse for disobeying God and seeking communication with the dead through witches was, "I am in great distress; the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me..." "I have turned to you..." Samuel asks, "Why, if the Lord has turned away from you, do you ask me?" Samuel is God's spokesman—he must take the same posture toward Saul as God; does Saul think Samuel will be able to overrule God on his behalf and does Saul wish to make Samuel God's enemy with him? The dead who die in the Lord rest from their labors (Rev. 14:13; Phi. 1:21-23; 1 Pet. 5:10; Luke 16:22,25; 2 Cor. 5:1-21). To leave this world by death is, for those **in Christ**, a blessed affair and deliverance from great tribulation (Phil. 1:23-24) To be brought back to this world is "disquieting" and "disturbing." Even Samuel, with all the fame, power and goodness he might have had in this world, did not want to come back.

Samuel repeats the message of God to Saul which he had told Saul years earlier (15:23)—"the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand..." This time Samuel **specifies David as the next king of Israel**. The cause is still the same..."because you did not obey the voice of the Lord..." to slay all the Amalekites. Here Samuel says that what God wanted Saul to do was "carry out his (the Lord's) fierce wrath against Amalek..." Saul was a servant there to execute the wrath of God upon wrong doers. But Saul did not do it, therefore government was taken away from him. Jesus said to one who had not obeyed the Lord in this life, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them...if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead" (Lk. 16:29-31). Saul is classic proof of that statement from Jesus! God's will does not change with time or circumstances. His will in heaven is the same as his will on earth; so let it be done (Matt. 6:10). It would do no good for anyone today to communicate with a dead brother if one thinks by doing so he might be more readily convinced to do the will of God as God has revealed it in the Scriptures. Miracles do not convert people—they simply establish the veracity of God's message and messengers. Man must still make a surrender of his own will to the will of the One whose power and veracity is demonstrated in the miracle. No miracle ever overpowered or violated the moral autonomy of the human will. Man is still the captain of his own fate (in this sense). Saul even did miraculous things in his own body, but it did not change him against his own choices. No messenger or servant of God dare change the message of God either in this life or the other life! Even if all the angels of heaven came to earth and held a convention and voted to make changes in the gospel message, they would be pronounced "accursed" by God (**Gal. 1:8-9**). Samuel could not comprehend that Saul would think he could come back from the realm of the dead and bring a different message than the one God had him deliver while he was on earth!

Samuel did have a new revelation from the Lord for Saul! (28:19-20). Saul would, on the morrow, suffer defeat at the hands of the Philistines, and experience the awful tolling of the death knell (the "grim reaper")—Saul and his sons (plural) will die! Note—Samuel does not say **how** they will die! For Saul, not even the honor is reserved of dying in combat—Saul will commit suicide! Samuel says, "you and your sons shall be with me." Apparently the realm of the departed (dead) spirits, or Sheol, was known only as **one** place by the OT saints. Jesus revealed more about it in Luke 16 and John in the Revelation. There in the NT it is divided into "paradise" and "torments." The LXX says, "...and tomorrow you and your sons with you shall **fall**..." The literal meaning of the Hebrew word *'imiy* (translated "with me") means "to be hidden." What Samuel is predicting of Saul's

future is **not** that he will be “with” Samuel “in Abraham’s bosom” but that Saul will be “gone from the world of the living.”—“hidden”—dead! When Saul heard the words of Samuel he was so emotionally overcome by the finality of his ruin he flung himself quickly (Heb. *yemaher*, “hurriedly”) upon the ground, the full length of his frame and was filled with fear. There was no sign of strength (Heb. *kocha*, “vitality”) left in him. He lay motionless. Partly because of the emotional drain, partly because he had eaten nothing all day and night (which in itself was due to emotional turmoil). Saul was **sick with grief, guilt and indecision**. Samuel pronounced Saul’s ruin was not due to circumstances beyond his control, but to his own moral failures! Saul was not the “victim” of his environment or of other people’s faults—his ruination is his own doing! Jesus’ parables (esp. of talents and pounds) teach that God’s evaluation of a man is **not** what he has accumulated, produced or his circumstances but what his attitudes (his moral character). The circumstances of all men are different. Their opportunities and abilities vary. But character is either good or bad and, is so in spite of circumstances. It is not how much, but how; not what, but why! The torment of Saul was severe. He was undone, destitute of power. If the torment of facing one’s own ruination is so great in this life, what must it be in the next (Luke 16:24). No doubt, the greatest torment of hell will be eternal reminders and regrets over the brutal truth that it is character, motives, spirituality that counts—not circumstances!

## 1 SAMUEL 29:1—31:13

The Philistines massed all their forces at Aphek. The armies of the different Philistine “lords” must have been passing in some sort of “review” and it was finally noticed that, along with the troops of Achish bringing up the rear of the whole Philistine force, were some “Hebrews” (a Philistine term of contempt, see 4:6). The other Philistine lords were shocked to find soldiers bringing up the rear of their fighting forces from the very nation they were going to make war against. Achish, lord of Gath, told his contemporaries who David was. He also testified to David’s loyalty to him for “years.” Achish thought David had “fallen away” (deserted) from Saul’s army. He also thought David had been fighting Israelites of the Negeb all the time he was living in Ziklag—but David hadn’t. Achish believed David would make a loyal and capable ally in their fight against Saul. It is very doubtful that David would have carried through with this. He certainly had plenty of opportunities to make war on Saul and even to kill him, but would not lift his hand against the Lord’s anointed. David might have seized an opportunity to catch the Philistines in a “cross-fire” had he been allowed to go into the battle. But the other Philistine lords would have none of David. They were afraid he would become an adversary rather than an ally. Achish regretted that David could not fight for the Philistines, but since he was out-voted by his comrades he discharged David and his men and sent them back to Ziklag. Willard Winter says, “David was playing the part to the hilt. His words were ambiguous and he did not expect that Achish would be able to make any charge against him.” When David volunteered to fight against the “enemies” of the Philistines he did not specify Saul. It is suggested that in the phrase, “fight against the enemies of my lord the king...” David could have meant he would fight against the Philistines for Saul, his king! David subtly pretended his honor had been attacked. David knew he had not been loyal to Achish in fighting against the Israelites of the Negeb. Achish had been tricked. He believed David was as blameless as an angel of the gods. Be thankful that our God has so ordered life with principles and values the worldly-minded cannot tolerate the godly-minded. It is by this **providential** arrangement that God often extricates his children from the “messes” into which they have gotten themselves. The Philistines knew that David, by the very fact that he was an Israelite, was their enemy—no matter what he pretended. They knew he was really at war with them. They would have nothing to do with him. He was thus saved from perhaps helping the Philistines make war on Israel. When people of the world find out that you are a Christian, and they withdraw their “friendship,”—don’t fret. Perhaps it has saved you from making a “mess” of your life. David was blessed by the Lord that all the Philistines did not speak well of him! Jesus said, “Beware when all men speak well of you.” All men did not speak well of Jesus! Would you have believed in Jesus if the Pharisees and Herod had spoken well of him?

David and his men had been gone from Ziklag at least 6 days. It was on the third day after leaving the Philistine encampment that they arrived back at Ziklag. While they were gone the Amalekites who were desert nomads of the Negeb and inveterate enemies of the Israelites (see notes on 15:2), made a raid on defenseless Ziklag and burned the city, looted it, and carried away all the women and children of David’s soldiers as prisoners of war (probably to sell them into slavery). David and his men wept until there was no more vitality in them to weep. David and his men were prostrated with grief.

David's two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, had both been taken prisoner to be sold as slaves. David's depression was intensified because the his troops all blamed him for the catastrophe. They were "bitter" (Heb. *marah*, what Naomi said her name was, Ruth 1:20) in their soul toward David. Perhaps David was responsible for leaving Ziklag defenseless—after all, he was the leader. His guilt would have increased his distress. **They wanted to stone him.** But David did not despair and commit suicide, as Saul would do. David strengthened (Heb. *chazaq*, meaning, "to bind on, to gird on, to hold firmly to, devote oneself to") himself in Jehovah. There is a great lesson here for all believers. The way to overcome grief and depression is to **strengthen oneself in the Lord.** The way to strengthen oneself in the Lord is to **"bind him on, hold firmly to him, devote oneself to him."** Jesus told us how that is to be done in John, chs. 14-15-16. In these chapters Jesus told his disciples that when he went away (to heaven) he would send The Comforter (i.e., "Strengthened"), the Holy Spirit. If we allow him to abide in us, and if we abide in him, we shall be strengthened. We must abide in him as the branch abides in the Vine. We abide in him and he in us when we keep his commandments (John 14:21-24; 15:10; 1 John 2:24; 3:24). "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments" (1 John 5:3). **THAT IS THE DEFINITION OF LOVE—"KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS"!** When David found himself to be losing his hold on circumstances, on himself or on his values, he always turned to God and "got hold of God" by seeking God's commandments for his life. Peter tells us we should "gird up" (put to work) our **minds** (1 Pet. 1:13) which means to strengthen our minds by getting hold of God's word (or letting his word get hold of our **minds**). This was Peter's exhortation to the exiles of his day who were suffering unjust persecution.

Down in the barren, open, shadeless desert of the Negeb, not too far from Egypt, David and his men found a dying Egyptian. They gave him an abundant meal and water to drink. The man had not eaten or had a drink of water for three days and three nights. That is about the limit of human endurance for water—after which dehydration sets in. Notice, David and his men fed the dying man **before** they interrogated him. The man must have had the appearance of a slave for David asked him, "To whom do you belong." The man said he was an Egyptian, serving an Amalekite master (he was a slave). His Amalekite master had left him there to die because he had become ill and unable to keep up with the rest of the band. We see the character of the Amalekites: this slave's life was of such little value to them that they would not care for his illness, take him with them, nor even leave him with food and water. **They cruelly left him to die a slow and tortuous death in the desert. Their inhumanity led to their destruction! This slave confessed the deeds of the Amalekites and later led David and his men to their position.** The barbarities of slavery are aptly portrayed here. Slavery necessarily hardens the heart and debases the nature of all who promote it. A man could not be a slave owner without hardening his conscience against the truth that human beings are all created in the image of the heavenly Father, and endowed by him with certain **unalienable** rights—**life, liberty and proprietorship. People are not property!** Liberty of every human being is an unalienable human right. It is theirs by the very fact of their humanness—and no other human being has any right to take it away from them, by enslaving them. Although the Christian scriptures do not advocate or condone individual violence as the solution to the evil of slavery, they do enjoin kindness, love, care, and actually, brotherhood (not slavery), as attitudes and actions of those who are Christian masters or Christian slaves in a predominately heathen society (see 1 Cor. 7:20-24; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25; Philemon 1-



25). It would seem that in a predominately Christian society, the evil of slavery could not exist—that some non-violent way could be found to abolish such a practice (but a “non-violent” way could not be found in the U.S.A. in 1850-1864). The consequences of kindness are manifested in this incident. Here was a case of a sick, starving foreigner found by David and his men who were on a very urgent mission. The lives of their women and children probably depended on haste. Yet David stopped to save the very life of this cast-off slave (David knew what it was to be deserted in the Negeb!). This shows the difference in the heart of a man of God, and godless heathen. Life to the Amalekite pagan was worthless if it could not be exploited. Life to the man of God was precious enough to slow him in a very urgent and personal mission, so that life might be saved if possible. **David would have made a “good” Samaritan!** How strong the temptation must have been for David to speed on after the Amalekites and justify himself to leave this “Egyptian” (a descendant of those who had enslaved David’s ancestors in Egypt) to get what he deserved. However, good always comes out of doing kindness. No man ever lost anything by helping someone in need. The blessing of helping those ready to perish is worth more than all the gifts of the rich and strong.

David rescued everything and everyone the Amalekites had taken, even his own two wives. After David’s people got back all their families and flocks, they marched before David all the flocks of the Amalekites which had been captured and said, “This is David’s spoil.” When David arrived back at the book Besor, he asked his people about their welfare. One of the greatest virtues of David is that of magnanimity, charity and liberality. Some of the baser, stingier, envious men in his company were quick to announce they did not wish to divide any of the spoils of war with these men who had been so dead tired they could continue with the war party no longer but had been stationed at the brook with the “baggage.” David’s rejection of this uncharitable suggestion is unanswerable because it is undeniably true: **(a)** it was through the goodness of the Lord they were even able to effect this rescue; he gave them the booty—the Lord protected them—the Lord gave them the victory; **(b)** none of the other 600 people would support the greedy 200; they were out-voted—a soldier is a soldier, whether he goes into battle or is stationed in a support-role with the “baggage”—human justice demands those united in a common cause should have united, mutual shares. Moses set a precedent for the Israelites when he ordered that the spoil from the war with the Midianites (Num. 31:27) should be distributed half to the combatants and half to the congregation who remained in the camp. David made this a statute from that day forward and it was practiced in Israel for centuries afterward. We find it being practiced in the time of the Maccabees, 165-66 B.C. (2 Macc. 8:28-30). It has been practiced by other armies also. Polybius records that the Roman general, Publius Scipio, enacted the same rule for his army after his capture of New Carthage (146 B.C.). It is the “law of service.” All those engaged in the Lord’s service, whatever their circumstances or station, shall be rewarded: **(a)** all are equal in the Lord’s service, for all receive what they receive by his mercy and graciousness and not from their merit (Luke 17:7-10); **(b)** every member of the Lord’s “army” has his proper function, and not all functions are alike; **(c)** differing functions are necessary to complete and secure victory; **(d)** loyalty is the basis of reward—not fame or production. Jesus’ parable of the “Laborers in the Vineyard” (Matt. 20:1-16) should be read in connection with this application. What may seem an unjust distribution of rewards, looked at from human perspective (which is mostly self-centered), is an altogether different thing looked at from the Divine perspective. Only God knows how rewards are really to be dispensed. His values and ours may not agree.

Jesus commended the widow for giving a “mite” while the rich cast much (of their superfluity) into the treasury. Jesus blessed the children who were shouting Hosanna to his name in the temple while the religious leaders and the fickle multitudes vacillated over his teachings. I suspect that rewards in heaven, and I believe there will be such, will be made not according to successes as the world evaluates them, but according to capacities to appreciate and enjoy them. Such capacities would be—gratitude, humility, loyalty, faith, liberality, honesty, selflessness (whoever thinks he has been forgiven the most, loves the most, Luke 7).

Saul was severely wounded. He was wounded in the abdomen. It was a mortal wound. He was apparently going to die. He was in agony. Saul begged his armor-bearer to take his own sword and thrust him through and slay him before the Philistines should take him alive and “make sport” of him, i.e. torture him for their own special kind of vengeance and satisfaction (cf. Judges 9:54; 19:25). Adolph Hitler, his bride Eva Braun, and the entire Joseph Goebbels family committed suicide in the “Führer-bunker” to keep from being taken alive by the Russians in 1945. During the “Indian-wars” on frontier America (1750-1790) many white men and Indians alike either took their own lives or asked others to take them lest they be captured and tortured beyond imagination by “enemies.” Saul’s armor-bearer would not slay his king, probably for fear that should the armor-bearer survive, someone might hold him responsible for the death of the king. Saul then takes his own sword and falls upon it, taking his own life (suicide). This is one of the very rare instances of suicide in the OT (others being Abimelech, Judg. 9:54; Samson, Judg. 16:28ff; Ahitophel, 2 Sam. 17:23; Zimri, 1 Kings 16:18; and in the NT there is Judas, Matt. 27:3-10). There is no specific law classifying suicide as a sin in the OT or NT, but in principle it should be considered a sin. Suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> most frequent cause of death in the U.S. There are approximately 25,000 suicides per year in the U.S. Estimated attempts at suicide are 200,000 to 250,000 per year. The suicide rate in the U.S. is 10.5 per 100,000 persons. The rate for male suicide is higher than female; the rate for male suicide rises sharply after the age of 45 and keeps rising into the eighties. The national suicide rate for males is 16.6 compared with 4.9 for females. In 1958 there were 522 suicides in Missouri alone. There is no explicit prohibition of suicide in either the OT or the NT. Some have contended that Rom. 14:7-9; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 5:29 are, in principle, prohibitions against suicide. Augustine denied its legitimacy no matter what the situation, arguing that it precludes the possibility of repentance, and that it is another form of murder. Thomas Aquinas held that suicide is (1) unnatural, being contrary to the love which every man should have toward himself; (2) an offense against the community; (3) an usurpation of God’s power to kill and make alive. The Bible is silent on this probably from the very fact that in the Biblical ethic there is no room for even a consideration of suicide. The OT covenant was a covenant of promise, the NT covenant is of HOPE. Suffering is to be endured. No one needs to hasten his departure from this life for he is promised, if he is a Christian, that he will reap in due time if he does not “faint.” THE DESIRE TO TAKE ONE’S SELF FROM THIS LIFE WOULD BE ITSELF A LACK OF FAITH IN THE LORD’S PROMISE. A Christian conscience and ethic is against the very thought of suicide: (a) a man’s life in all its powers, physical and mental and spiritual is a personal trust from his Creator—it is a trust-fund and not our own property—we cannot dispense with it as we see fit—the Lord gives and the Lord takes away; (b) the Christian believes that God is working in this world in every way toward a redemptive process—to attempt to assume power to stop that redemptive process in our own lives would be to interfere with God’s plan—“The child of God cannot at his own

will excuse himself from God's school" (see Phil. 1:21ff); **(c)** each life belongs to others' lives—to live is not only an individual duty, but also a social duty—no one can determine whether the best service to others may be rendered by remaining as a burden which they are to learn to bear as part of their life's training, or by being taken bodily away from their concern and obligation. Remember John Donne's poem, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main...Any man's death diminishes me...therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." The issues of a single life are too complex, too intricate, and too far-reaching in their eternal effects as well as temporal effects, for us to take them in hand, and to decide when our task has been accomplished here, and the hour for our discharge from this life as come. Giving one's life for another is not suicide (cf. Rom. 5:7; John 15:13; 1 John 3:16). Whether suicide is an "unforgivable sin" or not, the Bible does not say. We shall just have to leave that determination up to God in the hereafter. We do know the Bible teaches that beyond this life there is no opportunity (and probably no desire) for repentance—true repentance. Suicide is, in most cases, moral cowardice. It is an attempt to escape consequences of guilt or escape the chastening-suffering which develops moral steadfastness. It is an existential cop-out-ism, it is the easy way out of facing problems and difficulties. THE SAME MORAL IMPERATIVES HOLD TRUE FOR ALLEGED "EUTHANSIA."

The Philistines cut off Saul's head (probably in retaliation for the beheading of Goliath. Apparently they cut off the heads of his sons, stripped their bodies of armor and weapons and sent these objects throughout Philistia with news to the house of the idols. They put the armor in the idol-temple at Ashtaroth and "nailed" the bodies of Saul and his sons to the wall of the city of Beth-shan (*Beth-shan* means, "house of quiet"). The inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, at the risk of their lives, went at night and spent all night taking down the headless bodies of Saul and his sons. They took their bodies to their home town of Jabesh in Gilead and burned (cremated) them until there was no more flesh on the bones, then buried the bones under the tamarisk tree there and fasted seven days in mourning for Saul and his sons. The reason for burning the bodies was probably due to the unusual circumstances: **(a)** the bodies were already mutilated beyond recognition; **(b)** leaving only bones buried at Jabesh would preclude the Philistines taking the bodies and making more desecration of them. Unlike many neighboring nations, the Hebrews had an abiding horror toward cremation. Cremation was reserved for the worst criminals (Lev. 20:14). However, there is no scriptural sanction against cremation. The practice of early Christianity seems generally to shun it as a mode of burial. In modern society where even modest funerals cost as much as \$5000, one has to weigh Christian stewardship against scruples about cremation. The exploits of the men of Jabesh-gilead were brave, out of gratitude, and patriotic. But how much better it would have been had they been as brave, patriotic and grateful **before** Saul's death by helping him overcome the causes that brought his untimely death (which they do not appear to have done). Honors after death make poor amends for neglect and unfaithfulness during life! It seems rather unjust that Jonathan and his brother should die in such a humiliating way all because of Saul's self-will. They, especially Jonathan, were not responsible for his sins. Yet, we must believe that even in this "all things are worked together for good by God for those who love him and are called according to his purposes" (Rom. 8:28): **(a)** God 's word was vindicated; **(b)** David's way to the throne was made clear and open; **(c)** Jonathan would be relieved of situations that might have been worse for him after his father's death and David's accession; **(d)** by it all David was trained in compassion; **(e)** God shows unequivocally that, **ultimately**, the

difference between good and evil is to be taken care of in the other world, not this one. The Israelites were shown in graphic terribleness what the consequences are of “a king like the nations” sitting on the throne of God’s kingdom. No human being can rule God’s kingdom! Even the best of men fail. All men are fallible and finite. Most certainly, God’s kingdom does not need worldly-minded people using worldly-methods to be in charge of his kingdom. As a matter of fact, God is really in charge, after all! This book of 1 Samuel is undeniable testimony to that fact! The NT concept is the resolving of the immaturity of OT concepts of the kingdom. In the NT dispensation there are no rulers except Jesus Christ! He alone is “king.” Everyone else, even apostles, are *douloi* or “bond-servants.” No man is to “lord” it over another (1 Pet. 5:3)...there is only one Lord! Let all Christians beware—see in Saul the attempt to take the kingdom of God and use it for one’s own selfish, prideful, advancement, and not as a place of humble service. The results of such self-will are self-destruction, shame and reversal to the work of God on earth, and perhaps even the name of God being blasphemed among the “nations.”

### Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

### Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

